

MINUTES
LEWIS COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
February 17, 2022

- (1) **Call to Order:** Chairman Petersen called the regular meeting of the Lewis County Planning Board to order at 2:30 PM in the conference room on the 2nd floor at the Lewis County Court House, Lowville, New York. Roll call was requested by Mr. Petersen.
- (2) **Roll Call:** Board Members Present: Tim Petersen, John Lehman, Don Cook, Eric Virkler, Sarah Metott, Thomas Osborne and Tim Hunt. Staff Present: Megan Krokowski, Community Development Specialist and Casandra Buell, Director of Planning & Community Development. Public Present: Josh Leviker.
- (3) **Reading and Approval of Minutes:** The draft January 20, 2022 meeting minutes were received and reviewed prior to the meeting. Mr. Lehman motioned to approve the minutes; Mr. Hunt seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- (4) **Correspondence and Communication:** None
- (5) **Report of Officers:** None
- (6) **Report of Special Committees:**

239-M Review

Ms. Krokowski read the following review:

VILLAGE OF LOWVILLE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Proposed updates to the Town and Village of Lowville Comprehensive Plan
Village of Lowville/Town of Lowville – Joint Application

The proposed Comprehensive Plan, General Municipal Referral Form, and signed FEAF were submitted by Mayor Joseph Beagle.

Town and Village of Lowville Comprehensive Plan Update

The Town and Village of Lowville’s Comprehensive Plan document was reviewed in its 149-page entirety. This document has been in the works since late 2020 and is an update to the 2008/2009 version of the Town and Village of Lowville Comprehensive Plan.

Contained in the Comprehensive Plan is the recommendation that the document be reviewed every 3 years by the respective boards to ensure it is up to date with the ever-changing conditions experienced, that of which is appropriate.

Please note that the page labels do not match the document page numbers.

The third paragraph on Page 25 of the document, “A household includes all the people who occupy a *single* housing unit.” It is recommended that the word *single* be added before housing unit to provide further clarification.

Near the top of Page 53 of the document, Goal 3.2 should be rephrased for clarity. “*Support and update zoning policies to allow for mixed housing opportunities.*”

Regarding the last sentence of the second full paragraph on Page 57 in the document, “*Therefore, the town and village should work closely with neighboring municipalities, Lewis County, **Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District**, and other potential partners to address concerns over the impact of disturbances, such as dams, on fish populations.*” It is recommended that you identify and work closely with the Lewis County Soil and Water District regarding these concerns.

The last paragraph on page 61, “*Three types of farms have been identified in Lowville—traditional family farms, Amish farms, and large farms with their headquarters in adjacent towns using former family farms in Lowville as ancillary lands—~~exist in Lowville.~~*”, consider rephrasing for readability.

Additionally, in the last paragraph of page 61, the following is addressed: “*...raised concern for the abandonment of agricultural buildings that formerly belonged to family farms.*” Please build off this by including how the town/village plans to incentivize and discourage the abandonment of abandoned buildings on family farms by the large farms. Although the Amish farms help maintain the rural atmosphere, have considerations been identified and addressed regarding the impact on public infrastructure and public safety?

Page 62 - “*The town should collect data on food processing and slaughterhouses and discuss where they should be allowed.*” This should be developed further to discuss the challenges that come with bringing this industry in and the potential importance for the respective farmers to be able to market a finished product with the campaign of buy local and the importance of knowing where your food comes from as well as all natural and organic certifications.

Page 68 stated “*The town and village will consider requiring sidewalk construction with new development, especially in the village.*” Ensure consideration has been made to update zoning and codes for this policy.

The last sentence on page 70 states “*The town and village’s recreation goals as well as more recreation assets are described in this section.*” It should be clarified as to which section is being referred to.

Paragraph two, on Page 75 states “*The Five Streets Project brought in \$19 million in investment to upgrade water infrastructure and is scheduled to be complete in **September 2021.***” Please update the project completion date or include the anticipated completion date if not currently complete.

