

Town of Jay Comprehensive Plan Special Board

December 16th, 2024

Present: Wally Walters (Chair), Adam DeSantis, Supervisor Matt Stanley, Robin Licari (Secretary), Matt Gillman, Tim Rowland, Christine Bush, Madelyn Savage (Youth Representative)

Via Go: Dr. Ann Ruzow Holland (Principal Consultant from AES), Scott Allen (Managing Consultant with AES), Melinda Beuf (Vice Chair), Councilor Olivia Dwyer

Advanced Material: Agenda, Draft Minutes of Meeting #13 (18 Nov 2024), Draft Stakeholder Interview List (Updated 16 Dec 2024), Way Ahead for Comprehensive Plan Development in 2025 (10 Dec 2024)

Other references: Jay Comp Plan Community Survey Raw Results Dec 2024, Jay CPSB Community Survey Results Report Draft 1, Jay CPSB Oct 2024 Open House Report Draft 1, AAPOA presentation inputs 13 Oct 2024, ARVBA presentation inputs 30 May 2024, Initial thoughts on Focal Topics and Alternative Visions for Discussion (updated 16 Aug 2024)

Meeting called to order at 6:30 PM

Tim Roland makes a motion to approve November 18, 2024 meeting minutes and seconded by Adam Desantis. All in favor and none opposed.

Welcome new member Christine Bush and introductions. Ms. Bush is a Jay resident and the Preservation Director for the Adirondack Architectural Heritage, and her specialty is Historic Preservation.

Olivia Dwyer expresses her opinion that the Core Working Group, "Parks and Open Spaces and Social Services" is too large for a Working Group and should be divided into two groups, "Parks and Open Spaces" and another Working Group for "Social Services". Olivia states her professional background gives her experience regarding "Parks and Open Spaces" but she lacks experience to lead a Core Working Group regarding Social Services and the needs for Social Services in the Town.

Supervisor Stanley states that he has been in contact with Angie Allen, Commissioner of Essex County Social Services. Ms. Allen has given him the names of people with a professional background in Social Services with experience to lead this Core Working Group. He will contact these people and follow up. He would like to have this person live in the Town of Jay. He also states that he would like to have contact with the Office of the Aging regarding boosting Senior enrollment in the meal program and activities at the Senior Center.

Wally Walters wants to include other populations besides just Seniors. Wally would like this Working Group of Social Services to become a permanent committee to continue after the development of the Comprehensive Plan.

Olivia would like this group to include Head Start and Child Care.

Survey Results:

Wally Walters states that the extension of time to complete the survey was successful and they were able to obtain another 80 surveys. Current number of surveys received is 434 surveys which is about 17% of the Town population. Some surprising data was that three quarters of the respondents were happy with their lives in the town. Affordable housing is a concern. STRs were a frequent topic. The revitalization of Main Street was also identified as an issue.

Stakeholder Interviews:

Dr. Ruzow Holland intends to interview most of the Stakeholders online and recommends Stakeholder Groups contain 6 to 8 people.

CPSB has received a multitude of material and data to define and identify agenda and issues. The next step is to try to understand more closely some of the higher profile issues and to identify the range of alternatives available to the Town.

Olivia Dwyer reports that there were fewer survey responses from Upper Jay, the Hamlet and Jay and many surveys (40%) were from people living in The Acres. Olivia encourages reaching out to other areas in the Town to make sure that their issues are also being addressed.

Wally Walters suggests using the Jay Community News this week to reach out to people from across the Town. He states that so far, the survey audience is wide and across a lot of domains, but the audience is not deep.

Wally Walters states that the individuals to participate in the Stakeholder Interviews should receive the questions in advance so the individual can be prepared for the interview.

Dr. Ruzow Holland states that the process would be for Supervisor Stanley and Mr. Walters to write a letter of introduction to the Stakeholders and then she would contact the Stakeholder to set up the interview. Dr. Ruzow Holland would follow up with an email that would include the questions that will be asked. She states that Stakeholders that will be interviewed as a group need to know that they will be participating in a group experience. Although the Stakeholder's list is not completed, she recommends that a priority list be sent to her, and she will start setting up interviews with the people at the top of the list.

