

**MINUTES**

Committee Chairman Galvin called the meeting to order at 7:14 pm. In attendance were members: Pete Nelson, Frank Mendelson, Gil Raab, Nick Tipple, Al Wassenhove, Aaron Groom along with Town Attorney Ted Guterman of Guterman, Shallo & Alford PLLC, and Nan Stolzenburg of Community Planning & Environmental Associates. Absent from the meeting were members: Kyle Wilber, Jonathan Walters, Phil Trowbridge, Janice Fingar, Jim Beal, John Fishman, and Larry VanBrunt.

There was a brief discussion of the time required for the Committee to conduct reviews of the specific goals and strategies. It was observed that it is difficult to assign a specific date for completion of the Committee's purpose.

**PUBLIC INPUT**

There was no input from members of the Public.

**MINUTES**

A motion to approve the 03 September 2008 minutes, as presented by Ms Barrie, was made by Mr. Raab, seconded by Mr. Wassenhove and unanimously approved.

**CONTINUED REVIEW OF GOALS 12, 13, 14, 15, 1, 2 & 3 AND RESPECTIVE STRATEGIES**

Please see attached addendum for details. It was agreed that review of Goal 1 strategies, commencing with item 1-g shall continue at the November meeting. There was a unanimous decision to consolidate Goals 2 and 3. Copies of the 'updated' Goals 1, 2 and 3 will be sent to Committee members, in advance of next month's meeting.

Chairman Galvin suggested that the Committee should be able to complete its initial review of the various goals and strategies at the November meeting.

**NEXT MEETING**

As the country's General Election is being held on Tuesday, 04 November 2008, the Committee will meet on **Tuesday, 11 November**, beginning at seven o'clock. Members will be reminded/advised of this change.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

**ADDENDUM**

**Goal 12 Enhance the quality of life of Ghent residents through diverse and accessible recreational and cultural opportunities.**

Draft Strategies

a. Continue a Town-sponsored recreation committee whose role would include:

1. developing an inventory of existing recreational resources,
2. identifying future needs for existing and new facilities and programs
3. creating a long-range recreation strategic plan for Ghent,
4. working as an advocate for the Town in seeking grants to fund projects,
5. involving teens and senior citizens in the development of programs for those age groups,
6. coordinating and improving existing recreational programs,
7. coordinating with and communicating with surrounding towns to benefit all area residents.

**ok with changes – Committee approved list of items**

b. Identify locations that are feasible for public access to the creeks for fishing and recreation. Enhance creek access to those locations and work with willing landowners to acquire land via fee-simple purchases, easements, or landowner agreements for this purpose. Help landowners understand options, benefits and implications of providing public access on their lands. Provide information about the NY Recreation Use that addresses landowner liability, to Town of Ghent landowners. Encourage these private landowners to provide public access to creeks

**ok with changes**

c. During major subdivision or site plan review, the Planning Board should seek opportunities for creating public access points to the creeks and other open space areas, suitable for recreation in Town. For example, this may be able to be accomplished through conservation easements when a conservation subdivision takes place.

**ok**

d. Seek to link preserved open space lands with trails and greenways. The Planning Board should maintain a map and inventory of preserved lands in Town and work to find linkages between them over time.

**ok**

f. Town to work with area land trusts to obtain and manage easements or land purchases for creek and recreational access.

**ok with changes**

- g. Identify a suitable location and develop a community center for future recreational and cultural programs. Such public facilities should be concentrated in a town center, preferably in the hamlet of Ghent. Facilities and programs at the Ghent Community Center could be expanded or a new facility provided. Use the survey results from this Comprehensive Plan to identify program and facility needs.

**previously discussed in goal 4 - remove**

- h. Liaison with the school district to improve community use of school buildings that serve the Town of Ghent. Work to find ways to expand and build on programs using existing school district resources to benefit the broader community and coordinate activities.

Work together to explore opportunities to obtain NYS Department of Health physical activity promotion grants or technical assistance to support recreational efforts.

**ok**

- i. Enhance the language of the subdivision regulation to strengthen the current recreational land contribution requirement by granting the Ghent Planning Board the authority to require that park and recreational lands be established for major subdivisions in the Town or that payment be made in lieu of setting aside parkland.

**ok with changes**

- j. Establish a one-time per lot fee for new subdivisions. These recreational fees would go into a dedicated recreational programs Town fund.

