



April 2, 2012

CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS
GAPS Committee
Agenda

6:00 PM

- o CALL TO ORDER**
- o ROLL CALL**
- o APPROVAL OF 3/22/12 COMMITTEE MINUTES**
- o PUBLIC SAFETY DISCUSSION**
- o SEWER LINE DISCUSSION**
- o INCENTIVES**
- o PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

ADJOURN



April 2, 2012

CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS
GAPS Committee
Meeting
City Council Room

PRESENT: Commissioner John Franck
Supervisor Matt Veitch
Clark Brink
Supervisor Yepsen
Bill Sprengnether (arrived at 6:15 p.m.)
Rick Fenton
Stephen Towne
Amy Durland
Dennis Brobston

EXCUSED: Geoff Bornemann

STAFF: Commissioner Mathiesen, Deputy Commissioner Eileen Finneran, Mark Benacquista, and Tim Wales, City Engineer

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.

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Franck welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Dennis Brobston moved and Rick Fenton seconded to approve the 3/22/12 minutes as distributed.

Ayes - All

PUBLIC SAFETY DISCUSSION

Commissioner Franck stated from the past meetings, they have identified that the major concerns are incentives regarding infrastructure needs. There was also a lot of discussion relating to the speed limit and overall safety issues. We invited Public Safety representatives to discuss the meeting they recently had with NYS DOT regarding Route 9 safety. Commissioner Franck stated there was also some discussion regarding zoning in certain areas. He also mentioned the possibility of traffic circles by P.J.'s and one by Crescent Avenue and Broadway.

Supervisor Veitch asked Commissioner Mathiesen to speak to the meeting he had with NYS DOT.

Commissioner Mathiesen stated he has lived here all his life and has seen increase use in that part of the City. He had an employee who used to tell him all the time about the number of accidents that almost happened by the old Joe Collins Restaurant. In more recent years, there have been a number of car/pedestrian accidents. He feels Rt. 9 is a big concern in regards to safety and speed. He spoke with the Department of Transportation to ask them to evaluate the safety of that road. He asked them to look into changing or reducing the speed limit as you come into the City. A lot of the entries into the City have had their speed limits reduced to 45 mph. DOT is looking into this and he hopes to have a response by them by this summer. Increasing the sense of safety of this roadway would promote utilization of those businesses.

Supervisor Veitch asked if they explored the stop light at the east/west road to be fully operational on a year round basis rather than be blinking.

Commissioner Mathiesen stated since they don't use that road for most of the year, he is not sure how that would work.

Mark Benacquista advised they were getting a lot of complaints about the light be fully operational when the road is not in use. There is no justification to cycle it; you are stopping 4 lanes for traffic for nothing.

Commissioner Franck confirmed only the state can set the speed limit in that area.

Commissioner Mathiesen stated that is DOT area to set the speed limit. They did stress to DOT during their meeting that there needs to be a focus to make that area safer.

Commissioner Franck asked if there were any thoughts about installing a couple round-abouts in that area.

Mark Benacquista advised that in order for round-abouts to be considered needed, there needs to be 2 side streets.

Commissioner Franck asked if they could do a round-about at Crescent Avenue instead of the traffic light.

Mark Benacquista advised if they did that, they would have to do one at W. Fenlon Street, and the Avenue of the Pines. Round-abouts don't reduce accidents; they reduce the severity of accidents. In regards to pedestrians, he doesn't feel they are as safe as a driver is not looking for pedestrians; they are looking for another vehicle.

Amy Durland asked what their thoughts are about the bikers and pedestrians on Route 9.

Commissioner Mathiesen stated there is a very wide edge, but people have still been hit. There is also a lighting issue. These are ways we are looking at to calm the traffic. The arterial is 45 mph; Union Avenue is 30 mph; so lowering Rt. 9 wouldn't be a bad thing.

Bill Sprengnether stated without enforcement, people won't actually slow down. Is enforcement a possibility?

Commissioner Mathiesen stated enforcement when the changes are made is part of the equation. People will respect the change in speed with enforcement. As more businesses open, we need to look at making that roadway safer.

Stephen Towne stated when we first looked at the slow growth or enhancement of that area, speed and safety weren't reasons on his list. Now, he wonders if safety is on the same level of priority in terms of the obstacles impeding the development and growth of South Broadway.

Clark Brink stated we are trying to enhance the potential of the businesses but we might be losing focus. After the past couple of meetings, he hoped we could begin to develop a vision for the City Council. The biggest opportunity is from the Adirondack Trust to the Holiday Inn and yet the biggest eye-sore. It is an under-utilized area. He hopes this will be part of the consensus of the committee for the final report.

Commissioner Franck stated his original thought process was to focus on W. Fenlon to Lincoln. At our last meeting, 90% of the stakeholders were from Saratoga Honda south. The problem south of W. Fenlon is there isn't much we can do; the zoning is what it is. He agrees the value of this committee is going to be from W. Fenlon to Lincoln. Most people are not overly concerned about the T-5 zoning. There is some concern about the zoning around Murphy's Golf area. We can meet as much as possible to frame the presentation to the Council. It seems the main thing is to lower the speed limit and maybe add some lighting.

Supervisor Yepsen stated the vision should be a package of what you want; walkability, speed limits, type of businesses, etc.

