

**TOWN OF GHENT
MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE**

01 MAY 2007

In attendance were John Fishman, Phil Trowbridge, Gil Raab, Nick Tipple, Al Wassenhove, Chairman Jim Galvin, Town Attorney Ted Guterman, and Don Meltz of Don Meltz Planning & GIS (DMP). Chairman Galvin opened the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

It was agreed to place the minutes of the Master Plan Committee meetings on the Town of Ghent web site, been made available through Community Planning & Environmental Association (CP&EA). It was also decided to include mention of the survey along with a rudimentary timeline of the Committee's activities. Mr. Galvin will co-ordinate with Don Meltz (DMP) and Nan Stolzenburg (CP&EA) regarding the web site.

Don Meltz of DMP requested data updating the 1994 inventory. Mr. Galvin will speak with committee member Walters regarding the overview of the 1994 inventory presented earlier in the year. As part of the inventory, the Town's budgets for this year, five, ten and fifteen years ago, will be forwarded to Ms Stolzenburg by Ms Barrie, with copies to Chairman Galvin.

It was asked if the Town is participating in the New York State Geographic Information System Co-operative Data Sharing Program (GIS). According to Town Attorney Guterman, an account has been set up and information was being forwarded to his office. He will supply Don Meltz and Town Engineer Ray Jurkowski with account access data.

Mr. Mendelson suggested that Columbia County Real Property be requested to supply demographics relating to second home owners and permanent residents.

Mr. Raab pointed out that available wages, combined with available housing will not allow young people to remain in the Town. Mr. Wassenhove said that removing lands from the tax rolls by ways of tax-exempt status will reduce monies available to the Town. There was a general discussion of water and sewer districts. Town Attorney Guterman suggested the Town needs property that is zoned 'smaller,' allowing lots of 1.0-acres or less. Additionally, there is a need for business activity. Mr. Wassenhove pointed out that Mr. Larry VanBrunt (Town of Ghent Council and Ghent Master Plan Committee) has repeatedly brought Hamlet of Ghent water supply problems to the attention of Town Board.

Mr. Galvin informed the Committee the Saturday, 28 April 2007 workshop, according to Ms Stolzenburg, was well-attended, when compared to other towns in Columbia County. Mr. Meltz said future workshops will take the form of focus groups addressing specific issues such as, but not limited to, agriculture, water supply and senior citizens.

Committee members reported on the major issues discussed at their tables at both the Tuesday, 03 April and the Saturday 28 April, 2007 workshops.

Mr. Tipple stated that people at his table discussed tax relief to owners of agricultural or vacant land which would in turn preserve and encourage open space in the Town.

Mr. Raab reported that those seated at his table believe the abilities of the Town and local government agencies to support even modest commercial and/or residential growth are limited. It was also noted that public lands are available for all to enjoy.

Mr. Guterman said the workshops provide for involvement of the public and provide information that can be funneled into surveys.

Mr. Galvin stated that people at his table were concerned with preserving the rural nature of the Town of Ghent. Issues such as the rail trail and historic properties were also discussed. Those present were not aware of the latest changes to the Town's zoning. Mr. Galvin offered a general observation of the workshops that people under the age of 50 were minimally represented.

Mr. Wassenhove reported on the subjects reviewed at his table, at the second workshop. People agreed the Ghent community can take care of its own; speeds on Town roadways need to be reduced, and enforced; there was no approval for a rail trail; and residents want to have improved communications, such as internet access and cable TV.

Mr. Fishman reported that at his 03 April 2007 workshop table, it was observed that the Town is virtually crime free; people do not want development in the West Ghent area of the Town of Ghent; and there are misconceptions between permanent residents and those with second homes in the Town.

Mr. Mendelson suggested that the Committee follow-up on the workshops with a newspaper article. The article could also encourage under-50s to participate in laying out the Town's future.

It was agreed that Mr. Meltz will compile and produce a first draft of the survey, which will include material drawn from the workshops. Mr. Meltz will supply Ms Barrie with the workshop information to be forwarded to Committee members.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held seven o'clock, Tuesday, 05 June 2007, at the Ghent Town Hall.

It was suggested that the Committee's meetings be listed in the meeting calendars of newspapers such as the Register-Star, The Independent and the Chatham Courier.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.