The tenth bullet from the top on Page 84 states “*Any renovations to existing barns should be authentic to their original design and new barns should follow a similar design standard.*” Consider providing a design standard for new barns.

The fifth bullet down, on page 85, “*New or re-designed freestanding signs should have flower beds and gardens around the base of the sign or raised flower beds with stone or brick bases.*” Consider if the use of the verb “should” is appropriate or if it should be replaced by must or shall. If should is the verb of choice, consider defining the word for clarification - i.e. “A directive verb

signifying the action is to be carried out unless circumstances make it impracticable.” Also consider updating zoning and coding regulations to reflect this directive.

Bullet eight from the top on page 85, “*Any junk or clutter should be removed, stored, or screened from street view.*” Consider defining ‘junk’ and ‘clutter’ for clarity and consider if zoning and codes should be updated for the inclusion of this policy.

The ninth bullet on page 85, “*Windows in residences and non-residential structures should be uniform, **symmetrical, evenly spaced and sized.** Industrial, storage, and warehouse facilities should consider windows so that those uses blend in with the character of the town.*” Concerning the bolded items, please ensure this policy is practical regarding enforcement.

Page 90 – “*Parking lots should be paved well and have delineated parking spots, including handicap parking spots and electric vehicle charging station infrastructure, **when practical.***” – Consider adding ‘when practical’ following electric vehicle charging station infrastructure.

Page 90 – “*The map on the next page shows the new vision for the village center and the surrounding areas, which can be found in the Village of Lowville’s Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant application. The village has received this grant funding, and projects are beginning and should continue to be supported.*” Please consider rewording since the funding was not received.

Recommendation: Approve with Recommendations

- 1) It is recommended that the word ***single*** be added before housing unit to provide further clarification to the third paragraph on Page 25 of the document, “*A household includes all the people who occupy a **single** housing unit.*”
- 2) The following revision to Goal 3.2 is suggested to provide clarity: “*Support and **update zoning policies to allow** for mixed housing opportunities.*”
- 3) It is recommended that the Comprehensive Plan identify the Lewis County Soil and Water District in the following excerpt from Goal 4.1: “*Therefore, the town and village should work closely with neighboring municipalities, Lewis County, **Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District** and other potential partners to address concerns over the impact of disturbances, such as dams, on fish populations.*”
- 4) Consider rephrasing the last paragraph on page 61 to the following: “***Three types of farms have been identified in Lowville**—traditional family farms, Amish farms, and large farms with their headquarters in adjacent towns using former family farms in Lowville as ancillary lands—exist in Lowville.*”
- 5) It is recommended that, in the last paragraph on page 61, that additional suggestions on how the town and village should plan to incentivize and discourage the abandonment of family farm buildings by the large farms. Additionally, although the Amish farms help maintain the rural atmosphere, considerations should be identified and addressed regarding their impact on public infrastructure and public safety.
- 6) According to Page 62, “*The town should collect data on food processing and slaughterhouses and discuss where they should be allowed.*” This should be developed further to discuss the challenges that come with bringing this industry in and the potential importance for the respective farmers to be able to market a finished product with the campaign of buy local and the importance of knowing where your food comes from as well as “natural” and organic certifications.

