

Town of Wilmington
7 Community Circle, Wilmington NY 12997
518-946-7174

Minutes of the 2/20/26 Preliminary Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting

Recording also available online.

(Recording started just a moment late, missed the first bit of Wally's intro.)

In Attendance:

In-Person:

Andrew Sugar

Jenn Munsie

Bill Koucky

Matt Burleigh

Svetlana Filipson

Pat Winch

Sam Haselton

Carol Wiebe

Guest: Wally Walters, Chair of Town of Jay's Comprehensive Plan Special Committee

Virtual:

Karl V.

Doug H.

S. Adams

Jeri W.

Pam

Discussion

Wally Walters

- Was board chair of Ausable freshwater assoc.
- Town of keene took 5 topics and focused on those
- Two sources of money from NYS
 - NY Dept. of State - consolidated fund, apps due July 31st, instructions come out late april/early may
 - Dept of state runs a class as part of training planning board members can go to
 - Endorsements are helpful: assembly rep, river association, etc. - show we know what we're doing, understand the task, and have buy in
 - State agencies can help prepare grants until they issue instruction in April and May - then they can only talk to everyone simultaneously. If you want help start before announcements (i.e. now)
- DEC

- Out of cycle - they have a specific program just for grants in ADK and catskills.
 - They tend not to give until you make your second application (but its a good exercise and you may get the money)
 - However, dept of state is very bureaucratic and DEC just wants to see that you spend the money well (easier to work with DEC)
- Jessica Doloreses - county grant offices - this is who we should mainly be working with for grants
 - We can let the planning board handle this, or appoint the comp plan special board
 - Jay had 4 town committees at the time they started (working groups) these are all included in comp plan special board (a member of the town board is a member of each of these committees/special boards)
 - Planning board (planning and land use to include housing)
 - Economic dev committee
 - Climate taskforce (the rest of infrastructure went here)
 - Parks and open spaces committee
 - They added a 5th - human services during this comp plan committee
 - Budget - Wally suggests we need \$70-75k for whole thing (consultant/firm)
 - North Elba Plan Update
 - 80% of this is community profile
 - 20% is actual plan
 - St. Armand Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan
 - Do we lean toward relying on contractor/consultant, or making this a more community driven project?
 - Events/Activites
 - Open House
 - Boards w info and blank boards where people can share their thoughts (on specific topics?) and let people come and go as they want
 - Helped inform survey
 - Town of Jay Comp Plan Update community survey 1***
 - To determine where to send - lots of advertising, do your best
 - Some complaints that they didn't do post cards
 - High school student appointed to board - Wally did this (what about college students as well)
 - They launched survey at open house
 - Ran the survey for 49 days
 - Inquiry to find out what people care about
 - Contractor is the one who analyzed and made a report
 - From this, they generated a list of focal topics - not the ONLY things they would spend time on, but the major things
 - Stakeholder interviews
 - Finding people who can tell you things that take some expertise or a particular subject they're specifically familiar with - they decided they had

enough information from Surveys and they deferred stakeholder interviews for a year

- They brainstormed up all of the stakeholder groups that might be considered and then pared it down
- They did 16 stakeholder groups total
- They focused more on gaps where they felt they were lacking information and worked to fill those
- Workshop
 - 40-50 people preselected based on their expertise, though it was also open to public; to help get a sense of how they wanted to organize going forward
 - Broke into random groups to chat about topic, then would reconvene (5 groups w group leaders leading)
 - Can up with 4 main areas: Managing growth, enhancing quality of life, creating opportunity (maintain families, workforce), leveraging resources (how to we work with others)
- From the workshop they framed survey #2
 - More substantive questions
 - This is where they asked about STRs and so forth
 - Put together tri fold brochure to encourage participation
- Community Profile
- Community project list
 - Not just what we want grants for or even have money for. Just everything we might want down the road so that it is in the plan
- Rollout
 - Before its put into public, make sure everyone on town board has seen and approves - if the town board doesnt vibe with it, it can't go anywhere
 - Legal requirement for two public hearings
 - 1 by planning board or comp board
 - And 1 by town board
 - Also want review by state (i.e. dec) and county
 - They're advisory - the town board is the deciding factor
 - Implementation plan
 - Chapter on implementation, milestones, follow up, etc.
 - Jay plans 1 yr post plan formal review
- Jay had 3 overarching imperatives
 - Digital connectivity (cellular, wifi, broadband)
 - Mainstreet (Jay is looking at NY forward grant for this)
 - Affordable housing

