

Minutes

Zoning Commission of the Town of Caroline

Tuesday, March 30, 2021

7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Zoning Commission Members: Ernie Bayles, Michelle Brown, Barbara Knuth, Bruce Murray, Val Warke, Evelyn (Evie) Weinstein, Tim Murray (Town Board Liaison) and Jean McPheeters (chair)
Public: Mark Witmer, Don Barber, 4 others

1. **Call to order** by Jean McPheeters, chair, at 7:01 p.m. on a Zoom call.
2. **Welcome and introductions:** The members introduced themselves and noted their experience in planning, relevant areas, and their length of residence in the Town of Caroline. Jean welcomed those in attendance.
3. **Agenda review:** Tim Murray suggested that we might want to allow time for public comment at the beginning of each meeting. Jean will add that to the upcoming agenda.
4. **Community Scan:**
 - a. **Planning Board:** Val Warke noted that the Planning Board had completed a review of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan and in 2020 had worked to revise it. There was extensive interest in the plan by residents, who participated in on-line meetings and via a survey. The new plan, which was adopted in 2020, is much more specific about “rural character.” Barbara Knuth added the 4 major goals of the Comprehensive Plan:
 - i. Promoting economic activity in hamlets.
 - ii. Protecting agricultural and environmental resources.
 - iii. Promoting cluster development.
 - iv. Promote the development of housing.
 - b. **Town Board:** Tim Murray provided information on the moratorium on commercial building in the town, which was passed in December and which will expire in June, to give the Planning Board time to revise the site plan law. Task Force has submitted a draft to the town board, but it should be enveloped in zoning document rather than stand on its own.
 - i. Tim also discussed recent topics which have come before the Town Board and have some bearing on planning and zoning:
 1. The Franklin Retail Store Project (better known as Dollar General)—the corporation has submitted preliminary plans, but has not formally applied for permission to build.
 2. Speedsville General Store—notified the Town about their application to serve beer on their porch, but this is actually a matter for the NYS Liquor Authority.
 3. Petition by Solar X for a waiver to the moratorium to create a solar farm on 76 Road was approved.
 4. Cell Towers: The AT&T cell tower application on Bald Hill was approved in 2019, but there was some controversy about that. In 2020 Verizon applied to co-locate on this tower.
 5. Street Lights in the Town are currently owned by NYSEG. Through a grant the Town will replace these with LED lighting and

will then own the street lights. This will save the Town money and reduce electric usage. This will happen in the very near future.

6. Neighbors on Thomas Road have been working with the Finger Lakes Land Trust to protect the wetlands by packaging some of these properties together under the Land Trust. More to come.

c. Land Use and Economic Development Task Force:

- i. This group was formed by the Town Board in 2020 and recommended that a Zoning Commission be formed. It also recommended the following be done:
 1. An economic inventory of the town
 2. The adoption of a scenic resources inventory
 3. The creation of a town specific SEQR, which is a TSEQR.
- ii. Barbara Knuth added that they also looked into what role “formula business restrictions” might play in limiting the quantity or location of retail and restaurants that “have standardized services, décor, methods of operation, and other features that make them virtually identical to businesses elsewhere.” These have been successful in some areas in retaining and supporting local character, but only where there are zoning laws.

5. Documents we should read:

- a. We discussed documents all members of the Zoning Commission should read and study. These include:
 - i. [Adopting Zoning for the First Time](#)
 - ii. [The 2020 Town of Caroline Comprehensive Plan](#)
 - iii. [Zoning and the Comprehensive Plan](#) (recommended by Barbara)
 - iv. [Caroline Land Use and Economic Development Task Force Executive Summary and Video](#)
 - v. Zoning maps and laws for the towns that adjoin Caroline (Danby and Dryden) and all those in Tompkins County. Also maps of areas that adjoin Caroline in Tioga County. (All these can be found on-line, but we will see if we can obtain hard copies to have at the library, town hall or town clerk’s office.)
 1. [Town of Danby](#)
 2. [Town of Dryden](#)
 3. [Town of Ulysses](#)
 - vi. [The Town website](#) (particularly the list of local laws and the new page for the Zoning Commission).

6. Discussion of our task ahead:

- a. What information do we need?
 - i. What communities don’t have zoning? Ernie (?) is going to look that up for us.
 - ii. Best practices for communities like Caroline in size and characteristics. How is zoning enforced.
- b. Public input: There was agreement that this is critical, and should begin early in the process. Barbara reminded us that “Adopting Zoning for the First Time” notes that there is a requirement for a public hearing on a preliminary document.

- c. Professional assistance: Tim said that the Town is working to hire someone in April. Jean offered to send out the link to the job posting on the town website and urged everyone to try to find some candidates.
 - d. What else? Ernie said that we will need to develop both a written zoning document and maps, and suggested phases for our next work. Jean said she would begin to develop a time line based on the requirements based on Adopting Zoning for the First Time.
7. **Next meeting:** We agreed to meet twice a month for the time being and noted that we may need to meet more frequently at times. We are hoping to finish this work within 8 months. Our next meetings will be on Tuesdays, April 13 and 27, which are the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month, from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. We are planning on trying to keep this schedule for at least a few months.
- a. Jean noted that she would send out the notes and a suggested reading list within the next few days.
 - b. Ernie will find us a list of towns with no zoning in NYS. Some nearby towns in Tioga and Broome may not have zoning.
8. **Adjournment: We adjourned at 7:59 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jean McPheeters

3/31/2021