

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
October 22, 2014 – APPROVED

**Comprehensive Plan Committee Members**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Email address</b>
Jim Schoenig	VOB Mayor	jschoenig@brewstervillage-ny.gov
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Mary Bryde	VOB Trustee	MBryde314@gmail.com
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Peter Hansen	VOB Clerk/Treasurer	phansen@brewstervillage-ny.gov
Bob Cullen	Town of Southeast Councilman	rcullen@southeast-ny.gov
Jack Gress	VOB Zoning Board, Coalition for a Better Brewster	jackgress@verizon.net
Richard Ruchala	VOB Zoning Board	rrr845@gmail.com
Rick Stockburger	VOB Planning Board	rstockburger@verizon.net
George J. Gaspar	VOB Planning Board, Resident (architect by profession)	gjgaia48@gmail.com
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Anthony Mole	VOB Attorney	am@herodesmole.com
Bob Dumont	Business	Bob@thebowlcompany.com
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Harold Lepler	Covington	haroldlepler@gmail.com
Larry Nadel	Covington	nadels@comcast.net
Don Rossi	Covington, Legal Council	dmrossi@hoganandrossi.com

Members present October 22, 2014	Members absent October 22, 2014
Jim Schoenig	Joe Czajka
Christine Piccini	Meghan Taylor
Mary Bryde	Rick Stockburger
Tom Boissonnault	Bob Cullen
Peter Hansen	Don Rossi
Richard Ruchala	Terri Stockburger
Barbara Barosa	John Folchetti
Jack Gress	Larry Nadel
George Gaspar	
Bob Dumont	
Anthony Mole	
Harold Lepler	

Ms. Piccini led the Committee in the pledge of allegiance.

Ms. Piccini made a motion to open the work session of the Comprehensive Plan Committee to hear the presentation from VHB. This was seconded by Ms. Bryde and passed unanimously.

Ms. Bryde made a motion to accept the amended minutes from the October 8, 2014 meeting to include corrections to the spelling of Mr. Boissonnault's name throughout the document. This was seconded by Mr. Gaspar and passed with one abstention (Mr. Ruchala).

Three members from VHB attended to present the VHB presentations. They were: David Schiff, Steve Martini and Gina Martini. They opened their presentations stating that there were two key topics to discuss: zoning and step one of the renewal process.

Presentation focused on observations/issues highlighted by VHB.

Mr. Schiff stated that overall the zoning ordinances were good and up to date.

### Business Districts

B1 Zone – heart of downtown

- . They see a need to increase the FAR
- . Adjust parking requirements
- . “Tinker ” with the current uses in downtown, but the main uses are good
- . Design guidelines should be provided, suggesting what buildings should look like without dictating (Building to the line)
- . Incentive zoning is a tool to use with developers when discussing zoning

B3 Zone – Intermediate/transition district

These are the areas leading into and out of the downtown area.

- . Some rezoning of residential in this area, which might want to be considered B1, straight residential.
- . Mr. Ruchala commented that the change to the Garden Street School property might dictate which way the Village goes.

B2, B4, B5 Zones – these are highway/commercial zones.

- . VHB recommendation is to combine them since there is a lot of overlap.

Residential District (R District):

- . Some “tinkering” here.
- . Question came up about manufactured homes and making it a special exception use.
- . Mr. Schiff stated that there was a need for the definition of manufactured homes and said that it could be a special exception use. Ms. Martini said permitted use, and Mr. Schiff said it should be conforming to give it more validity.
- . The R1 is only found in three locations in the Village and these include vacant land.
- . There are no requirements to define cluster provisions.
- . Discussion of incorporating a town house use in this area.

Parking District

- . Doesn’t quite match the proposed current plans going forward and may need to be revised.

## General Recommendations

- . Coordinate and define ordinance language so it matches the comprehensive plan
- . Districts ought to have a purpose
- . Special exception uses – few have their own criteria, therefore may need to establish and define criteria so there is something to measure an application against
- . Should think about converting commercial use areas to residential areas
- . Already have some flexibility with parking overlays, but an important issue
- . R & D zone may need to be in R20 area

Mr. Schiff opened the meeting to questions.

Mr. Mole asked what they thought about the overall number of districts.

- . Mr. Schiff responded that he understood that there were different districts, auto-oriented, commercial corridor districts, which are next to each other, and it would be nice if they were one district. Didn't know if it would be possible to narrow it down to one district and maintain the control to make sure that the Village would only permit a limited amount of gas stations. He said that it would be nice if they were one, and this would lead to a simplification. He recommended design guidelines for those corridors to look different.
- . He also stated that zoning works better to prevent what you don't want, rather than what you do want. And to do this, it takes time.

Ms. Piccini talked about the walk about town that occurred earlier in the day re: B1 district and the residential district and asked if VHB was thinking about leaving single family homes in the residential areas and picking up a change in zoning after them.

- . Mr. Schiff responded, Yes, but didn't recommend "hop scotching" too much between zones as it would be difficult to establish a continuous walking area and tight-knit downtown. He repeated that there is all this residential currently, and the Village needs to ask itself if it wants to transition to non-residential.

