

Caroline Planning Board Public Hearing Minutes of September 24, 2020

The Caroline Planning Board held a Public Hearing electronically via Zoom teleconference on September 24, 2020 beginning at 7:02 p.m.

Attendance: Bill Podulka, Chair
Charles Eldermire
Kathryn Goldberg-Forrest
Val Warke
Tim Murray - Absent

Recording Secretary: Jessica L. Townsend, Town Clerk

Also Present: 41 members of the public attended the teleconference.

The Planning Board members introduced themselves. Bill opened by welcoming all that joined and described this as an opportunity for the public to comment on the draft 2020 Comprehensive Plan. He explained that the Planning Board has written this Plan based on the community's comments over several years. Bill then described the rules of the meeting and further explained the process going forward. After tonight's hearing, they will be reviewing comments from the public, make any necessary revisions to the Plan and then turn it over to the Town Board. At that time, the Town Board make their revisions and then call another Public Hearing for further comments before voting on the Comprehensive Plan.

It was proposed and agreed to extend the deadline for public comments from tonight's meeting until midnight on Monday, September 28th.

Mary Alice Kobler – Expressed her gratitude to the Planning and Town Boards who have devoted their time to this Plan. Felt inspired that the community has been able to guide the Plan. Has witnessed changes over the years, such as increased traffic and more homes but also sees more bikers and hikers. Believes we need to expand paths and trails and preserve our farmland. Agrees with the actions and goals laid out in the Plan for land-use, water resources and the creation of renewable energy assets. She is also in favor of zoning to protect our rural way of life here.

Ellen Harrison – Supports the actions and goals of the Plan. She will submit her comments in writing. She explained that any changes that we make to our land, changes the land forever, and it is therefore essential to think about the future and plan for that. She gave recommended wording to be added to page 34 stating “Once developed, the land is forever unavailable for agriculture, as climate change impacts agricultural lands in other areas (such as California) the farmlands in Caroline is going to become increasingly valuable and essential and we need to protect it”. She added that the same land that is valuable for agricultural and ecological values is also good for development. Suggested the Plan mention that conflict and on page 40 the Plan it mentions some locations within the town with excellent drainage can support a good system (large septic system). Since those areas are also prime farmlands, she recommends wording be added to show the preservation of those lands take priority over where a septic system could go.

Janice Burton – Thanked the Planning Board for all their work. Comment on page 5 (iv) paragraph that describes the hamlets of Brooktondale and Slaterville. She recommends including Speedsville as it is often left out. Appreciates long-term planning and added that our wetlands and ponds are the driest we've ever seen.

Elisa Evett – Thinks the Planning Board incorporated the public’s views and goals in the Plan perfectly and is impressed by the construction of the Plan. Believes we need stronger land-use planning – whether it’s by adding cluster development for areas or formula businesses, etc. Believes commercial development should be prohibited on prime farmland. She like would like to promote regenerative agriculture by helping farmers acquire land, give tax incentives and encourage residents to buy produce from them. Grateful for the Planning Board for taking on this monumental task on behalf of the residents.

Richard Andersson – 30+ year resident of Caroline. Appreciates the hard work from Planning Board and Town Board. He was previously the Chair of the Subdivision Review Committee (now the Site Plan and Subdivision Review Board). He is in favor of Plan review process. Supports stronger land-use planning in our community. Zoning needs to be on the table, although many might disagree. Strongly supports the Natural Areas and Trails Group and supports the South Hill Recreational Trail extension. Would like to see Municipal Services in our area allowing public water, sewer and natural gas extended for residential development. Town has been a role-model for renewable energy and he strongly supports that.

Renate Ferro – Moved here in 1982. Spearheaded trash removal back then. Felt unwelcomed by the Town Board back then. The community has become more diverse and transient community. Stated that we have amazing resources here and we need more planning and strongly supports zoning. Feels like we have transitioned from a rural community to a more suburban community and believes we need to preserve the lands that are left undeveloped.

Paula Welling – Thanked the Planning Board for all their work. Supports the new Comprehensive Plan. Believes it is well crafted to preserve what we love about living here. Supports expanding bus transportation and paths/trails throughout the town. Strongly supports the items listed in the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources section of the Plan especially relating to climate change, renewable energy and preservation of open space.

Kathleen Kelley-Mackenzie – Thanked the Planning Board for their hard work. Helped on the 2006 Comprehensive Plan. She was glad to see the public transportation expansion portion included as well as the South Hill Recreational Trail expansion. She added that it would be good to identify the hamlets and housing clusters mentioned in the Plan for boundary purposes. She also supports zoning and believes it gives the Town legal privileges. She added her frustration in the past with board members whom ignored the Plan or never read it and she has hope that the Plan will be used now and in the future.

John Reed – He has attended all the public meeting regarding the draft Comprehensive Plan. Will be sending his thoughts in writing. Supports the intent of the Plan and its inclusive process for planning. He stated the property values in the town are changing. As more people move here, it is his hope that future Town Board members use this tool to make decisions.

Jonathan Comstock – Very pleased reading the Comprehensive Plan and the tremendous amount of energy put into it. Believes it to be specific enough in its guidelines and appreciates the goals of inclusivity and constructive goals related to housing and local economic opportunity. Rural character of the Town includes not only the landscape but preserves cultural values. He believes strongly in renewable energy and believes solar farms are coming and should. He recommends adding advanced definitions on size and location of these farms. Strongly supports the Plan.

Paul Franzen – Spoke in favor of the Communications section of the Plan. He has no access to broadband or cellular service at his home here in Caroline and was pleased to see that as a focus for the future.

Scott Reese – New resident in Brooktondale. Very excited to hear community engagement in this process. He described the nodes the Plan make of local agricultural and/or small businesses that couldn't be counted because they were unable to track them. He advocates for a way to find out more information about these small businesses and advertise them in some way (like an online directory). He believes there are many resources here in Caroline that people just don't know about.

Barbara Short – Resident of over 40 years. Opposes zoning in the town. Believes that landowners, as taxpayers, have the right to their property to do what they wish.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:56pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica L. Townsend
Town Clerk