

Town of Washington Master Plan Committee

September 27, 2007

The Town of Washington Master Plan Update Committee held its first workshop meeting on Thursday, September 27, 2007, at the Town Hall, 10 Reservoir Drive, Millbrook, New York. Co-Chairman, Dr. Thomas Beaumont opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Master Plan Committee members present: Dr. Thomas Beaumont, Co-Chairman, Donald Hanson, Co-Chairman, James Shequine, Frank Genova, Robert Audia, Town Board Liason, Daniel Weller, Timothy Marshall, Gerry Baker, Karen Mosca, Maureen King, Jesse Bontecou, and David Strayer and Neil Wilson, Planning Consultant.

Co-Chairman Beaumont stated that this meeting is a workshop meeting and asked committee members to introduce themselves to the public. He thanked everyone who answered the call for volunteers and said he had only one person who turned down serving on the committee, who is heavily involved with the school. Both Co-Chairman Beaumont and Hanson appreciate the effort made by everyone. A copy of the Agenda was distributed to the committee.

Co-Chairman Beaumont and committee member James Shequine met with John Dyson who had a lot of involvement with the 1987 comprehensive plan. There will be a new comprehensive plan but it will be an update from the old plan. Co-Chairman Beaumont also met with Dr. Schlesinger, President, Institute of Ecosystem Studies, who has kindly agreed to provide the committee with any professional/scientific input needed. Also, committee member Strayer, scientist, is present this evening.

Funding for this process can be a costly operation. The Town is looking into private funding, possibly grant monies are available.

In his introduction, co-chairman Beaumont gave recognition to the memory and honor of former planning board chairperson, Michele West, who was very dedicated; her sudden demise was in February, 2007. She would be very pleased tonight to see everyone here, at the upstart of the comprehensive master plan update. Michele talked about and worked diligently to get the comprehensive plan to this point and should be recognized for this effort.

The process of the master plan is a critical element that regulates the future and growth of the Town. The current master plan is about twenty years old. The community has changed over this time. On recommendation of the planning board, the Town Board, approved the update process. The new comprehensive plan will update the old one and will result in a new plan. It is the intent to coordinate with the Village of Millbrook, at some point in the future, a questionnaire will be sent out that will include the Village of Millbrook as well as the town. Once the master plan has been completed, the results will be submitted to the Town Board for public hearings and consideration for the adoption of the updates. This committee was established by the Town

Board and will operate as a independent group for the purpose of accessing and making recommendations to the town with respect to amending the 1987 Master Plan. It is a public committee, its work is intended to be carried out in public, meaning, advertisements to allow members of the public an opportunity to attend the meetings. There will be incremental public hearings. There is not going to be a huge document which everyone is expected to digest. The public hearings will be held on various aspects of the plan update, which will keep the process simple.

Co-Chairman, Donald Hanson addressed committee members and spoke to the Master Plan Update as being exciting and challenging. Notice of tonight's committee meeting was posted in various locations throughout the Village of Millbrook, and a notice was published in the Millbrook Round Table and Poughkeepsie Journal. An e-mail notification was sent out today, a little late, this was an oversight, but will be timely in the future. Co-Chairman Hanson stated that these meetings are workshops open to the public, are not public hearings, which means, that at most, the public will not have the opportunity to verbally comment. However, if the public has a particular issue that they would like to be brought to the committees attention, this can be done in writing and submitted to the committee which will be taken up at the next general meeting for discussion.

The Master Plan Update will take approximately two to three years to complete. Most importantly, is the chairmanships of the sub-committees, who will delegate to the volunteers that are to be on the sub-committees. A list of persons who have submitted their names is available, is not limited to just those persons, but is a good start, and is to be used. Co-chairman Hanson emphasized that the resources available are unlimited, Institute of Ecosystem Studies, the Internet, access to the computer GIS system, acetate map overlays of aquifers, steep slopes, build-outs, etc. and more importantly consultant Wilson. This Master Plan Update will take everyone working together.

Town Planning Consultant, Neil Wilson introduced himself and related that a small group of persons, Donald Hanson, Tom Beaumont, James Shequine, and Frank Genova, have been working over the past two weeks to try to pull together an outline of the organization for this committee. Consultant Wilson distributed Master Plan Update Committee binders and referred to the Agenda for the Master Plan Update Committee, September 27th meeting which identifies what will be talked about tonight. The contents of the binder that has been provided is basically the shell of an outline of the committee structure. The twelve persons in attendance are the Update Master Plan Committee. Intended are to have break-out sub committees dealing with specific tasks.

