



March 8, 2012

CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS  
GAPS Committee  
Agenda

**6:00 PM**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**ROLL CALL**

**INTRODUCTION of MEMBERS**

**MISSION STATEMENT / GOALS OF COMMITTEE**

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

**WORKSHOP – EXISTING CONDITION AND CURRENT ZONING**

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

**ADJOURN**



March 8, 2012

CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS  
GAPS Committee  
Meeting  
City Council Room

PRESENT: Commissioner John Franck  
Supervisor Matt Veitch  
Clark Brink  
Geoff Bornemann  
Dennis Brobston  
Bill Sprengnether  
Rick Fenton  
Stephen Towne

EXCUSED: Amy Durland

**RECORDING OF PROCEEDING**

The proceedings of this meeting were taped for the benefit of the secretary. Because the minutes are not a verbatim record of the proceedings, the minutes are not a word-for-word transcript.

Commissioner Franck welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

**INTRODUCTION**

Commissioner Franck introduced each member of the board and provided the following bios:

**Clark Brink** - Clark has been a resident of Saratoga Springs since 1997. He is the owner of 5 McDonalds in Saratoga, Warren and Washington Counties and the employer of 250 (+/-). He is also a board member of numerous 501-C3's (non-profits). Clark was appointed to the committee by Mayor Johnson.

**Bill Sprengnether** - Bill is a landscape architect and an active member of the community. Bill moved to New York to attend graduate school at Cornell University and then settled in Saratoga Springs with his wife Caroline. He has worked with a number of New York State communities to facilitate the process of visioning vibrant future development plans and then translate those visions into graphic and written format. Most recently, he helped aid the effort in Prattsville, New York to develop new town

plans after the hamlet was destroyed by Hurricane Irene. He is also on the Board for Hudson Crossing Park as a member of Sustainable Saratoga. Bill was appointed to the committee by Supervisor Veitch.

**Rick Fenton** - Rick received an AAS degree from the NYS Ranger School in 1975 and a BS degree in forestry from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in 1977. He worked for the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation from 1978 through 2010. His career over the last 20 years has been focused on land management and land use planning for New York State Forest Preserve lands in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. Rick is originally from Rome, New York and moved to Saratoga Springs in 1980. He served a five-year term through 2010 on the Saratoga Springs Board of Ethics of which he was the chair for the last three years. Rick was active in promoting the passage of the City's Open Space Bond Act and has assisted in the ongoing Meet the Trees program to identify, plant, and maintain trees in Congress Park. He is also working with Sustainable Saratoga and the City to conduct a street tree inventory and develop an urban forest management plan for Saratoga Springs. Rick was appointed to the committee by Commissioner Madigan.

**Geoff Bornemann** - Geoff holds a Master's Degree in Planning from the University of Massachusetts. He served as City Planner for the City of Saratoga Springs for 22 years from 1985 to 2007. Prior to being with the City he was a planner for 10 years with the Capital District Regional Planning Commission and 5 years with The Saratoga Associates, a private consulting firm. As City Planner, Geoff served as staff to the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals and Design Review Commission. He worked on several revisions to the City's Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinance. Since his retirement in 2007 he has volunteered for a number of local organizations, including: Beekman Street Association, Saratoga Arts, Saratoga PLAN, Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation and Saratoga Vital Aging Network. Geoff was appointed to the committee by Supervisor Yepsen.

**Amy Durland** - Amy's career has been in the area of policy development and regulation, primarily in human services, in Massachusetts and New York. In recent years, she has been a member of various municipal committees and boards; including the Community Development Block Grant Advisory Committee, the City's Zoning Board of Appeals, and is currently a member of the City's Planning Board. She has a master's degree in Psychology as well as a law degree. Amy was appointed to the committee by Commissioner Mathiesen.

**Stephen Towne** - Stephen is the CFO & Treasurer of Roohan Realty. He is the former Commissioner of Accounts for the City of Saratoga Springs and the former chairman of the City's Board of Assessment Review. He is the current Vice-President of the Albany Diocesan School Board and the current treasurer of the Shelters of Saratoga. Stephen was born and raised in Saratoga Springs, has been married for 39 years and has 6 children and 6 grand children. Stephen was appointed to the committee by Commissioner Scirocco.