**ok with changes**

- k. Work with hamlet landowners to develop fair mechanisms to ensure sidewalks in the Hamlet of Ghent are well maintained and expanded where none currently exist to allow for safe walking.

**previously discussed in goal 6.3 - remove**

- l. Establish a constructive dialogue with all-terrain vehicle and snowmobile enthusiasts in Ghent related to trails and their recreational needs. Include this effort as well as other public input into development of a trail network in Ghent.

**ok**

- m. Enhance the walking, biking, running and trail network in Ghent for all users. This would include programs and facilities to encourage shared roadways, enhanced road shoulders, roadside trails, and off-road trails for a variety of users. The recreation committee, suggested above, should include trail and pedestrian opportunities as a major need in the town recreation plan.

**previously discussed in goal 6 - remove**

- n. Continue to promote existing recreational facilities, services, and programming, especially the Community Day, Ghent Band, and other local attractions.

**previously discussed in goal 4 - remove**

- o. Promote nature-based recreational opportunities.  
**previously discussed – environmental education - remove**
  
- p. Consider establishing a community events board, newsletter or page on the website dedicated to informing residents about the various events, programs, and facilities available for recreation and cultural activities in Town.  
**previously discussed in goal 4 – remove**
  
- q. For all recreational and cultural facilities, evaluate and consider future parking needs, especially at the Water Street recreational field.  
**ok**
  
- r. Explore and seek additional funding sources for recreational facilities and programs.  
**previously discussed – combine with goal 12.a.4 - remove**
  
- s. Add recreation facilities as a category the Town should consider in its long-range planning.  
**ok with changes**
  
- t. Engage more youth in community pride and town activities. Establish a teen forum to discuss teen needs and programs that they can get involved in. Involve the Youth Commission in this effort.  
**previously discussed in goal 4.9 - ok**

**Goal 13 Encourage local government to remain responsive, fiscally responsible and forward thinking in its approach to meeting the needs of Ghent residents.**

**Draft Strategies**

- a. Where feasible, consolidate or share municipal services to limit duplication of services. Conduct a feasibility study with the Village of Chatham and surrounding towns to assess benefits of consolidation or sharing of services. Apply for a NYS Shared Municipal Services Incentive Grant to fund this work.  
**ok**
  
- b. Consider adoption of a Capital Improvement Plan to better plan for all capital projects in the Town. This would include land, equipment, facilities, and staff needs to accomplish all town functions.  
**remove**
  
- c. The Town Board should, on an annual basis, establish a Comprehensive Plan work plan that will guide implementation on an annual basis. This work plan should

include those items to accomplished that year. In addition, the Town Board should form a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee to oversee and initiate projects to implement this Comprehensive Plan. This Committee should operate under the direction of the Town Board and assist with implementing the annual priorities of this plan guided by the work plan established by the Town Board (see Action Plan).

**ok**

- d. Fully develop the Town of Ghent website so that all maps, plans, permit applications, notices, laws, and other municipal information is available via the internet.

**ok**

- e. Retain a grant writer, when appropriate, to assist the Town in attaining funding for programs and facilities recommended in this plan.

**ok with changes**

- f. Ensure that the Planning Board and ZBA use the maps created for this plan. Each Board should have a full set of the maps for their use during meetings. Consider purchasing these Boards a computer and install the GIS data and maps for ease of use during application review.

**ok**

- g. Update the tax parcel based GIS data in the Town on a regular basis so that information can be most useful by the Planning Board and ZBA as they review projects.

**remove**

- h. Evaluate this plan and make updates as needed every ten (10) years to keep it current.

**ok with changes**

- i. When plan is completed, work to develop a summary brochure and make it available at public locations, place on website, and/or mail to all households.

**ok with changes**

- j. Hold an annual meeting on concerns and use the newsletter to advertise and generate interest.

**previously discussed in Goal 4.6 – remove**

- k. Town Board can sponsor an annual or bi-annual “Town Meeting” to discuss issues, strengths, weaknesses, and ways to move forward together.

**previously discussed in Goal 4.6 - remove**

**Goal 14 Support Planning and Zoning laws, and other strategies, that address aging-in place issues.**

Draft Strategies

- a. Encourage new land uses oriented towards senior services such as health clinics, recreational facilities or seniors, and senior housing such as continuous/extended care complexes. Senior services should be close or within walking distance to other services.
- b. OTHER IDEAS HERE?  
Consider establishing a committee to investigate and implement programs and strategies to support quality health and human services for the elderly.