Commissioner Mathiesen stated he believes from Crescent Avenue south, there is an issue with speed and safety. Enhancing safety of that part of South Broadway would be good for those businesses.

Rick Fenton stated the character of the highway is to get the people past all the businesses on South Broadway and get them into downtown. Calming the traffic is one small step the government can take towards the improvement of that area.

SEWER LINE DISCUSSION

Commissioner Franck asked Tim Wales if there is any way a sewer line can be extended past Crescent Avenue down Rt. 9.

Tim Wales stated he worked on the Best Western project. During that time, he suggested if the owner got some of the other businesses to contribute; they could build a pump station for not much more than what he was spending for the septic system out there. The solution in that area would be a pump station in the flat area around the Big Apple. The cost to do this would be approximately \$1 million to \$1.5 million in soft costs. The problem is there are not enough customers there to pay for it. There is a waterline that runs down through that area.

Commissioner Franck asked if we would have any leverage with the casino coming in to get these lines run.

Tim Wales stated his office hasn't been approached regarding any of this yet. They will need water, etc. We do have to upgrade the pump station on the back side of the casino track as they do want to build some new infrastructure soon.

Bill Sprengnether stated he has heard about larger wetland systems for municipal wastewater treatment; is there an opportunity to construct something like that in that area.

Tim Wales stated he personally doesn't think they work and create more headaches than they are worth. It would be much more cost effective to build a pump station to connect to the County.

STRUCTURE OF REPORT FOR COUNCIL

Clark Brink suggested looking at a near term versus a long term for the report.

Supervisor Veitch stated one of the committees he was on did a short term, medium term, and long term solutions.

Clark Brink suggested using the map to deliver their short term, long term, etc. and include some of their theories such as public safety, trees, etc. He also stated they could talk about success stories, and work on changing the perception of what a T-5 zoning is. He is trying to understand how to communicate the perception that it is difficult to develop or do business on South Broadway versus the reality which is we are welcoming and we do want you to do business here. Maybe this can be accomplished through a web page. Lessons we learned here may be able to be used in other corridors of the City.

Amy Durland suggested if they are going to talk about the Thirsty Owl project as the prototype, they need to bring back Brad Birge and Kate Maynard to talk about the details of that project. That project is more complicated than we have discussed at this table. She reminded everyone this is supposed to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The idea of complete streets is something that has taken off; pedestrians, cyclists, etc. should be folded into the vision.

Stephen Towne stated Clark's approach makes sense. He wonders if we build the environment, they will come. Should they look for an anchoring business? It is going to take a marketing effort to pull that anchoring business in.

Dennis Brobston stated he thinks about 3 areas when he thinks of South Broadway; Adirondack Trust to the Holiday Inn; the old Weathervane to the Adirondack Trust; and then the piece below the old Weathervane. There are differences in each section. From the incentive perspective; what incentivizes people to do things. The County IDA has funds for help in planning; but it will take a design. There is flexibility in zoning and ways to make this work.

Commissioner Franck asked what kind of marketing we could get from SEDC.

Dennis Brobston stated we all need to work together. You would be surprised of the people who pay attention. The perception needs to be fixed and know that there are a few areas that are going to be difficult no matter what you do. What services do we think we want to go after?

Supervisor Yepsen stated she believes we already have 2 anchors; the state park and the racino. We also have tourism and the track going for us. The money on the state level is going to go into economic development or tourism. We should be partnering with the state, county and city. What kind of mixed use would support the 2 anchors we already have? She would like to do a test to see what it would take to get people to do business on South Broadway.

Rick Fenton stated the City has done the zoning, the infrastructure and now it is time to get the private sector to move in and work with the land owners. From his discussions with real estate people, he has the impression that there is a lot of activity on South Broadway. Marketing seems to be the thing; there is nothing they can do that would be more effective than that.

Supervisor Veitch stated he agrees with marketing being a big thing. When the economy is down, this is the opportunity for a developer.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mike Murphy of Murphy's Driving Range stated he agrees with the anchors; we have big anchors in the City. He asked if there is a reason why they don't want hotels on South Broadway with the racino, etc. The downtown has been built out; it's complete. An office building doesn't speak tourism but a hotel does. It doesn't make sense to him that hotels are not a permitted use in his area of South Broadway.

Tom Denny stated he is part of Sustainable Saratoga. He complimented Supervisor Veitch on bringing the visuals showing us when the trees were the fields of dreams for Broadway (Adirondack Trust to Circular). He provided a summary of benefits of having trees.

Ken Fansiwala of Top Hill Motel stated his concern was about the sewer system. The septic system is costly and takes up a lot of land. He feels if all owners chip in some money and the City comes up with some money they can find a solution for a sewer line – that would be great.

Chris Mathiesen of 20 Friar Tuck Way stated when you see hotels on the outskirts of cities, you see dead downtowns. Before we put hotels around the outskirts of the City you have to be sure you've developed the downtown and he doesn't feel we have done that yet. There are interesting challenges to this issue and he applauds this committee. Every parcel has a different set of problems.

Ken Ivins of Outlook Avenue stated he believes there are 3 separate areas each having different things to address. Office space in the middle section does not invite tourism therefore a zoning change is needed.

David Fragomeni of South Broadway stated you have to be realistic. There are parcels that are never going to be developed if there is no sewer. The reality is you won't be able to entice anyone without a sewer line.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Ribis
Clerk

Approved: 4/12/12