**Dennis Brobston** - Dennis has been involved in economic development in Saratoga County for the past fifteen years and has been serving as President of the Saratoga Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) since March of 2008. Prior to his career in economic development Dennis held positions in manufacturing management, regional sales and marketing and also owned a small business in his hometown of Steubenville, Ohio. In his time at SEDC, Dennis led the development teams that attracted Sysco Distribution Warehouse, Marshall Distribution, Parts Unlimited and countless other projects throughout Saratoga County. He worked to develop and implement SEDC's first comprehensive, five-year marketing and communications plan to promote Saratoga county, SEDC, and its key stakeholders on a local, regional, national, and international level. Dennis serves on the board of directors of Saratoga Hospital; he is an appointment member of the Capital Region Economic Development Council, the New York State Economic Development Council, the International Economic Development Council, and the Northeast Economic Development Council. Dennis holds a degree in Business Administration from Empire State College. He resides in Clifton Park with his wife, Teresa and has two children and two grandchildren. Commissioner Franck appointed Dennis to the committee.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Bill Sprengnether advised how they came up with the mission statement and reviewed it for the public. He read the mission statement as follows:

“The Gateway Action Program of Saratoga (GAPS) is committed to understanding the opportunities and impediments to economically and culturally robust land use in the South Broadway corridor. With contributions from stakeholders, the committee will prepare recommendations to help stimulate redevelopment and land-use of this important gateway, consistent with the vision presented in the City’s adopted Comprehensive Plan and land-use regulations.”

Bill advised they are open to feedback from the land owners and community. They are not going into this with a pre-disposed idea. They are looking to stimulate growth in that area.

Commissioner Franck advised they were originally looking from Rt. 9 (south) to Lincoln Avenue. After discussion, they expanded it up to Circular Street. People feel downtown starts at the Holiday Inn, so they extended South Broadway the extra block. This is a committee of the people and looking for a lot of input. After this meeting, the main function of Supervisor Veitch and himself is to make sure the meetings go timely, help with putting power point presentation together, etc. but hope this committee will take this over with the community. Today is the first of 4 meetings. His hope is for this committee to bring recommendation to the City Council during one of their 2 meetings in May.

Clark Brink thanked Commissioner Franck for pulling this group together. It is the audience and stake holders that will drive the exploration. It is also important to say what they are not – they are not chartered to make changes for change sake. No one is coming here with a pre-disposed position or agenda. They are not intended to be a long standing committee/task force.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Tom Denny of 205 East Avenue stated he is here representing the Urban Forestry Project. He wanted to get trees on the radar. The largest of the 6 surviving elms is in front of the Surf & Spa; he hopes to protect that. There is evidence that trees are good for business. Places with trees have higher occupancy rates, higher rents, and people stay there longer.

Commissioner Franck stated all new sidewalks and pipes were put in recently; so the infrastructure is in good shape.

Pat Kane of 19 Marion Place complemented the committee for taking on this task. As a former land use board member, design of the area is critical.

Geoff Bornemann stated there are other corridors in the City experiencing trouble and need to be looked at. He hopes this, as a first step, will be useful for those areas.

Mary Zlotnick of 6 Laura Lane stated the state is into multi-mobile transportation. Also, Chicago was just awarded money for transportation; part of which was for bike sharing. She suggested an area for parking for people to be able to share rides.

Peter Kontos of South Broadway stated he and his family own the stretch of area where the Saratoga Diner and Mavis Tire are. He stressed that the area being talked about is still very car dependent. Walk-ability will need to be phased in over time. In 2005 he had a plan for an office building to be built in that area and no one wanted to put their office there. They didn’t see that area as a viable place for their office. Saratoga is not large enough yet to sustain as much office space as it already has.

Commissioner Franck advised the packet presented to the members of the committee has a list of the property owners. It appears there is pedestrian traffic to Lincoln Avenue.

Ken Ivins of 50 Outlook Avenue stated there is a Complete Streets Group that this committee may want to consider inviting to one of their meetings. There are grates for drainage on South Broadway that are a couple inches lower than the road; which is dangerous. This is something to be kept in mind when developing in the future.