- 7) On page 68, the proposed Comprehensive Plan states *“The town and village will consider requiring sidewalk construction with new development, especially in the village.”* Ensure consideration has been made to update zoning and codes for this policy.
- 8) The last sentence on page 70 states that *“The town and village’s recreation goals as well as more recreation assets are described in this section.”* It should be clarified as to which section is being referenced.
- 9) Within paragraph two, on page 75, the proposed Comprehensive Plan states that *“The Five Streets Project brought in \$19 million in investment to upgrade water infrastructure and is scheduled to be complete in **September 2021.**”* Please update the project completion date, or anticipated completion date if not yet complete.
- 10) Consider providing a design standard for new barns referenced on page 84.
- 11) In reference to the fifth bullet on page 85, *“New or re-designed freestanding signs should have flower beds and gardens around the base of the sign or raised flower beds with stone or brick bases,”* consider replacing the verb “should” with “must” or “shall”. Zoning and coding regulation updates that reflect this directive should also be considered.
- 12) Relative to the eighth bullet on page 85, please consider defining ‘junk’ and ‘clutter’ for clarity and consider if zoning and codes should be updated for the inclusion of this policy.
- 13) Consideration should be made as to the practicality of enforcing the following policy included on page 85: *“Windows in residences and non-residential structures should be uniform, **symmetrical, evenly spaced and sized.** Industrial, storage, and warehouse facilities should consider windows so that those uses blend in with the character of the town.”*
- 14) Consider adding “when practical” following the electric vehicle charging station infrastructure referenced on page 90.
- 15) Also, in reference to page 90, the following excerpt should be revised as the DRI funding was not received: *“The map on the next page shows the new vision for the village center and the surrounding areas, which can be found in the village of Lowville’s Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant application. The village has received this grant funding, and projects are beginning and should continue to be supported.”*

Note: After reviewing the document for content, a variety of grammatical errors were identified. As a courtesy, reference to the errors found will be sent separately to the Village Clerk for correction prior to finalizing the document.

The board then engaged in discussion about details of the proposed updates to the Comp Plan:

Mr. Virkler suggested that recommendation number 10 be changed to “Consider removing design standards for barns on page 84”.

The Board proposed that recommendation number 11 be changed to be less specific “Signage should be complementary to the area and maintained properly.”

The Board suggested that recommendation number 12 be updated to “Keep street views neat, clean, and complementary to the surrounding neighborhood.”

The Board further discussed several other points that they would like to be revisited in this comprehensive plan. They thought that, for a comprehensive plan, the level of specificity in the document was concerning, to the point of overregulation at unpractical levels. The board also felt that using photographs of properties within the jurisdiction of this plan to demonstrate “things not to do” was not tactful or appropriate, and that the Village/Town should consider using

drawings to convey the message. The Board considered the use of “Amish Farms” as potentially derogatory and suggested that it should be referenced differently. Following these lengthy discussions, since there appeared to be quite a few identified improvements conditioned, the Board was not comfortable approving the Comprehensive Plan as submitted. Several board members proposed disapproval of the plan to give the Town/Village an opportunity to improve and further clarify the plan.

With no further discussion, Mr. Lehman made a motion to disapprove the Town and Village of Lowville Comprehensive Plan as submitted. Mr. Cook seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Ms. Buell indicated that she would follow up with Tug Hill Commission regarding the discussed concerns.

(7) Report of County Planner:

- Responses from municipalities regarding previously submitted/reviewed projects:

Project Description	Final Action	Project Description	Final Action
T/Denmark - NSG Solar East Road (North Site)	Approved w/Conditions	T/Diana - Stewart’s Shops	Approved
T/Denmark - NSG Solar East Road (South Site)	Approved w/Conditions	V/Lowville – Zoning Text Manufactured Homes	Approved
T/Greig - Raven Acres Campground - Mike Dolhof	Approved w/Conditions	V/Lowville – Zoning Text Smoke Shops/Tobacco Stores	Approved w/Conditions
T/Denmark – Kevin Hughes North Country Golf (Cabins)	Approved w/Conditions	T/Watson – Zoning Law – Solar Energy Systems	Approved w/Conditions
T/Lowville - Foothills Market Chris & Jennifer Kain	Approved w/Conditions	T/Turin – Mark McDonald (Cabins)	Approved w/Conditions
T/Croghan Zoning Law	Approved w/Conditions	T/Watson – Village of Lowville Groundwater Project	Approved w/Conditions

(8) Unfinished Business: None

(9) New Business: Mr. Cook brought up a question about elected officials’ ability to serve on planning boards. Ms. Buell indicated that she would investigate this further and provide Mr. Cook an email with her findings.

(10) Adjournment: There being no other business, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Cook, seconded by Mr. Virkler, which carried unanimously. Mr. Petersen adjourned the meeting at 3:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Casandra Buell

Director of Planning & Community Development