

TOWN OF MIDDLEFIELD SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING (held via Zoom)
Friday January 8, 2020
10:30am via Zoom

PRESENT: Chair Sydney Waller, Andy Baugnet, Marion Karl, Roy Kortick, Johnnie Nemece, Bill Ralston, and Abby Rodd

Also: Eric Scrivener Assistant Director, Otsego Planning Department and Shane Digan Planner, Otsego Planning Department,
Neal Newman, Middlefield ZEO

This special meeting with the Otsego County Planning Department officials was called by Middlefield Planning Board members to discuss updating the Master (aka Comprehensive) Plan. The current plan was affirmed, updated, and adopted by the town board June 14, 2011 (pursuant to NYS Town Law Section 272-a), and states "the Town of Middlefield will review, and update as needed, this Master Plan every five years to ensure it remains relevant to the residents and current."

The following considerations were presented by Otsego County Planning Department staff:

1. Generally comprehensive plans take anywhere from 1-2 years to complete depending upon who does the work. An updated zoning law is based on the updated comprehensive plan. This work can be performed by professional consultants, college interns pursuing planning degrees from such institutions as SUNY Binghamton, or anyone interested in doing the work. Having the planning board undertake this task would take the longest amount of time. Several comprehensive plans have been updated by local municipalities and the planning board members were encouraged to look at them (Town of Milford, Maryland, Village and Town of Richfield Springs, City of Oneonta).
2. Goals and strategies need to be identified and sensitive issues should be addressed. The plan needs to reflect the concerns of the Town of Middlefield. Planning Board members, interns or others recommended or hired by Town Board have the job of gathering information using several different methods in order to be certain they include the community in every way possible. Typical methods to gather information are community surveys (what issues does the community feel are important?), meetings for specific interest groups (farmers, business owners, the short term rental community), feedback at meetings, and workshops to give citizens the chance to steer the direction of the plan.
3. Consolidated Funding grant opportunities may be available to fund comprehensive plans from: the DEC's Climate Smart Communities program; programs by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), New York State Energy and Research Development Authority (NYSERDA), and Center for Agricultural Development & Entrepreneurship (CADE). Those would need to be evaluated in order to verify that the project would qualify.
4. Items that were brought up that might be of interest to residents include pesticide use on farms and regulations involving their use, broadband internet access, and enrolling in the Climate

Smart Communities program. Shane Digan responded that these are good examples of how surveys or meetings for specific interest groups will help to identify interests and concerns of the community. Responses to such queries would then drive the direction of the plan.

Other considerations and recommendations noted are as follows:

How does the comprehensive plan benefit the town?

Does it provide clear guidance for land use laws?

Do we consider adding an agriculture preservation policy because we still have a healthy population of agriculture district enrollments?

Does the implementation section provide clear goals and objectives for the town to accomplish over targeted timelines?

Would future town and planning board members be able to use the plan and carry forth the work outlined in its implementation section?

Data such as mapping, applications, census information is available from Otsego County.

Soil & Water can help with soil mitigation plans for the banks of the Susquehanna River to enhance our shoreline protection plans.

Comprehensive plans need to reinforce zoning law, so the goals should be set accordingly.

Shane recommended we establish a steering committee or other dedicated team to work on the Plan, if not the full Town Board.

We might consider adding a separate Solar Law; the County Planning Department can provide a model law.

The County Planning Department can provide mapping applications such as Middlefield's connectivity (broadband and cellular) access areas and they can update their 2016 layers with Middlefield's latest PDDS.

The Planners noted that a budget for an intern would be very useful: \$1,000 for a 3-month summer intern; \$4,000 for a one-year internship.

They recommended we reach out to Town of Maryland to gather feedback on what went well for them, and what did not, to inform our own process.

The meeting ended at 11:30 pm with special thanks to Shane and Erik for their time.

Andrew Baugnet Secretary