Reading through the 1987 Master Plan, there are various sections dealing with an inventory of what the Town of Washington is; the housing, demographics, economics, everything that makes up this community, both manmade and natural environment.

Consultant Wilson asked committee members to view the Outline of Committee Tasks and Function, issued September 27, 2007, bottom of page 2 B, Charge to the Master Plan Update

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Committee and said Section I provides a broad outline and extrapolate from the policies of

the 1987 Master Plan, to be able to go back, refresh memory, as one is working through the various tasks that are volunteered for or be assigned. The bottom of page 2, Section I B, Charge to Master Plan Update Committee should be reviewed because it reflects ideas that were presented by the planning board to the Town Board that formed the basis for the Town Board's decision to go ahead and update the Master Plan which were very broad outlines of analysis of land development patterns since 1989, including changes in development densities. Updating the Natural Resources section to better describe water quality issues based on new mapping technologies, identification of a build-out analysis for the Town which is now in place, identification for the protection for sensitive aquifer areas, steep slopes areas, and also consideration for the need of updating the zoning relative to our two hamlets.

Section II, bottom of page 4, starts the outline of the sub-committee's process. Co-chairman Hanson has indicated that the entire update process is expected to take from one to two years; depending upon how quickly the committee and sub-committees do their work and reach consensus at the end of the process. At the very bottom of page 4, page 5, are the initial Sub-Committee assignments: Population and Economic Sub-Committee, Housing Sub-Committee, Transportation Sub-Committee, Municipal and Cultural Resources Sub-Committee, Natural Resources Sub-Committee, Land Use Sub-Committee. Phase I, is nothing more than collection of data, not trying to determine at this particular stage whether the existing land use policies should be changed. All that is going to be done in Phase I is data collection. That is necessary because looking at the 1987 Master Plan, what is woven throughout the Master Plan is data about what this community is. There have been changes in land use, changes in economics, and demographic profiles of this community in the last twenty years. All of this needs to be updated as part of the process for getting to the very end where we start to analyze and come up with new policies, modification of the existing policies, or rejection of the existing policies.

The work of the Sub-Committees will involve a fair amount of time, simply identifying the data that needs to be collected, and where it is to be collected. As co-chairman Hanson has indicated, there are resources today that were not available in 1986-87 when the current Master Plan was being put together. The Institute of Ecosystem Studies, the Internet, the County, State and Clearing Houses, are good sources of information. There is also a mapping capability through GIS, colored maps that have actually been put together that are recent products. (reference was made to the current zoning districts map posted in the meeting room). These are available for the sub-committees to use in their data collection. It will be up to the individual sub-committees to eventually go through and create a work plan.

Consultant Wilson next gave a review of the outline, referred to page 5 as one of the key components of a Master Plan is a Community Values Survey, where a survey is sent out to residents of the town and village asking their opinion on the quality of life issues relative to this community. The survey asks residents opinions, such as, are you satisfied with the direction that the town is headed with respect to the way the policies, decisions, are being followed. A number of communities actually rush and do the Community Values Survey first, this, in consultant Wilson's opinion is a mistake. In order to be able to formulate a decent survey, is to do the data

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collection first, to get a better understanding of what this community is and the changes that have occurred since 1987. The resulting survey form itself will be that much better. The Community

Values Survey will be done after the data collection phase. There will also be discussions about updating the land use policies, as well as the land use inventory map for the Town.

In Phase III, this committee will actually be holding public hearings, as co-chairman Beaumont has indicated; the committee is going to try and manage the process so that the document will be dealt with in sections. The committee will be looking for input on individual sections, pieces of the document, taking that public input and finalizing the document. The document in its proposed final form is actually submitted to the Town Board who then takes it and considers whether they want to amend the document. The Town Board will hold a series of public hearings, then, will hopefully lead into adoption of the document.

This is a broad overview of what is actually a process that involves a lot of minutiae and a lot of little individual meetings as well as the collective meeting of this committee. This Master Plan Update involves a real commitment of time. Consultant Wilson expressed his admiration for everyone who has said, “yes” to co-chairman Beaumont’s request for assistance. The Master Plan Update will take time but as co-chairman Hanson has indicated is also a very exciting and rewarding experience.