Mr. Lepler asked for a definition of commercial development.

- . Mr. Schiff responded that this could consist of retail, health club, office, restaurants; but not automotive or a big box store; not residential and not industrial. Those should be consolidated to a downtown area. There is a good potential for professional offices pretty close to downtown.

Mr. Lepler talked about difference between parking requirements for a lawyer's office versus a medical group. He cited 6 parking spaces/1000 square feet for a medical office.

- . Mr. Schiff responded that it wasn't expected to have large complexes, and therefore no need for that type of parking lot.

Mr. Ruchala asked about building heights.

- . Mr. Schiff responded that zoning permits four stories, and six with additional parking. He felt that this was acceptable.

- . Mr. Lepler stated that the parking on Marvin Ave. could have multiple levels and access from the side streets, and therefore, four stories on Main Street wouldn't block any views.

- . Mr. Schiff asked how the Village's height ordinances are defined.

- . Mr. Ruchala stated that if density was to increase, buildings would have to be higher.

- . Mr. Schiff responded that this would have to be commented on by the Committee.

- . Mr. Lepler reminded the Committee for the need for parking along with the increase in building heights, and that this burden couldn't be placed solely on the Village's infrastructure. He suggested having other meetings with EMS and fire departments to know what their capabilities and limits are. He also stated that the issue of materials and class of design of construction for fireproofing needs to be considered.

- . Mr. Gaspar expressed that the biggest challenge is the grade change throughout the Village. He felt that parking under some structures would be okay. And therefore, people would have to walk a distance to get to grade level. He suggested pocket parking on Main Street (as in Saratoga, NY) instead of parking in the basement of buildings. He thought it was good to keep the residential area, and that if there are to be zoning changes, they needs to be viable financially.

- . Mr. Hansen asked that if there were parking under buildings, would that parking be just for that building or for everyone. Mr. Gaspar hoped that it would be universal.
- . Mr. Lepler stated that it shouldn't be a commuter parking lot. And Mr. Gaspar responded that, Yes, it should as the discussion revolves around a transit-oriented development.
- . Mr. Ruchala agreed. He also stated that properties in the Village don't provide for front and back access.
- . Ms. Martini added that if some sites in the urban renewal area weren't deemed residential, they could be converted to pocket parking lots.

Urban Renewal Process = Article 15 of NYS general municipal law which gives municipalities the ability to adopt urban renewal plans.

- . Mr. Schiff explained that it's a multiple step process.
- . Blight determination is the first step.
- . Once an area is considered blighted, the Village can designate an area as appropriate for urban renewal treatment and then adopt an urban renewal plan. The urban renewal plan provides powers to the municipality to do acquisition, if it wants, to reinforce rehabilitation and enhance code enforcement and provide design controls, and as a result it strengthens the Village's hand for financial reimbursement. It doesn't mean tear everything down.

Substandard Definition today

- . This includes a combination of physical and economic factors.
- . It can include under-development or stagnation, incompatibility of uses, underutilization, obsolescence of buildings.
- . It doesn't always mean a slum.

Blight Study – Please consult the Blight Study document dated September 14, 2014 for specifics.

- . The study area map was presented and the red outline showed the downtown area boundaries near the train station, which include a mix of retail and residential use, with denser development here.

Existing land use map was presented

- . Exterior building conditions that were surveyed showed a range of conditions from poor to excellent. There were three categories: critical deficiency, intermediate deficiency and slight deficiency.

Underutilized or Obsolete Buildings

- . Examples: Putnam County Archives Building, Cameo Theater, overcrowded/poorly configured lots, vacant buildings
- . Poorly designed lots; residential used next to industrial lots
- . Vacant buildings - e.g., Garden Street School and Cameo Theater

Sidewalks

- . Many areas are without sidewalks
- . Increased density will require installation or improvement of sidewalks
- . Need to address DOT regulations/standards when improving sidewalks

Topography

- . Steep grades impact walkability
- . Blighting factors – Village will have to decide what areas they need to focus on and cite them for redevelopment.
- . Areas that are sufficiently blighted need to be identified to warrant an urban renewal plan. Mr. Schiff added the specific areas need to be focused on and what those areas should contain should be noted.

Mr. Lepler, in talking about parking, suggested that each application should be accompanied by a geotechnical engineer's statement to make sure that the parking is structurally sound.

Mr. Schiff stated that the Committee will receive the next two chapters, Recommendations and Implementation, for the next Comp. Plan Meeting on Nov. 12, 2014.

Ms. Piccini asked if Mr. Schiff was suggesting that the Committee get these next two chapters prior to the Nov. 12, 2014 meeting and then discuss them, with the comments from the Nov. 12, 2014 meeting, at the Nov. 25, 2014 meeting, and Mr. Schiff responded, Yes.

Ms. Barosa stated that we are also waiting on the traffic chapter.

Mr. Gress asked a question about page 12 in the Blight Report. He wanted to know what the difference was and how the assessments were made, e.g., between fair/poor and poor, and that he noticed that only 31.7 percent of the buildings mentioned were blighted. Mr. Gress' concern was that there weren't enough areas considered blighted (only 7.7 percent) to move forward with an urban renewal plan. He wanted to understand how they came up with the 51 percent.

