

Village of Chester
Board of Trustees Special Meeting Minutes
July 17, 2017

The Board of Trustees of the Village of Chester held their special meeting in the Village Hall meeting room on Monday, July 17, 2017.

Members present: Mayor John Tom Bell, Deputy Mayor Christopher Battiato and Trustee Brian J Boone.

Also present: Village Treasurer, Angela O'Neill, Village Attorney, Henry Christensen, Building Inspector, John Orr and Orange County Planner, Megan Tennermann.

Mayor John Tom Bell opened the meeting at 7:00 PM and started the meeting off with the Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor stated that this is an informational meeting regarding the Village of Chester's Comprehensive Plan. Mayor Bell stated this is the first step to have an understanding of what a comprehensive plan entails.

Tennermann stated that the current comprehensive plan resource document prepared by John Orr is a well put together and thought-out document.

Tennerman of Orange County Planning stated the idea of a comprehensive plan is rooted in NYS GML Section 239 D9 and governs all municipalities. Any land within the Village of Chester governed by Comprehensive Plan cannot be ignored and must be respected by any surrounding municipality as it relates to the development of such land. The law does not require any municipality to have a comprehensive plan. Orange County Planning feels it is a good idea to have a comprehensive plan in place, it is a way for local government to be proactive about development activity instead of reactive to the development activities that come in before the planning and zoning board. It is a way to avoid spot zoning. A comprehensive plan would help in forecasting the need and direction of future infrastructure based on community needs, such as bridge repairs, sewer lines. Ensures a way to ensure land values as a village, understand housing needs, current land use, best way to provide for your agricultural parcels, what the Village wants to do for its downtown businesses.

The County of Orange is currently working on their own comprehensive plan. It is forecasted that the County of Orange will have their Comprehensive Plan Update Draft completed by October 2017. Public Hearings will be held as part of this process. 14 of the 42 municipalities in Orange County are undergoing a comprehensive plan update or adoption. The Town of Chester just completed their Plan in 2015 and considered to be a good plan.

Village resident, David Stevenson of Elm Street inquired about dated plans and what it means to a municipality. Tennerman's response is that the recommendation is to look at the comprehensive plan document continuously and should be updated every 5 years in order to be useful as communities change and new requirements and needs arise. The 5-year review is also a way in which to track progress of land development in the community. The review is also a way in which to review short and long-term capital projects and how to make revisions that will have changed the use of the land.

The comprehensive plan will be helpful in determining how the Village of Chester will develop and grow.

Mayor Bell asked Megan Tennerman how far will Orange County Planning go to assist the Village of Chester in the development of the comprehensive plan and are there any resources the County of Orange has to assist

during this process.

Tennerman responded that Orange County can assist to a certain extent, such as identifying potential grants and assist in writing such grants. Tennerman went on to explain the process:

- Get as much feedback from members of the community via public information session/visionary sessions
- Visionary sessions can be broken up and scheduled as one session at a time with topics such as housing, land development, business development, infrastructure, etc. to be discussed.
- Once all the information is noted and gathered priorities can be determined based on community needs. This information is recorded and a draft document is prepared for the consultant.
- Environmental review of the draft document will take place and environmental impact statement is produced.
- Public comment period is scheduled, typically 45 days in duration.
- All information is considered and a final plan is drafted, which will then be submitted to New York Department of State.

Tennerman stated that, realistically, it takes approximately 18 months to complete the comprehensive plan.

Deputy Mayor questioned if time lines for completion of plan changes based on size of the municipality and available open land. Response from John Orr was that re-development is what the Village of Chester is currently going through and it is an equal or more difficult challenge due to its density and suspects it will take an equal or greater amount of time to complete the comprehensive plan as the suggested 18 months.

Tennerman pointed out that part of the process is to consider things that have happened in the community over the years, giving example of the concerns of Orange County due to the enactment of disabilities act.

