

Town of Stanford
Comprehensive Plan Review Committee
Minutes of Meeting of May 11, 2021
Review of Community Comments from CPRC Public Meeting on the Draft
Comprehensive Plan

Committee Members Present via Video/Conference Call

Gary Lovett, Committee Chair
Tom Angell
Conrad Levenson
Karen Mosher
James Sansum
Jeff Spiers
Richard Bell
Rosemarie Miner, Secretary

Others Present

Wendy Burton, Town of Stanford Supervisor, Committee Liaison
Nina Peek, VP AKRF, Inc. Committee Consultant
Madeleine Helmer, Deputy Project Manager, Planning AKRF, Inc
Danielle Salisbury, Cornell Cooperative Extension

Meeting Minutes

The meeting opened at 7:00 pm via Zoom Webinar.

Gary clarified that the purpose of this meeting is to review written and oral comments submitted by community members.

The CPRC reviewed each comment, discussed its implications and agreed on a response which is described in this document. There will be additional opportunities for public comment at the CPRC Public Hearing on June 28, 2021 at 7 pm. The Town Board will also hold a Public Hearing when it considers adopting the Comprehensive Plan.

Comments submitted in writing. Numbers refer to comment numbers in the “Written comments” document which accompanies these minutes.

1, 2 and 4. Comments by H. Boehringer regarding a “Hudsonia Overlay.” This comment is not relevant because there is no such thing as a “Hudsonia Overlay.” The Hudsonia, Inc. study of critical habitats is not used in the Town’s zoning. Comment 4 also suggests that a Zoom meeting is not

appropriate for this purpose. The Committee thought the Zoom meeting worked well and was well-attended.

3. A comment by N. Kimball and T. Eng expressed enthusiastic support for the development of the Comprehensive Plan. They would like to see a centralized water treatment facility for sensitive communities such as Hunns Lake. The CPRC decided that the Comprehensive Plan would not make recommendations for any centralized water or sewer infrastructure because there is a lack of consensus on the issue in the Town.

5. H. Boehringer submitted several questions regarding the regulation of wind turbines. The Comprehensive Plan does not make any specific recommendations with regard to wind turbines, but it recommends that the Town consider developing additional standards.

6. H. Boehringer submitted a comment regarding solar installations and the “right-to-farm” laws; in his opinion the Town should not restrict a property owner’s use of land, regardless of soil quality. Right-to-farm laws are not restrictive and would not preclude alternative energy installations on farms. The Plan recommends that the Town develop standards and a process for approving new alternative energy installations.

7. P. Coughlin submitted a list of recommendations from the Comprehensive Plan that he disagrees with. Because he did not provide the reasoning behind his disagreement, it was suggested that the CPRC solicit more clear feedback so that we can address these comments. Wendy volunteered to have a conversation with Mr. Coughlin to try to clarify his reasoning. This prompted a brief discussion about the differences between ridgeline and view shed protections, including why the Plan should include both, especially the overriding priority of the Plan to protect the natural beauty and rural character of the Town. The CPRC decided not to change the recommendations concerning ridgeline protection in the Draft Plan.

8. D. Kaye and S. Horowitz opposed the recommendation for expansion of the RC district, which was in line with several oral comments received at the Public Meeting. The Committee's discussion of this issue considered the opposition from some residents and the possibility that this could contribute to sprawl of the town center. On the other hand, this change could open up more area for certain businesses, and there are already multiple businesses in this section of road, including an auto repair shop and salvage yard, a restaurant, a plumbing business, a landscaping business, a flower farm, and retail space in the old Carousel building. The Committee voted 5-2 to remove the recommendation from the Plan, with Angell, Bell, Levenson, Lovett and Sansum voting to remove the recommendation and Mosher and Spiers voting to keep it.

Kaye and Horowitz also commented on the need for a clear position on utility scale solar, which is in alignment with the current Comprehensive Plan. They also expressed support for the Recreation Commission’s plans for improving recreation facilities, and offered assistance on the subject of conservation developments. The Committee appreciates the offer of assistance.

