**Town of Stanford**

**Meeting Minutes from Comprehensive Plan Review Committee**

**March 9, 2021**

**Committee Members Present via Video/Conference Call**

Gary Lovett, Committee Chair

Rosemarie Miner, Secretary

Tom Angell

Conrad Levenson

Karen Mosher

James Sansum

Jeff Spiers

Richard Bell

**Others Present**

Wendy Burton, Town of Stanford Supervisor, Town Board Liaison

Nina Peek, VP AKRF, Inc. Committee Consultant

Madeleine Helmer, Deputy Project Manager, Planning, AKRF, Inc

**Public Comment**

Two members of the public were present. Charlie Shaw and Danielle Salisbury from Cornell Cooperative Extension.

The meeting opened at 7:30 pm via Zoom Webinar.

Gary invited members of the public to put comments or questions in the chat. Gary reviewed the proposed agenda:

1) Review and approve minutes of February 23, 2021 meeting (minutes sent out before the meeting).

2) Review Land Use recommendations from 2012 version and comments from residents.

3) Review Chapter 3 ("Future Land Use").

The committee reviewed the minutes from February 23, 2021 prior to the start of the meeting. Richard Bell proposed the following edit to the line attributed to him:

* “Richard said the Recreation Commission is not planning to include a separate community center in its upcoming capital campaign. He indicated that this does not align with the work the Recreation Commission is currently doing in conjunction with the library.”

Conrad made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, which was seconded by Karen and supported unanimously. Gary will make corrections and then Wendy will post on the Town website.

***CHAPTER 5 (formatted)***

The heading for Conservation Easements and Purchase of Development Rights should be smaller and less conspicuous.

Gary noted that several maps are in the Existing Conditions section and are then repeated in later chapters. Nina said that AKRF did this intentionally so that readers need not flip back and forth. CPRC members are comfortable with this strategy.

As it relates to protection of the two large forest blocks:

* These blacks are not represented in figure 5.3. AKRF is correcting this.
* There should be more justification for this recommendation by citing the Hudsonia study

The paragraph about the history of the Army Corps and wetland regulation will be removed. The 2001 Supreme Court decision will stay in the Plan. The federal government does not regulate all wetlands under the provision mentioned and this first sentence needs correction.

Pg. 93 last bullet under Comprehensive Plans recommendations:

* Tom recalled the Committee agreed to recommend voluntary compliance with viewsheds but committed to establish protections in the Zoning Code for ridgelines.
* Nina clarified that the DEC guideline document provides strategies for protecting viewsheds. The effect on visibility alone doesn’t necessarily qualify as impact but there are other criteria to determine whether or not something is impactful from a SEQRA perspective. Tom and Conrad recommend moving this discussion into the portion of the plan that discusses viewsheds.

Pg. 95:

* The picture needs the roll off container and truck cropped out.

Agriculture:

* Throughout the document the phrase Right-to-Farm should be hyphenated.
* Some editorial comments were made and noted by AKRF.

Questions that came up:

* The text boxes highlighted throughout the report are usually pulled from the text but in this report, some are pulled from the text in the chapter and some are new ideas, not mentioned elsewhere. CPRC members thought it should be consistent throughout if it isn’t already.

CPRC members will consider chapters approved by consensus with the recommended changes unless someone states otherwise. Once the Comprehensive Plan is completed, the CPRC will vote to approve it in its entirety.

***2012 LAND USE CHAPTER***

Gary shared his screen to review comments concerning land use recommendations in the 2012 Draft Plan.

*Lot sizes*

There were multiple comments on housing density from the community in 2013, and most were focused on the lack of availability of 1-3 acres residential lots. Most stated that smaller lot sizes would provide better affordability, primarily for young families.

The discussion focused on whether there is a way to have some areas with smaller lot sizes, aside from the places where they occur right now (in the hamlets, Upton Lake and Hunns Lake)?