Commissioner Franck stated they are looking on incentives. On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, we will be inviting the IDA, the Chamber, SEDC. Tonight's meeting was not overly advertised; but we hope to get more people to attend the next meeting.

Mr. Kane advised the motels are a dying breed. How do we keep these things running or how do we incentivize them to modify to a hotel type property.

Commissioner Franck stated if gambling does come; you will probably see that whole area become hotels. It's only a couple blocks away from the Racino.

Mr. Kane also reminded everyone about the truck traffic in that area. We need to figure something out there so it doesn't negatively impact that area.

## **WORKSHOP – EXISTING CONDITION AND CURRENT ZONING**

Supervisor Veitch presented his power point presentation. This included photos of the South Broadway area in the 1930s/1940s. He also reviewed the Comprehensive Plan and explained the 3 zones of the Comprehensive Plan as follows:

- Commercial 5 – This area is across from the tree nursery and was set up for office and medical use.
- Commercial 3 – This area is south of the golf course; where the Best Western is located as south. This area was set up for tourist related businesses.
- Country Overlay District – This area was designed to protect open spaces and push for cluster development in the outer district of the area.

Supervisor Veitch stated today's zoning has 7 zones – Rural Residential 1 (RR-1), Institutional Parkland Recreation, Tourist Related Business District, Office Medical Business District, Office Medical Hospital Business District, Transect 4, and Transect 5. The impacts on development include new infrastructure in the northern part; there are a lot of non-conforming buildings in that area; and it's expensive to do a tear down and rebuild. In the southern area there is a lack of infrastructure, there are no sewers, and there are a lot of wetlands.

Clark stated they did sewer, water and gas lines at the same time on the northern side. Would this be the time to discuss the overhead utilities; could they possibly be moved to the alley?

Geoff advised the improvements on South Broadway included storm drainage. It is a great investment.

Clark inquired what would the term 'shovel ready' mean to someone who is interested in a higher utilization of a property.

Dennis Brobston advised because the infrastructure, sidewalks, etc. is there, it would be considered shovel ready. Shovel ready means within 90 days you can get a site plan approval. There is also something to be said about if a person wants to take the time and money for the approval process or if there is somewhere else they can go. The economy has not been robust where this location would be somewhere to do something.

Geoff stated this could be a residential opportunity; possibly apartments of multi-levels.

Dennis advised it could; but walk-ability is part of why we don't see the interest. It is further apart from central services.

Stephen Towne stated the time matter is something that is in our 'control' to make the timeline more efficient and streamline it. On the cost side, the price of South Broadway would be more favorable and the property has not been a high interest area.

Dennis stated there is a whole block that is not for sale. That is a big issue as it is such a large and important parcel for lease only.

Stephen asked Peter Kontos if the block his family owns is not for sale or have they just not found the right price they are willing to sell it for.

Mr. Kontos advised they do not have any intentions of selling; they plan to keep it in the family. They have tried a land lease type of scenario but no one wants to take a chance on this. Pedestrian traffic really stops at Congress Park; the rest of the City is car-centric. This area is competing with Wilton; which is no longer the 'great white north'. Pharmacies want one story with a drive through; which required an additional curb cut and he was told by the city engineer at the time that he couldn't have another one.

Commissioner Franck stated he doesn't feel a land lease will kill a deal.

Mr. Kontos agreed, however people want one story, not two. Getting people to live on a second level will be difficult when they would overlook a trailer park and a cemetery.

Geoff stated nothing precludes a drive through in a T-5 district. There would be more revenue and productivity for the City if we kept to a vision of multi-level buildings.

Bill stated when he spoke to Peter in the past; he was told getting the City to allow him to put in a drive through was prohibited. Now he is hearing Geoff say drive thrus are allowed in T-5 zones.

Mr. Kontos stated logistically they would need an ingress or egress on to South Broadway. It would be hard to do it any other way.

Clark advised a typical McDonald cost \$25,000 - \$30,000 for the planning phase yet the Saratoga store took 2.5 years and in excess of \$270,000 for planning only. You have to think as a business person and say what is my return on investment? The challenge is the perception of if I'm going to ask it is going to be difficult. If it is going to be cumbersome it is not economically viable.