. Ms. Martini responded that there are a lot of factors that go into determining a blighted area. Suggested consulting the Appendix.

. Mr. Schiff responded that they will have to do a better job to explain this.

Mr. Mole stated that he was satisfied with the blight study and what NYS required. He stated that he understood, but didn't know if the Board was okay with it.

Mr. Gress talked about his making a comparison to the previous blight study and couldn't see enough blighted areas indicated.

He also voiced a concern that if there isn't enough blight to meet the criteria for the urban renewal, the Village Board could be liable if taking over properties.

Mr. Gress talked about building heights and stated that many people in the Village were okay with a higher structure, and he was okay with higher structures provided there was parking underneath. He added that five stories on Main Street would be acceptable, in the DOT area, also.

Mr. Gress reminded the Committee that the Village still needed to provide adequate parking for commuters. He didn't believe that there could be parking by the museum for them (too far). Wasn't in favor of shared parking in structures or parking garage, but thought parking near the train station necessary. He reminded the Committee that in the past Metro North talked of putting a parking structure on the other side of the railroad tracks and to recreate the paper road from Carmel Avenue so as not to cross the tracks. Also, perhaps develop the area behind the train station.



Mr. Hansen stated that commuter parking is underutilized today. He said that parking structures being talked about should be multi-use structures for commuters and visitors. He referred to a Tectonics rendering of parking behind Bob's Diner.

Mr. Dumont commented that as buildings get higher, the density gets greater and ingress to and egress from the Village needs to be considered. He continued to say that even today when the trains arrive there is congestion with regular traffic and commuters getting into and out of the Village near the train station. If the residential areas remain, there will be congestion, and the quality of life goes down.

Mr. Lepler commented about considering alternative means of transportation getting into and out of the Village, and that this would alleviate the congestion issue. Also, consider some form of transportation, e.g., a shuttle, for those with physical disabilities.

Mr. Mole recommended that Ms. Martini obtain the parking report from Mr. Czajka.

Mr. Ruchala talked about the area behind Bob's Diner, still intent for LDC.  
. Mr. Hansen stated that the Village will take ownership, and that Mr. Mole will make recommendations.

Mr. Gaspar stated that he'd like to see names associated with the various parcels of properties throughout the Village so one knows with whom one is dealing. Mr. Hansen said that he would try to obtain this information. Ms. Martini would get the information from the Putnam County IT/GIS Department's website.

Mr. Gress asked Ms. Martini again about the blight study. He said that there were no quantitative numbers included for the blighted area.  
. Ms. Martini stated that NYS doesn't require numbers.  
. Mr. Schiff stated that once a specific area is identified, more specific information can be obtained and presented at the November meeting.

Mr. Gress cited percentages for the following blighted areas and asked if these numbers changed with the corrections that needed to be incorporated.

Fair/poor areas: 3.3%

Poor areas: 4.4%

. Mr. Schiff responded that this was not an exact definition and that there is judgment that comes into play; some factors are not quantifiable.

Mr. Gress asked about any health or safety or hazardous buildings.

. Ms. Martini responded that they didn't go into buildings.

. Mr. Schiff mentioned that the Village needs to consider "blind justice" when dealing with property owners.

Ms. Piccini asked VHB if there was anything else they needed from the Committee. Mr. Schiff responded, No. They enjoyed reading the minutes from prior meetings.

Mr. Mole asked if any further information or direction needed on uses or height. Mr. Schiff responded, not until we get to specifics further down in the discussion.

Mr. Gress reminded the Committee that he was not in favor of converting the B1 and B3 zones to residential (Preferred that it was all B1). Mr. Gress then posed the scenario that if the area is considered B1 and there are residential homes there, is there anything that says that those residential homes have to be removed. The response was, No. And if someone later comes in and wants to remove a home and put in a structure that would be more commercial, they have that option. The response was, Yes.

Mr. Schiff stated that B3 is now all residential. He asked if the Committee wants to preserve it as residential, then zone it as residential. He also stated that if it converted to commercial over time, a zoning policy decision would have to be made.

. Ms. Piccini responded that this is something the Committee would have to decide.

Mr. Gaspar stated that he wanted to retract his earlier statement of finding out who owns which pieces of property throughout the Village as this might interfere with “blind justice”.

. Ms. Martini stated that one can find out information on properties through the section/block/lot numbers registered with the Village.

Mr. Gaspar asked about buildings that are designated as historic on the state registers and if these are part of the overlays.

. Ms. Martini stated that they listed them, and the Village will have to decide on the overlay.

Ms. Barosa stated that there are still issues with town houses and that more information is needed about town house zoning.

. Mr. Schiff responded that this recommendation to follow.

. Ms. Piccini repeated that this will be in the recommendation to be submitted for the next session.

Mr. Lepler asked about addressing the height issue and definition.

. Mr. Schiff responded that they would add information on heights.

Ms. Piccini reminded the Committee that the next meeting is November 12, 2014.

Mr. Gaspar made a motion to close the meeting. This was seconded by Mr. Lepler and passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.