9. A comment from C. Drago concerned the supplementation of volunteer emergency services, noting that the Town should be considering this as an issue that affects public health and should explore a long-term solution. Danielle Salisbury mentioned that this would strengthen the Comprehensive Plan as it relates to the Climate Smart Communities initiative. The CPRC agreed with

the concern, but decided that this issue would not be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan because this falls within the jurisdiction of the Fire District.

10. A comment from D. Waxter expressed concern with the potential for an event venue in town, which could cause problems with traffic, noise and other disturbances. The Committee agreed that we should change the Draft Plan to recommend that the Town establish criteria for events and event venues, and that large events would require a Special Use Permit from the Planning Board.

11. A comment from A. Rappelyea on behalf of M. Rena expressed opposition to the expansion of the CEAs, especially the Rider Pond CEA, because it could interfere with landowner property rights. The Committee noted that CEA designation simply highlights ecological significance and does not regulate land use.

12. P. Kraus commented that the Plan should support the centralization of businesses in the hamlets, perhaps in relation to the event venue issue. The Committee felt that that the Plan does support the centralization of businesses, and our decision to remove the recommendation for expansion of the RC zone furthers that goal. The event venue issue is addressed under comment 10.

13. H. Boehringer suggested that the Town set a goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2035. Wendy followed up with him and explained the NY State Climate Smart Communities initiative, which is aligned with a goal such as this, and encourages the Town to move in this direction.

14. N. Johnsen sent a list of questions that indicate concern about the process and content of the Comprehensive Plan. There were no specific suggestions about how to alter the Plan.

15. A comment from B. and L. Barnes suggested that the Town forego any efforts toward increased density through cluster development. Gary Lovett explained that cluster development does not produce an overall increase in density, but rather a re-arrangement of lots to retain undeveloped land. The Barnes feel that this is a “slippery slope” that will lead to increased development. The Committee felt that allowing cluster subdivisions would serve two purposes—it would provide a greater range of lot sizes, and preserve some undeveloped land.

16. G. Likens expressed strong support for the overall message and vision of the Comprehensive Plan.

17. T. Ambler and S. Bruman commented that it would be inadvisable to expand the RC district because it would risk changing the character of the community in that area, including Bangall. The Committee removed the expansion of the RC district from the Draft Plan (see comment 8).

18. M. Lagus commented that we need to keep Bangall and Stanfordville separate and minimize development. This would be addressed further with the recommended formation of the Historic Resources Advisory Commission, which would identify and map the historic hamlets.

19. J. Hughes commented that the Town should allow increased density in Stanfordville, specifically the “Planned Development District” that was recommended in the 2012 Draft Plan, to increase business development and a centralized core for the Town. There was opposition to the Planned Development District by many previous commenters on the Plan, and lacking a clear community consensus on this, the Committee did not reinstate the recommendation. The current Plan

recommends strengthening the business activity in the center of Stanfordville through other measures.

Oral comments from the Public Meeting.

There were 57 total participants including the panelists.

Speaker 1: N. Kimball enthusiastically supports the development of the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, they would like to see relaxed restrictions on the footprint of residential ground mount solar installations, pedestrian scale lighting, additional uses for accessory dwellings, participation in National Flood Insurance program and the encouragement of home-based businesses.

Speaker 2: S. Horowitz is opposed to the expansion of the Rural Center Zone to the intersection of Route 82 and Millis Lane. He worries that this would produce suburban sprawl and would like to see commercial development concentrated in the center of Town, along with more pedestrian infrastructure. Secondly, he is concerned about utility scale solar arrays and would like to see the plan outline some limits to the scale of such projects.

Speaker 3: D. Kaye owns a flower farm by the name of Bear Creek Farm. She is very concerned about the extension of the Rural Center Zone because of the potential impact on her farm. She would like to see the businesses concentrated in the current commercial center with more pedestrian infrastructure to foster community. (The Committee removed the recommendation for expansion of the RC zone—see written comment 8 above.)

