

Caroline Town Board Public Hearing of December 10, 2020

The Town Board held a Public Hearing on the updated Comprehensive Plan held electronically via Zoom teleconference on December 10, 2020 at 7:05 p.m. hosted by Supervisor Witmer

Attendance: Mark Witmer, Supervisor
John Fracchia, Councilmember
Irene Weiser, Councilmember
Cal Snow, Councilmember
Tim Murray, Councilmember

Recording Secretary: Jessica L. Townsend, Town Clerk

Also Present: 21 members of the public attended the teleconference.

Public Hearing on *the draft 2020 Comprehensive Plan*

Supervisor Witmer opened by announcing that the Planning Board has completed the updated Plan and that it is a visionary document that captures the vision of the community and the future actions that it should take. Guidelines are made so that future building is aligned with the Plan. He expressed his gratitude to the Planning Board for putting it together. The Town Board will take comments tonight, then schedule a meeting to vote on the Plan.

Supervisor Witmer opened the Public Hearing at 7:07 p.m.

Ellen Harrison – The Comp Plan has been a huge effort and undertaking to construct. Believes it is an intelligent report and provides a very good basis on moving forward on zoning, as well as site planning review updates. Impressed with efforts to reach out to a broad public. Very community building. Commended the group and looks forward to advancing those recommendations.

Elisa Evett – Resident for 45 years and has deep roots here. Believes the Plan is very thorough and recognized the time put into the Plan. Summarized and agreed particularly with Page 4 of the Plan (Agriculture) and the necessity to preserve farmland and Page 19 (Energy) promoting renewable energy conservation and renewable energy use. Realizes that it may be tricky to balance both but feels in time, a plan will come together.

Jonathan Comstock – Pleased to give the Comp Plan his full support. Believes it is specific enough to give guidelines. Feels it has a strong sense of inclusivity. Stated that farming is important to all the Caroline community. Only a small fraction is active. Believes solar farms are an essential piece of the puzzle. Farmlands should still be part of the farms, but solar farms are a great alternative. Recommends implementing the need for green space and solar farming.

Renate Ferro – States the Town Board needs to consider future families of Caroline. Agrees with housing development clusters. Wonders what the longevity of these power structures is and hopes the Board will be forward thinking when planning and considering these sites. Everyone has different beliefs on what zoning is so she encourages the Board to educate the community on what that might be.

Emily Adams – Spoke in favor of the Comp Plan. Agrees with the vision and stands behind the Town Board.

Don Barber – Supports and encourages the Board to adopt the Comp Plan. The process for creating the Plan is an exercise in collecting community voices to synthesize this community’s vision of the town we really want. With worsening crisis around us: species extinctions, pandemics, climate calamities, etc. adopting a community couldn’t be timelier nor more necessary.

Mary Kobler – Thanked all involved in creating the Plan and supports the adoption of same. Doesn’t think the town should wait years to establish renewable energy and site plan review laws. She was not aware of the current solar farm opportunity before learning of such at last night’s Public Hearing and now wants to see that happen for the community member that spoke.

John Reed – Has read the Plan and attended many meetings surrounding the Plan. The collected data was from the public. It was a wonderful effort and supports it. He hopes the Town Board will follow the goals and visions set forth in the Plan.

Supervisor Witmer – Thanked everyone and restated the many thanks to the Planning Board for capturing community sentiment.

Councilmember Weiser – Planning Board did many years long marathon. The dedication and commitment that everyone shows to this community is commendable. Job well done.

Close Public Hearing 7:36 p.m.

Discussion

Supervisor Witmer – heard broad support of his read of the Comp Plan. County had small but noteworthy suggestions to consider. Wants to look that over carefully and would like to move forward to approve this Plan immediately. Could schedule a special meeting or vote at the end-of-year meeting on December 28th.

Councilmember Weiser – Had submitted her comments to the Planning Board Committee about the draft plan regarding Emergency Services and local health care. Further discussion with Planning Chair, Bill Podulka surrounding those comments and how to integrate them into the Plan. It was concluded that the Board can edit those minor language modifications.

Councilmember Murray – The Planning Board had received over 20 extremely detailed comments after the last Public Hearing and they went through each line of all comments submitted. Very gratified that diversity and inclusiveness language was included and will help assist the community in addressing these important issues and is a great reflection of our town.

Councilmember Frachia – Thinks the Plan is a well thought out, intelligent document and addresses a lot of areas they know they need to address. Whole-heartedly supports this.

Supervisor Witmer – Will make the necessary revisions and will check with Attorney to see regarding non-substantive language change. A vote on the Comprehensive Plan has been set for December 28th at 9:00 a.m.

A motion to adjourn by Mark Witmer and seconded by Councilmember Tim Murray and carried unanimously at 7:56 p.m.

---Adjourn---

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica L. Townsend, Town Clerk