

Town of Salem Comprehensive Plan  
Committee Meeting  
January 14, 2008  
5:00 PM Town Hall

Attendees: Steve Alexander, Chuck Alexander, Joseph Childs, Bill Eberle, Bruce Ferguson, Nancy Hand Higby, Robert Laukaitis, Eileen Ryan, Anita Witten

Guest speaker: Nan Stolzenburg, AICP, Community Planning and Environmental Associates

The entire session was devoted to the speaker.

Nan began by describing her firm's background. Community Planning and Environmental Associates (CP & EA) has two full time people, herself and Don Meltz. The firm also employs some part-time help. CP & EA only works with small rural communities and does not do work for urban areas. Comprehensive planning work comprises about 60% of the firm's work. This includes both updates to existing plans and new plans. Plan implementation, retainers for planning board consulting makes up some of the other 40%. The firm has been in business for 15 years.

Nan discussed that a comprehensive plan is a roadmap – that it is not a land use plan but that land use is a component of a comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan should address the local needs of the community including infrastructure, housing, senior needs, etc. She pointed out that the State Town Law 272 now requires communities to state how often the plan will be updated.

Nan stated that comprehensive plans are now done differently than in the past – now comprehensive plans include more public input. Plans generally look at a 10-15 year range. She said that a community vision should be developed early so that during the planning process when disagreements arise the planning group can fall back on the common vision developed early in the process. She emphasized that the plan is not a law or zoning but laws and regulations such as site review and subdivision must conform to the plan. She also stated that once a comprehensive plan is in place that any updates to the local laws such as site review must also conform to the plan.

She explained that the committee needs to decide how detailed the plan should be and what type of language will be used and how descriptive it will be. For example, using the words consider verses must have and shall have. She cautioned that if the plan is too vague it will not be useful for implementation. For implementation, Nan said that details need to be given of what has to be done. She showed a matrix type of approach with a task, the implementation timeframe and the person/group that is responsible for completing the task.

Nan stated that during comprehensive planning zoning always comes up and now is the time to “argue” over these issues. She verified that the Town Board has final control over what is in the plan. She stated that the plan is helpful for the Board when it comes to budgeting as it can identify long term financing needs and also helps with getting grants. She said the Plan outlines why there is a need for land use laws, and what the purpose of zoning is – the plan gives the basis and reason. The plan defines the community character.

Nan identified three phases of comprehensive plan development. Phase one being where we are now, phase two – where we are going and phase three how to get there.

Phase 1(a) Data collection – town resources, trends, infrastructure, land use patterns, information for SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis. GIS, build out analysis, land evaluation and suitability analysis.

She explained that a build out analysis uses existing laws and applies the rules to a map to see how the town would look in the future and is it what the town wants.

Phase 1(b)

Public input – get as many people as possible involved. Nan estimated that if a survey is used a 30 to 40% response may be expected. She also mentioned that no matter how many opportunities the committee provides for public input there will always be a group that claims they did not have any input.

Phase 2

Develop a vision statement based on Phase 1 results and develop goals. Goals should be realistic but not prevent “forward thinking”. Some goals may seem difficult but are not impossible and should not be overlooked because of the level of difficulty. Make a wish list for the plan.

Phase 3

Strategies- these include non regulatory (policy statements) and regulatory (zoning, special use laws, stand alone laws).

Any relevant information, strategies, goals from the old plan should be kept and rolled into the new plan.

Develop an implementation plan and schedule. The plan should be updated as needed. A matrix checklist will help to identify when a task is completed. If the plan is too general it cannot be implemented – for example “preserve farmland” is too general and tasks on how to preserve farmland should be developed. Look at using terms such as shall, consider and study.

The plan should include a profile inventory, SWOT analysis, vision statement, goals, strategies, action table and appendices.

Nan explained that the adoption process

- requires a minimum of two public hearings – one by the committee and then one by the Town Board once the committee submits the Plan to the Board.
- A SEQRA Type I action long form (EAF) needs to be completed.
- County planning board review (30 days)
- adoption resolution by the Board (both village and town)
- must include timeframe for when the plan will be updated

Nan agreed that it is best to do a combined Village and Town plan.

Regarding the agricultural grant, Nan stated that she could help with developing the ag plan under the grant but suggested to not do it separately from the overall plan but to include as a plan within the plan. She stated that she would like to look at the grant we submitted if we wanted her to give a scope of work for that portion.

Nan stated that on average a full comprehensive plan may be \$28,000-\$30,000 but could be less depending on the scope of work. She suggested that teleconferencing (phone or web) can help contain her costs. Nan stated that right now she has a full workload but anticipates being available by early spring.

The meeting concluded. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled (due to President's Day) for Monday February 18 at 7:00 p.m. at the Town Hall as long as enough committee members can make that date. Please respond to Eileen or Dottie whether or not you can attend on Feb.18 on or before Feb 1.