Important

- There is a town law , 272A, How to do comprehensive plans
 - § 7-3. Comprehensive Plan. A comprehensive plan means the materials (written and/or graphic) including but not limited to maps, charts, studies, resolutions, reports and other descriptive material that identify the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, devices and instruments for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development of the town located outside the limits of any incorporated village or city (see Town Law § 272-a[2]). In other words, the comprehensive plan provides a longer term guide on how a town will be developed. As such, towns must adopt their local zoning laws in accordance with the comprehensive plan (see Town Law § 272-a[11]). Although there is no specific timeframe within which towns must review their comprehensive plans, Town Law § 272-a(10) does call for “periodic review” (see Town Law § 272-a [10]). If a town plans to adopt or amend its comprehensive plan, it must hold a public hearing on at least 10 days’ notice (see Town Law § 272-a[6]). Additionally, adopting or amending a comprehensive plan is subject to SEQRA review
 - <https://www.nytowns.org/images/Documents/MemberSection/New%20Town%20Law%20Manual%202015-16%20Edition.pdf>
- Smart growth - NYS General Smart Growth Principles. Not required but we should consider them in plan
 - <https://dos.ny.gov/nys-smart-growth-program>
 - <https://dos.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2025/03/sgcp-flyer-7.16.24.pdf>

Questions

Jenn - what do you wish you'd done differently

Wally is writing a paper on that now (each group has written a paper)

Svetlana - what is the first step that Wally recommends

1 - decide which path we want to take - Strategic vs comp plan (this is somewhat already made, we want the comp plan

2 - find someone willing to do the work and lead it

3 - make sure we have support of town board and planning board

4 - look seriously at grants - find some grant writers within town who might be willing to help

5 - Create committee/special board - decide who we want on it and ask them

- Criteria

- Everyone on special board was going to do some work

- Leads, HS student, deputy, secretary

- Working group membership is open ended

Andy - what did you find consultants most helpful for

Anytime there was plateau or sticking point, the consultant HAD to be responsible, "They couldn't run away"

Doug Hall - Samples of RFP - can these be shared? As well as final scope of work - wally is happy to share

Email Questions

One question that I would like to ask Wally is who they sent surveys out to? I hope that they included all property owners and not just full-time residents, but I am not assuming anything these days! If they did send the survey out broadly, did they use the tax rolls to identify people who should receive the surveys? One other broad question would be how they envision using their comprehensive plan to update their zoning code? For example, are they creating future land-use maps? Not fully answered, they don't have zoning other than APA in Jay. It is made a consideration in study. Current bias within planning board is that Jay may not need formal zoning in addition to APA, but they do probably need site review, and their planning regs need to be updated as they don't currently provide enough authority for community. (~1hr30min into recording, more in depth answer) **Jay does use zoning, unlike Keene, so that similarity is relevant to Wilmington.**

- Wally would recommend sending a post card to everyone in town - more info on their first survey
- They used survey monkey - and had a number of hard copies throughout town and distributed at events like JayDay

Jay received its funding for developing its comprehensive plan from the DEC's Adirondack and Catskill Parks Community Smart Growth Grant Program, but Wilmington applied to the Smart Growth Community Planning Program run by the Dept of State. Why did Jay choose the DEC's grant program for funding?

They applied to Dept of state but didn't get it
DEC was less bureaucratic hoops