Speaker 4: R. Kahn expressed concern about the future of Stanfordville and the exodus of businesses from the Town. He proposes some softening of regulations that may support small businesses, and suggests doing “whatever we could possibly do to encourage businesses and help them thrive”. The Committee agreed with this sentiment, and noted that the Plan included numerous recommendations to encourage small businesses. We encourage Mr. Kahn to review the Economic Development chapter of the Plan.

Speaker 5: J. Shafer extended her support of the Plan and gratitude for the effort. She supports the passing of the current plan so that the Town can move on to the next actionable steps.

Speaker 6: M. Shafer echoed his support of the previous speaker’s suggestions for a defined town center.

Speaker 7: T. Fox congratulated the Committee on their hard work and the clarity of the plan. He points out that the Town is positioned to take advantage of the traffic on Route 82. He likes the trajectory of the town with new businesses, a new library, and solid core businesses. He sees the Plan as being in alignment with the current trajectory of the Town.

Speaker 8: Neil Freeman had two questions for the CPRC.

1. What is meant by attaching zoning to the Comprehensive Plan? Is that the recommendation to extend the Rural Center Zone?

Gary explained that formation of a Zoning Committee would be a subsequent action to be taken by the Town Board to review and update zoning regulations.

2. What are the expected costs associated with the recommendations put forth in the plan? How will that affect town residents?

Most of the recommendations would not incur substantial cost but assessing the costs would be part of the Town's future budgeting processes. Richard Bell clarified that evaluating the costs is difficult at this stage because the Plan provides a general framework for future actions rather than a blueprint.

In further discussion, the Committee noted that many of the recommendations included in the Plan would be carried out by volunteer committees. However, the Town would likely need to hire a consultant to assist the committee charged with revising the zoning code.

Speaker 9: P. Kraus spoke to publicly reiterate his written comments submitted by email. He thinks the Plan is lacking recommendations to enhance the center of Town. We should consider an objective of creating "social vibrancy" in Town by concentrating commercial activity in the town center, and minimize commercial activity in other areas of Town.

Speaker 10: B. Rolston asked about the impact on homeowners of the recommended establishment of protected viewsheds and historic structure recommendations. Tom Angell clarified that the protected viewsheds are not a new recommendation and there would be no regulation, only guidelines with incentives for landowners to comply. There is less clarity around the historical structures, but that would be the purpose of the Historical Advisory Commission. The HAC would make clear recommendations to the Town Board.

Speaker 11: Wendy Burton read Katie Fallon's email stating support from the Stanford Grange for a Stanford Farmer's Market and their willingness to collaborate. The Stanford Grange offers their property free of charge for a farmer's market. Wendy also asked a clarifying question about the proposed zoning committee: Would the committee responsible be the current ZBA or a new committee? The Committee responded that the Town would form a new temporary committee to review and revise the zoning regulations to be consistent with the revised Comprehensive Plan.

Speaker 12: S. Adams asked two questions.

1. How many attendees are at this public meeting?

Gary stated that there were 49 participants. (The final attendee report showed that there were 57 total participants including the 12 panelists.)

2. Where would the parking recommended in the plan be located?

Gary clarified that the parking solutions would be to share and reconfigure existing parking resources among businesses, and there is no proposed new development.

Major changes to the Comprehensive Plan based on community feedback are as follows:

- The recommendation for the expansion of the RC Zone will be removed.
- Language concerning event venues would change and they would require special use permits.
- Items missing from the Appendix will be added.

Tom Angell made a motion to approve the Comprehensive Plan as amended at this meeting and forward it to the Town Board. Conrad Levenson seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. The Committee delegated to Gary the responsibility to confirm the changes were made to the draft. The CPRC needs to make a formal recommendation at an upcoming Town Board meeting, and then the Town Board will host a public hearing on the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.

NOTE: Subsequent research revealed that State law requires that the CPRC hold a Public Hearing on the Plan. The hearing will be held June 28, 2021 at the Town Hall.