Supervisor Stanley states that the current Stakeholder list includes 20 people who do not live in the Town of Jay. He wants interview data to be from the people in the Town of Jay regarding what their issues are versus interview data from people outside the Town regarding what they think is in the best interest of the Town,

Dr. Ruzow Holland states that we will lose something if we focus on obtaining information from the experts versus people living in the Town of Jay. She suggests that we do not do Stakeholder interviews with experts that we will already include otherwise such as selected town employees. She says talking to residents or businesses with a stake in the community should be the priority.

Wally Walters and Supervisor Stanley state they believe it is very important to interview the Town Counselors. Wally Walters states that Dr. Ruzow Holland, Supervisor Stanley and he have agreed on some Common Questions. Dr. Ruzow Holland suggests that Open ended comments be reframed into Questions in order to identify more concrete issues.

Wally Walters states that the CPSB has received from AES NE a 42 page report based on the survey narrative data. He would like to start sending survey results out to the community but would need a document that is a more concise summary of the survey results. Scott Allen agrees to write a short article to give to the CPSB for publication.

WEIGHING RESULTS:

Wally Walters states that the challenge of the CPSB is trying to extract from the input what topics should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. If the Town can't do anything about an identified problem, it is probably best that this issue not be a focus of the CPSB. Dr. Ruzow Holland states that some of these issues may be addressed by overlapping with other agencies.

Supervisor Stanley states that publishing some of the frequent topics in the Town may bring out responses from both sides of the issue. Supervisor Stanley reports that there is a lot of interest in the Town regarding the development of this Comprehensive Plan and he would like some results of the surveys to be released to keep residents informed of the progress of the CPSB and to keep them interested in the process, even before the final results are available.

Supervisor Stanley states that when AES finds only one side of an issue emphasized that they notify the CPSB in order to find alternative voices on this issue. Dr. Ruzow Holland states it is the obligation of CPSB to evaluate contentious issues and make sure both sides of the issue are represented by members of the community.

Matt Gillman suggests breaking down the core issues that need to be addressed into the previously assigned working groups of Economics, Open Spaces, Climate Change/Infrastructure and Planning. Once the CPSB identifies an issue, it could be further studied within these assigned groups.

Way Ahead for Comprehensive Plan Development in 2025

Wally Walters would like to have a Visionary workshop around the end of April 2025 to develop competing visions which take into account the range of alternatives for the various focal topics. He would like to have information sessions and another Open House following the development of visions. Dr. Ruzow Holland suggests four listening sessions with each listening session being 2 hours. Olivia recommends having events in alternative places around Town and suggests listening sessions at the public libraries and JEMS. Wally would like to obtain a decision among the competing visions of the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Jay by the Town Board in August 2025 to enable drafting the plan update itself through the winter season of 2025-2026.

Supervisor Stanley reports that the revitalization of Main Street is a frequent issue mentioned by the respondents within the Town. He notes that revitalization of Main Street would have to include two Towns and two Counties. Housing is also a frequent concern. He states that no solution exists to these issues independent of these two communities working together. The two Towns are currently working on their respective Comprehensive Plans and the emphasis on Main Street within their Comprehensive Plans can be used as leverage for funding. Supervisor

Stanley wants Au Sable Forks to become regarded as the Northern Entrance to the Adirondacks. Dr. Ruzow Holland suggests collaborating with other Towns regarding the revitalization of Main Street. Towns working together adds value to the State. She proposes broader projects and not thinking small.

CPSB members discussed not steering the Listening sessions and Open House in a direction. Adam DeSantis discusses the need to keep a blank slate versus over focusing on what has worked before. Adam requests a time frame for finishing the Stakeholder interviews. Dr. Ruzow Holland states she will need a couple of months. She needs to consider the Stakeholders' schedule especially with there are groups of 6 to 8. She is ready to start interviews as soon as Supervisor Stanley can send the introductory letter. Dr. Ruzow Holland suggests using AI to organize the 5,000 comments that has been received. She suggests AI organize the open-ended questions and spell out the core issue areas.

Website

Collecting surveys has ended. CPSB needs to populate the website. He suggests the website include the minutes and updated survey results. It was recommended that the website be updated at least once a month. Supervisor Stanley suggests putting all this information on the Town Website. Open House information should also be included. Website address is planjay.com

Next meeting date: Not determined. Next meeting date will be done by email.

Motion to adjourn by Matt Gillman and seconded by Adam Desantis. All in favor and none opposed.

Respectfully submitted

Robin Licari

Secretary, Comprehensive Plan Special Board