Committee members asked Ms Barrie to contact Committee member Jim Beal and request his input with this specific goal.

**Goal 15 Promote quality education by supporting the local school districts and working to provide enhanced non-traditional educational opportunities.**

Draft Strategies

- a. The Town has no direct involvement in providing public education, but can assist the school districts in planning to accommodate long-range facility needs based upon projected and actual population growth. The Town should ensure that all School Boards serving residents of the Town receives a copy of this Comprehensive Plan and understands the growth policies of Ghent.
- b. The Town should also encourage and support school districts as they can in efforts to maintain academic excellence and provide public outreach and lifelong learning programs.
- c. The Town's zoning should allow for alternative and private schools as a permitted use subject to a special use permit.

Committee member Frank Mendelson offered to review the language of Goal 15 Draft Strategies and circulate his suggestions to members, prior to next month's meeting.

## **Goal 1 Maintain and enhance the natural beauty and rural character of Ghent.**

### **Draft Strategies**

- a. Maintain the current RA-1 and RA-2 zoning districts, reflecting the renaming of the districts.  
**ok with changes**
- b. Maintain use of the existing conservation subdivision regulations.  
**ok**
- c. Enhance purpose statements of and review criteria used for both the special use permit and site plan review sections of zoning to more strongly reflect the rural character and environmental protection goals of Ghent. Since these are major goals of Ghent residents, the purpose statements should reflect that.  
**ok with changes**
- d. Include rural layout and design guidelines in subdivision regulations for minor subdivisions or those not being designed as a conservation subdivision. Although the current conservation subdivision process will work to maintain rural character for those subdivisions for which it applies, design of other smaller subdivisions to maintain rural character should remain a concern to the Planning Board as well. Basic rural design concepts include, but are not limited to keeping stone walls as they may exist, not placing new structures in the middle of former farm fields, carefully placing structures away from critical environmental features, reuse of old farm roads, and placement of structures so as not to interfere with adjacent agricultural or woodland operations. These standards can be used to reflect and promote traditional built forms and patterns of the Town. Where applicable, the Town should consider using the design guidelines outlined in the Building Form Guidelines, Hamlet Design, Rural Design Guidelines, and Rural Development Guidelines published by the New York Planning Federation.  
**ok with changes**
- e. Consider changing the name of the Suburban Residential district in the hamlet of Ghent (SR) to Hamlet Residential (HR) to reflect the nature of and desire for the hamlet area to remain a traditional neighborhood.  
**ok**
- f. Consider expanding the western SR district boundary, where environmentally feasible, to give Ghent room to grow its hamlet.  
**ok with changes**

**REVIEW OF GOAL 1 STRATEGIES ENDED HERE – OCTOBER 2008 MEETING**

## CONTINUE REVIEW OF GOAL 1 STRATEGIES AT NOVEMBER 208 MEETING

- g. Consider the following amendments to the Planned Residential District:
1. Allow PRD's to have mixed uses to accommodate some non-residential developments such as live/work complexes.
  2. Add language that encourages the developer, or authorizes the Planning Board to design the PRD as a traditional neighborhood (similar to a hamlet in scale, lot sizes, and uses).
  3. Increase open space requirements in PRD's from 25% to 50%.
  4. Add in language to the PRD process to ensure that new PRD's are consistent with rural character.
  5. Consider altering the approval process for PRD's. Current regulations require the Planning Board to review and approve the PRD application prior to it going to the Town Board for final approval. That process requires comprehensive review on the part of the Planning Board as well as significant investment on the part of the developer to provide site layouts for this review before there is approval to create a PRD by the Town Board. A more common approach is to have a general concept sketch and proposal that is reviewed and approved first by the Town Board with an advisory opinion from the Planning Board. After approval of the development concept (with or without conditions) by the Town Board, the project then goes for detailed site plan and subdivision review by the Planning Board. Since a PRD constitutes a zoning change, it is appropriate for the Town Board to approve or disapprove it first before significant investments are made.
- h. For the Village Business district, add hamlet style design standards for commercial structures into zoning requirements that will result in hamlet-style buildings and scale. Ghent currently does not have any specific standards or guidelines to ensure consistency with hamlet scale and design. To ensure scale is consistent with the hamlet, consider, among other concepts illustrated in the Hamlet Design Standards, setting a maximum square footage requirement for commercial structures in VB or consider requiring façade breaks for buildings that have a façade over 80 feet. Prohibit windowless walls along facades or visible sides.
- i. Enhance parking lot requirements more attention is given to parking lot location and design for commercial uses. Large parking lots should require landscaping and screening, and all should have lighting and landscaping standards. Further, lots should be placed to the side or rear of buildings to avoid large expanses of pavement in the front, especially in the VB district and along road frontages on Route 9H. Offer more flexibility in deciding how many parking spots are required for a