Consultant Wilson next referred to the remainder of the Outline of Committee Tasks and Function, pages 5 through the top of page 9; in the middle of page 5 he has stripped out from the current Master Plan the land use policies that have guided the development of the current zoning in subdivision law. This information begins on page 5 and ends on the top of page 9. This is part of the homework that the committee needs to do. On page 9, is listed the work of the sub-committees. Page 9, C)1) Land Use-Changes and Current Status has been given the flavor for what exactly this involves: a) this section would focus on the changes in land uses that have occurred over the past 20 years. The data collected is expected to be based largely on aerial photo interpretation, assessment records, and Planning Board records. 4) a) Housing-changes and Current Status- are profiles and persons who live in those houses hasn’t probably changed in the last 20 years. There is a lot of data that is available, the 2000 Census data, and the U.S. Bureau of Censes provides annual updates of the 2000 Census data; these are valuable tools. A good deal of this information is also on-line; multiple listing service, assessment, and data from County and State resources. This is a broad outline/framework for the sub-committees to consider as part of their formation as they develop their individual work plans.

Consultant Wilson expressed that one of the reasons he has provided the committee with the Master Plan Update binder is to keep everything together.

The next tab section is blank, it is consultant Wilson’s hope that everyone will take a copy of the current Master Plan and places it into this section.

The next section of the Outline of Committee Tasks and Function, page 63, holds a copy of Section 272-a. of the New York State Town Law; this is the section of the State Statute that

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authorizes towns to prepare the town comprehensive plan, explains what a town comprehensive plan is supposed to be, what the work of the Master Plan Committee is supposed to be. Most importantly, the reason for the town comprehensive plan, is that the zoning regulations have to

be consistent with the town plan. One of the things that does occur over time in the update of the Master Plan, is to make sure that the zoning regulations coincide with the current plan. The Town has made changes in the zoning code in the last twenty years; this is one of the questions that will need to be answered after the updates have been done. Once the updates have been done, the Town Board will have to consider how to address needed changes in the zoning law and the subdivision regulations to make it consistent with the new Master Plan.

The tab section, Creating the Community You Want: Municipal Options for Land Use Control, James A. Coon Local Government Technical Series, was taken from the New York State, Department of State Web Site, that is an introduction that explains exactly what a Comprehensive Plan is. This is intended to provide the committee with a broad outline of what the Comprehensive Plan is, zoning techniques, this is something for the committee to read.

Consultant Wilson said that the purpose of the binder is to allow the committee to keep notes, in an organized manner.

On the Agenda C)1) is the sub-committee organization/structure, what the sub-committees would be. In addition, each sub-committee would have its own chair, and, hopefully volunteers to work with the Committee. Consultant Wilson said that he is talking about volunteers from this Committee. If there is a transportation sub-committee, with a chair, one or more individuals may be interested in participating with that transportation sub-committee. Looked for is as much support and participation as possible in all of the sub-committees. Consultant Wilson referred to actual committee assignments and said this may be deferred to another meeting because all of this material is new and needs to be digested, there is also homework to be done. The Committee chair and members of the Committee are also free to draw upon the resources of individuals in this community, i.e., if there is a person with a particular expertise in ground water or transportation; there is nothing to prevent the Committee from reaching out to that person and requesting assistance in developing their data collection and other things that the sub-committee will be asked to do. The framework of the 1987 Master Plan Committee was that they “reached out”, there was a broad participation in the community, persons who were not necessarily formally designated as committee members by the Town Board, but the committee was able to reach out and call upon the assets, resources, of the people in the community. Consultant Wilson expressed that he sees no reason why it shouldn’t work this time around. If the sub-committee is running into a snag, and doesn’t know where to go, he has plenty of ideas on that, he does this for a living. There is a draft list that has been worked on by James Shequine, Donald Hanson, Frank Genova, and Tom Beaumont of individuals who may, or may not, be available. There are resources to be used and are available to help the sub-committees.

The role of the Town Planning Consultant with regard to the overall committee is to help guide discussions, to prepare the document, to prepare drafts for committee review, to make corrections to the drafts in their review, also, to help each of the sub-committees do their work.

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When the sub-committees have their breakout sessions, which will probably be within the next couple of months, consultant Wilson said that he plans on attending all of the sub-committee meetings as well. Part of consultant Wilson’s function is to help guide the overall

process. For this committee, even though not necessarily a volunteer, or are formally assigned to a sub-committee, there is nothing to prevent attending a meeting of that sub-committee, participating, or listening. It is not the intent to simply break the committee out into different departments and not talk to each other, there is supposed to be a lot of interaction. Consultant Wilson expressed that his role here is as the resource, and will be providing the committee with all of his contact information. Consultant Wilson emphasized to telephone him with questions. Co-chairman Hanson referred to the Outline of Committee Tasks and Function, page 9, containing the breakout of the various sub-committee categories. Consultant Wilson expressed that possibly the committee may choose to break them out into sub-sub-categories. Committee member Shequine expressed that there also may be additional subjects that need to be covered, i.e., disaster preparedness.