Village Attorney, Henry Christensen made the following overview comments:

- Concept behind a comprehensive plan is a way to justify zoning regulations.
- Adoption of a zoning regulation is to be in line with a vision for your community.
- No need to have a written comprehensive plan as your local zoning laws' that covers your whole village has a purpose and a plan in mind.
- As the community develops, specifically in the village, there have been many changes in the village, such as the industrial park and Whispering Hills Community.
- Laundry list to consider and reflect on when preparing a Comprehensive Plan:
 - A general statement of goals, objectives and principles, policies and standards for immediate and long-range development of the Village for purposes of maintaining and enhancing what exists.
 - Consideration of regional needs
 - Be familiar with the Town of Chester's and other bordering/neighboring communities' comprehensive plans as well as what the County of Orange has in mind since they could already have addressed a number of issues that affect the Village.
 - Study existing locations and intensity of land uses and what changes you would propose for the Village in the future. Study single agricultural resources, historic and cultural resources and sensitive environmental areas.
 - Study your population and demographics, socioeconomic trends, location and types of transportation facilities as it is a critical component of any community in Orange County. Where transportation is available and not available is defining how communities develop or not develop.
 - Existing and proposed general locations of public and private utilities and infrastructure.
 - Existing housing resources and future housing needs including affordable housing
 - Present and future locations of educational, cultural facilities, emergency services facilities, health services facilities. Location of recreational facilities and parklands.
 - Review policies and strategies for improving the economy.
 - Committees can be formed to address each of these areas to be considered in order to gather the

necessary information to include in the plan.

Discussion of statistics related to Village of Chester's demographics and affordable housing available in the Village was discussed as members of the audience, Anthony Quinn and David Stevenson expressed concern regarding affordable housing not being the focal point of the Village's Comprehensive Plan.

Village resident, Leslie Smith suggested that a good place to start is by reviewing the current zoning map for the Village of Chester and surrounding towns and comparing zoning relationships as well as what is happening in the village and neighboring communities and public feeling related to current zoning laws/maps. Henry Christensen stated that a data base of community demographics should be used to establish needs. Tennerman stated she can provide this data.

Village resident, David Stevenson inquired as to whether or not the Village of Chester can implement a building moratorium while the comprehensive plan is being developed. The Mayor responded that he is not in favor of implementing a moratorium due to current litigation.

John Orr discussed who should be on the comprehensive plan committee, suggesting elected officials and local residents. Suggesting contact with civic organizations, business owners and then gathering public comment to formulate a plan that will work and is representative of everyone's needs. The idea of creating a Facebook page to spread the word, collect comments, and distribute material to the community was discussed. Subcommittees can be formed to address a different section of the plan.

Planning Board Chairman, Rick Ramsdell asked if Megan Tennerman could explain the relationship between a comprehensive plan and the Village's zoning law in terms of everyday activity. Tennerman responded that the zoning law is based in the comprehensive plan and your vision for the village, so your zoning law has to be compliant with that vision. VOC is well built out, people trying to get in, fairly occupied, feels current zoning map is well thought out in terms of residential vs business zone. An annex to the zoning law may not be necessary based on current available land. Tennerman responded that all communities evolve, it is not all about new development. It is a vision for the future potential re-development due to a natural catastrophe or growth or evolution of the community due to legal mandates or technological evolution. Tennerman went on to explain that the comprehensive plan can include the Village's future vision for an existing parcel that may at some point change. The reason to pursue the comprehensive plan is not to define what to do with undeveloped land but to encompass improvements to the quality of life to the community of the Village of Chester. Traffic and transportation should be an area of focus for the Village's Comprehensive Plan due to the incoming Lego Land Project. It was recommended by Tennerman that it is easier and more cost effective to hire a consultant to assist and draft the plan. Orange County may be able to assist in securing a grant to hire a comprehensive plan consultant for an approximate amount of \$25,000 to \$35,000.

Next meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 18, 2017 at 7:00 PM at Village Hall Meeting Room.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Trustee Brian J. Boone, second by Deputy Mayor, Christopher Battiato. Motion unanimously passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela O'Neill
Deputy Clerk