new use to avoid overbuilding parking lots. Work with each applicant to determine the necessary number of parking spaces they will need for that use.

- j. Consider amending zoning to reduce the size of allowable signs in all business districts (currently at 32 square feet). Sign sizes of 24 square feet are more appropriate to rural areas, and even smaller in the VB district. Consider reducing the dimension for façade-attached signs, especially in the VB district (currently allowed at 60 square feet). Reduce the allowable height of ground signs from 12 to 8 feet in the VB district. Add height standards for pole mounted signs and define ground, pole, façade, and other signs to distinguish them.
- k. Maintain existing commercial districts located along Route 9H to keep the “nodal” pattern of commercial districts. Minimize creation of any new ones. Existing districts have ample opportunities for commercial development. Avoid allowing Route 9H to develop into strip commercial areas.
- l. Consider reducing allowable height of lighting poles from 25 feet to 20 feet. Establish standards in zoning law to reduce or eliminate light pollution by requiring use of fully shielded light fixtures and limitation of lighting at property boundaries.
- m. Update subdivision regulations so that natural boundaries (streams, stone walls, forested edges, hedgerows, etc.) are used wherever possible to configure new lots.
- n. Amend zoning to establish density calculations in the RA 1 and RA 2 zoning districts based on a net acreage basis. Significant agricultural, open spaces and environmental resources exist within these districts. Use of a net acreage approach would allow density in these districts to be modified on a parcel by parcel basis to take into consideration environmental features that limit development potential. Currently density is calculated on a gross basis. For example, if you have a 100 acre lot in the RA 1 (5 acre) zone, then the lot is eligible for 20 lots. An example of a net density approach would be the same 100 acre parcel that has 20 acres of regulated wetlands on it. The density calculation would be 100 acres minus 20 acres of environmentally constrained lands results in 80 acres of buildable land. In the RA1 district, that parcel would be eligible for 16 lots.)
- o. Allow for controlled use of flag lots when they would be advantageous for maintaining open spaces, rural character, or environmental features that should be preserved. For each use added, ensure that adequate definitions are included in the zoning law.
- p. Establish anti-monotony standards for major subdivisions. Modern subdivisions can bring many changes to rural areas. Monotony in appearance and what is called the “monopoly-set house” are both situations that can erode rural character. Monotony is defined as a structure producing a lack of interest in detail or other design elements. Major subdivisions can be monotonous because the same limited numbers of house models are repeated over and over with inadequate differentiation. Monotony comes from not only repetition in design, but use of similar

roof trims, roof lines, front facing garages, lack of 360 degree architecture, shallow roof overhangs, and uniform building setback and yard sizes. Zoning and subdivision performance standards can be established for major subdivisions to address monotony and uniformity. Consider the following for major subdivisions:

- Variation of lot width and front setbacks
- Variation in building height
- Variation in roof styles
- Variation in building orientation
- Use of porches
- Use of side-loaded garages or recessed front-loaded garages instead of garages that face the street
- Street trees and landscaping

- r. Study the feasibility of use of wind power in Ghent. Add personal wind turbines as a new category in the use table and require site plan review and special use permits for approval. Initiate a study to determine potential locations suitable for commercial wind farms and establish a zoning overlay district to restrict such wind farms to those areas. Establish a local wind turbine local law that would cover but development standards, required safety measures, construction traffic, setbacks, noise easements, abatement, and wind measurement towers.
- s. Encourage higher density housing to locate in or near Hamlet areas, with the density of development decreasing outside of hamlets centers.
- t. Amend zoning and add in specific criteria to guide the design and development of multifamily uses.
- u. Consider removing professional offices and medical arts building as specially permitted uses in the RA1 and RA2 districts, or limit them with square footage. These uses in these rural residential districts may not be consistent with rural character and environmental protection if allowed anywhere within these districts.