* + Conrad pointed out that having smaller lots doesn’t necessarily make a property affordable. The most affordable options are multiple unit dwellings with shared water, septic, etc.
  + Tom explained that “density increase zones” were previously included in the zoning code, but they were removed. The problem is that ideal septic soils are also agricultural soils. Much of the cost of a lot is related to well and septic system installation and driveways, which greatly increase the cost of development. Board of health (BOH) approval now requires that in addition to the map of the septic, the expansion fields must also be mapped. BOH approval is what adds value to a property, and also makes development of smaller parcels difficult. Karen also mentioned the increase on the price of septic engineering and installation.
  + The solution to the problems that people run into with smaller lots would be a shared sewer and water system, but this has been difficult to get agreement on in the Town. To identify density increase zones, there would need to be in-depth soil studies and a systematic review of proposed solutions. Richard proposed a more thorough evaluation of the current situation before making policy recommendations on this issue.
  + Tom mentioned another angle to examine, why are young people leaving or not settling in Stanfordville (proximity to work, etc.)? Are there reasons other than housing affordability?
  + Nina mentioned alternatives to changing the minimum lot size. There can be an average density subdivision or conservation subdivision where the total number of lots is established based on overall parcel size, but the subdivided lots can be of various sizes. These types of subdivisions would need to be allowed in the zoning code. The density bonus is also an option, which allows someone to subdivide a property and be granted additional density if a specific proportion of the project is designated for affordable housing.
  + Jeff pointed out the potential increase in prices for those smaller lot sizes if the inventory isn’t expanded.
  + James mentioned the Plan’s commitment to preserve the Town’s agricultural and rural character, which can be compromised by zoning for smaller lot sizes.
  + Wendy pointed out the clear call for smaller lot sizes, and hopes the Plan will propose a solution to this important issue. Nina mentioned the code’s inability to regulate certain attributes of a development (such as price, condo vs. co-op) but it can create flexibility to attract and facilitate different types of housing. Some proposed housing policy changes allow people more flexibility in what they can do with their accessory building, incentivize provision of affordable housing through density bonuses, etc.
  + Tom mentioned a technique whereby a large lot can be subdivided into smaller parcels one at a time. He also pointed out that there are still lots that could be subdivided in the RC Zone.
  + More businesses are coming to Town, and Wendy expects younger people to settle in Stanford, she wants to provide reasonable housing alternatives.
  + Rosemarie mentioned the problem facing a generation-- most millennials are not able to afford traditional homeownership and are looking to new models for affordability.
  + Gary proposed addressing it directly in the plan along the lines of, “smaller lots sizes are difficult to obtain but a properly planned conservation subdivision can provide smaller lot sizes within the current zoning framework.” We can highlight the ways in which we are promoting this option to the desired end.
  + Jeff mentions the increased overall cost of building a home.
  + AKRF can add something about allowing more flexible conversions of single family to multi-family homes. Tom mentioned that two-family homes are as-of-right within the town.
  + The Plan will recommend that the Town keep 5 acre zoning throughout the town, except the hamlets and lake zones.

*Rural Mixed - Use District*

The purpose of this district was to allow some space where there could be commercial businesses that require more space than is available in the hamlets. The section in question is a salmon color on exhibit 3-4 from the 2012 plan.

* Tom was curious as to what would be accomplished by changing the current zoning. He also mentions that the community shared negative feedback regarding lots being arbitrarily split on the map.
* The Rural Center could be expanded along the natural lines of established business. James points out that it currently doesn’t include the west side of NY 82, where an auto mechanic and several other businesses are already located. AKRF would add another color for the expansion and label the expansion Mixed-Use. This would indicate that the recommendation is for more flexible use than what exists in the current RC district. The RC zone could also be expanded, which would provide for more 1.5 acre lots.
* CPRC members suggest making a recommendation for expansion in general terms (north along both sides of NY 82 and to the south a bit as well), but leaving the exact specifications to the Zoning Committee. James suggested the map just include the RC zone and the proposed expansion. Tom and Wendy see this as controversial in the community.
* Tom proposes leaving the map unchanged.
* Most of Bangall is not included in the current RC zone. Gary asked the committee if anyone knows why that is. Wendy posited that its historic designation could have been the reason.
* CPRC members decided to add a recommended expansion of the RC zone only in the triangle between Millis Lane, Hunns Lake Road, and NY 82.

*General recommendations from Land Use Chapter - 2012 version:*

* Third bullet should read, “All major residential subdivisions…”
* Fifth bullet would require a site plan for all residential new construction to offer oversight for new development projects. The CPRC concluded that this bullet should be removed.
* Sixth bullet is to be eliminated.
* The last bullet is more of managerial issue and relates to the need for more robust protocols and training for building inspectors as it relates to land development. The CPRC would like to leave this in the plan but make it more specific. Nina suggested an administrative tool that would outline specific actions for specific instances, a roadmap for land use procedures from the town’s perspective.

***CHAPTER 3***

*General Recommendations*

Tom would like to see item #3, in the “Rationale” column edited to read, “Expanding economic development opportunities by creating additional flexibility in existing use regulations while protecting the Town’s rural character.”

* Nina will reword.

Richard had suggested some rewording for the last recommendation. Nina asked the group to clarify the plan’s stance on future sand and gravel mining. The CPRC members would like to leave the recommendation as is.

*Residential Uses*

Gary found thesection a bit grim for an opening. He would like to see it paint a more upbeat picture.

*Recommendations*

The first bullet should be integrated with the recommendation discussed earlier in the meeting as it relates to density and proposed expansions.

The maps for Bangall and Stanfordville hamlets will be omitted.

*Solar*

Page 4.

* The first sentence of RC Zoning Districts paragraph should read, “At present the Town of Stanford allows utility-scale ground mounted solar energy systems in the RC Zoning District via Special Use Permit granted by the Town Board, and the site plan is reviewed by the Planning Board.”

*Wind*

Any wind installations would be subject to viewshed and ridgeline restrictions, as applicable. Existing height restrictions would also limit projects that include wind power generation. AKRF can reword this to be a bit more specific, as it relates to “getting ahead of the issue.” There is currently no sound ordinance so anything that would fit within the height restrictions could be constructed with no oversight. Gary asked AKRF to provide language that is comparable to policies that other communities have adopted.

Next Steps:

The March 23rd meeting will be a review of the complete plan. It will include a chapter 7 with all recommendations and a proposed timeline.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm.

**Next Committee meeting will be held on:**

March 23, 2021

**The public is invited to listen to these meetings by signing on through the following**

**Zoom link:** <https://zoom.us/j/99284835503>

Meeting minutes submitted by:

Rosemarie Miner

CPRC Secretary