Mr. Denny stated the downtown area isn't pedestrian friendly in the sense that people don't actually want to downtown. If they did, we wouldn't be having discussions about parking downtown. Pedestrian friendly means people have a reason for coming in their car and then keeping them there allowing them to walk from one site to another. He thinks moving utilities to the alley is a creative thought.

Geoff stated putting the utilities underground has significant cost. The standards for the T-5 district are for decorative street lights, trees, and sidewalks.

Mr. Kane stated another jewel is the state park. The most pedestrian use in that area is runners and people walking the Avenue of the Pines. There needs to be a creative level of tourism to draw people.

Geoff stated that the theme he hears is the perception is out of line with what reality is and maybe something could be done to package what the corridor should look like. There may need to be some alteration to the review process. The intention of the "T" districts was to have faster design approval in the City. He also wonders how much of this is driven by the economy.

Commissioner Franck stated he understands the owners' frustrations and he doesn't want to end up like Wilton where they approved a lot of different things. One of the incentives may be doing something on the

City's part to help develop it. We are not looking to change the zoning but one of the problems we have is a lot of properties have been up for sale for a long time.

Mr. Kontos stated since West Avenue has been re-developed, the traffic has gone down. The national retailers don't want to come in because traffic isn't there.

Mr. Kane stated the largest construction project we have is overlooking the dump. People will live in places we may not think of. If you don't build density you won't have density. Creating a level of density will create a re-birth of that area.

Commissioner Franck stated the residential density isn't here as they did on the West Avenue corridor. There can more traffic here again than West Avenue; but the City doesn't own the property.

Geoff stated sometimes one project can change everything.

Stephen stated there hasn't been a successful series of suggestions put forward going back some time. What is the right location and type of business to start this off? We need to have a break out.

Bill stated as he listened to everything tonight, he has come to understand that it is not that the critical mass is not there, but the people are not stopping in the corridor. People are traveling through it to get to another point. We need to capture the local daily residential traffic crowd and the rest will come later.

Rick Fenton stated the idea was strange to people that we put 'mall' stores in a nice building. Possibly we can get other retail businesses to compete with the mall so you don't have to leave downtown. Let's get in a partnership with real estate companies to get in touch with developers to get people to come here. Marketing is more of an issue here than the design elements.

Supervisor Veitch stated they need a market plan that packages the corridor. It is ironic that the GAP in the mall closed but the one downtown stayed open. Someone needs to take the first step to be the anchor; maybe we do need competition with our neighbor to the north.

Commissioner Franck stated the best spot is the plaza next to Alexandra's. What do the areas around us give that we don't? Wilton doesn't have a town tax; they have a better tax base. Maybe we should do some type of a pilot. We should have the heads of the land use boards here. Maybe it's a factory outlet.

Mr. Kontos stated having a Trader Joe's and a café would be car dependent. Making every building multi-story isn't going to work; just need to get that anchor store.

Clark stated there is another piece that is missing; those who are still here.

Dennis stated it would be nice to see a bigger map of the properties.

Clark also suggested doing a walking tour of South Broadway with the property owners to see if it stimulates some thoughts of creativity.

Stephen suggested having the property and business owners here to do a brain dump.

Commissioner Franck asked if the committee would like to have the land use boards and business and property owners invited to the next meeting.

All were in agreement.

Mr. Kane stated there is a disjointed effort between the land use boards. The collaborative approach is possible but it just isn't designed that way right now. We need a fluid method to compliment everyone on the corridor. Bigger projects have to be unified.

Clark stated this meeting wasn't advertised in today's Saratogian.

Commissioner Franck stated he thinks it got stopped; but it will come out. We contact the press and got the feeling they weren't going to come tonight. He is confident they will be here in the future.

Stephen stated this committee also has value as a prototype for other areas of the City that are in need of economic development.

Mr. Ivins again commended the committee. He is pleased to hear the land use boards and the stake holders will be invited to the next meeting. People are going to go where there is least resistance; they can come here or go to Wilton and fly through things.

Commissioner Franck stated we had a great start tonight. He thanked everyone again for coming tonight.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Ribis  
Clerk

Approved: 3/22/12