Consultant Wilson related that the vision is for everyone to understand what the current 1987 Master Plan says, and what the policies are. For the next meeting there may be a question and answer type session. Looking at the individual land use policies, some, in today's environment, do not make a lot of sense, so there may be questions why they were put in there at that particular point in time. Everyone needs to be on the same page on what these policies are; it will help sharpen and focus the data collection portion of the committee's work on Phase I. Reading the 1987 Master Plan and materials that have been provided this evening, will help focus the tension on the various topics that need to be covered, housing, demographics, population, natural resources.

Co-chairman Beaumont next addressed the committee with the remark that this Master Plan Update will be done openly. There is concern of the community being overdeveloped, losing control of development. Taking into account everything that consultant Wilson has said, is to

try to protect the Town, environmentally, because if you try to decrease the zoning density, there is already 75-80% of the Town that is zoned five or ten acres, which could easily run into legal challenges. The thrust is to protect our natural resources, ridge lines, slopes, aquifers, There is an advantage to having gravel roads because they do not take the same traffic volume as paved roads which makes it a plus for the Town. There are approximately thirty-one or thirty-two miles of gravel roads in the Town. The committee will embark on a search of what resources we have, then what to do about it. Co-chairman Beaumont expressed that he wishes everyone to understand that a) the committee is looking for help b) there is nothing secretive in this update c) and believes that everyone wants to protect the community and keep it as is, and to control growth.

Co-chairman Hanson remarked that this is the first committee meeting, some persons do not know one another, the information given this evening may seem overwhelming; this is not the intent. If one feels overwhelmed, they should know that there is plenty of help.

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Co-chairman Beaumont spoke to the request of a proposed planning board Moratorium to the Town Board, creating a Moratorium that would affect subdivisions that are more than four (4) parcels.

Consultant Wilson remarked about the land use policies, guiding policies that remain current, that are still relevant and will perhaps be questioned on the purpose of these committees. One of the challenges of this town, and a number of suburban towns throughout New York State, is the desire to preserve open space, agriculture, and more importantly, the quality of life that makes this community a desirable place to live. There are a lot of development pressures, a mounting body of case law that is pushing towns to provide for a range of housing opportunities. The question becomes, how does the town balance that. In the 1987 Master Plan, there are some generalizations regarding the background data, some conclusions that would not be supported in today's environment as the basis for continuing with the ten and five acre minimum zoning that dominates in this town. Consultant Wilson is not suggesting that the zoning be changed, he is suggesting that the background and supporting data needs to be enhanced and improved as support for continuation of the land use policies and enhanced in addition to those land use policies as may deem appropriate. The analytical tools today regarding i.e. gravel roads, efforts have been made over the last twenty years in trying to quantify; the next logical step would be the care and capacity of gravel roads. In the care and capacity of a gravel road, once you are able to quantify, the next logical step would be to be able to say we are able to have an x number of vehicles on the road during the day, and having a natural limitation on the number of homes that could be served by that gravel road. Without water, we do not have a quality of life, we don't have a community, in particular, there is only so much ground water. It is critical today, to try to establish a better handle on what our actual water availability is. The wealth of data that we have today, was not available in the current Master Plan that was put together twenty years ago. This committee will try to build a better foundation for the policies that are still relevant, and for any additional policies that are appropriate to include in the update.

Co-chairman Beaumont stated that he has kept the letters from persons requesting to be placed on the committee. If there are additional persons needed on the sub-committees, those persons would be considered.

Committee member Frank Genova, spoke to the assignment process and asked consultant Wilson for his input. Consultant Wilson said that he wants to do this in a way that everyone feels comfortable in participating. What is being looked for are volunteers, not to have everyone pile into one particular committee as opposed to another. Consultant Wilson said he recommends that committee members read the material on the 1987 Master Plan, rather than making committee assignments, reconvene for another meeting, have a discussion about the Master Plan, about the observations persons may have of the Master Plan, then move into making the sub-committee assignments. Consultant Wilson referred to the Outline of Committee Tasks and Function, page 4, paragraph A) a listing of the Sub-Committee assignments. Committee member Shequine indicated that within any one of those committees there may be five or six smaller committees for specific areas. He made a list of what also might have to be looked at within these and came up with thirty, without any problem. This could breakdown to a fairly

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broad organization of smaller committees that work in the aspect of a larger one. Consultant Wilson remarked that the sub-committees have been laid out that simply follows the way that the current Master Plan is broken down. There may be an entirely different idea for breaking out the sections, the sub-committees are only recommendations. It is ultimately up to the committee

how to form the sub-committee, and what is wanted to be done. Once the sub-committees have been formed, perhaps at the next meeting, or following meeting, the sub-committees will need to set up their own individual times to meet. Task number one is to develop a work plan, and how to attack the task. Consultant Wilson and other committee members will be available to assist in that task. It should not be a daunting task. There are computers available today, that were not available for the current Master Plan.

The homework assignment for the committee, as recommended by consultant Wilson, is to read, or re-read the 1987 Master Plan and other materials that have been provided, and think about the sub-committee breakouts, Population and Economic, Housing, Transportation, Municipal and Cultural Resources, Natural Resources, and Land Use.

Co-chairman Beaumont spoke to getting information from committee volunteers on what sub-committee they want to serve during the next week or two. Co-chairman Beaumont recommended to review the various sub-committees and possibly make a choice, which might make it a little easier to make the assignments for the next meeting. Co-chairman Hanson suggested that committee members place their name in whatever sub-committee they want to serve and put that information in the Master Plan Committee box located in the Town Clerk's Office.

Committee member Maureen King, referred to the Outline of Committee Tasks and Function, page 4, Population and Economic Sub-Committee, and expressed that these are two separate committees. Emergency response should be an individual sub-committee.

Committee member Jerry Baker, recommended listing two or three choices, so when putting them together, one can say we have five persons on one sub-committee, persons can then make a second choice.

Co-chairman Beaumont expressed that he would appreciate any input from the public, to write down their concerns, suggestions, which will be reviewed and seriously considered, and said this is an important undertaking that deals with the future of this community which all of us love.

Committee member David Strayer questioned if the materials that the committee receives will be available to the public at some point, and where placed? Co-chairman Beaumont said that the materials will be available from the Town Clerk. Mr. Strayer referred to the materials that were distributed tonight. Consultant Wilson remarked that as the committee goes through the process, there will be drafts of different documents, it would be very easy having many different versions, being handed to a friend, making a copy, etc. The Town Board has established a policy for release of public records. Everything that the committee is doing is a public record. Consultant Wilson said this is the reason secretary Caul has been given a binder, to keep materials in as the

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committee is doing its work, those drafts will be put into that binder, requests for a copy of the material gets submitted to the Town Clerk, who has given a copy from the binder. It is not information control, it is trying to keep things streamlined, how information gets out into the public. This process has been set up by the Town Board. Public hearings, notices, will be placed

in the library, and will be available with the Town Clerk. The Town Web Site is up and running; and will be explored about putting materials online, which makes it instantaneously available to everyone. Mr. Strayer questioned if someone wanted to follow-up on other suggestions for other committee structures, etc., see what the tentative committee structure is, can they can get to this binder? Consultant Wilson responded affirmatively.

Committee member Shequine spoke to controversial matters, it is estimated that the amount of time that will be spent on this gathering of information is probably one and one-half years. There will not be anything in that timeframe that will be of a controversial matter, it is going to be about gathering information, and putting it in a form that the committee can work with. There is no contest over the information, it is a matter of getting the information, and putting it together into a useful form. There is no controversy that is going to happen for a year and one-half.

Committee member Frank Genova said it is his understanding that the assignment is to read the 1987 Master Plan, then base the data collection on that as a framework. Consultant Wilson remarked that the overview references generally to case law, as opposed to each case. The things that the Town Board had been advised by the planning board, was that the planning board had been challenged through the application process. As this process moves forward, if the committee has a particular question about planning, legal matters, the answers will be gotten. The initial thought for this organizational meeting was not to overwhelm, scare, with the volume of data that is potentially available. The committee should try to narrow and focus on the task at hand which is an update to the 1987 Master Plan. The first committee assignment is very straight forward, reading the 1987 Master Plan.

Co-chairman Beaumont addressed the committee, read conflicting dates of other committees and questioned if Thursdays were comfortable for everyone to meet? Maureen King expressed that there is a conflict of a monthly meeting, on the third Thursday of the month for her. It was determined that the next Master Plan Update Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 25th, 7:30 P.M. Since Thursday seems to be the most acceptable, consideration will be given to keeping future meeting dates on Thursday. The workshop meeting was adjourned at 8:36 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Nikki Caul, secretary