

**Ballston Spa  
Comprehensive Master Plan Steering Committee  
Social Considerations II  
July 21, 2022**

Present in Person: Mathew Ercoline, Jared Iacolucci, Karen Martell, and Jackie Pelliccia.

Present on Zoom: Carrie Chapman, John Cromie, John Hearn, Marilyn Stephenson, and Amy Fitzgerald

Excused: Scott Burlingame, Monique Cohen, Nafeesa Koslik, Peter Martin, Ellen Mottola, and Jon Taisey

Observers in Person: Liz Kormos and Bernadette  
Observers on Zoom:

Meeting was called to order by Karen Martell at 7:07. Jackie Pelliccia moved that the minutes of the last meeting be approved as presented; Mat Ercoline seconded; passed. The meeting was turned over to Jared Iacolucci and Jackie Pelliccia to continue the discussion. During a review of the prior meeting's subjects, Jared noted a significant fact is the large number of residents over 50 and the ramifications of an aging demographic. That fact leads to the question of how to incorporate younger residents into the fabric of the village, to have them included on boards and committees, so they will be in a position to take over the reins from those who are aging out.

Limits on the number of positions a person could serve in and creating an environment where one-term service is expected coupled with advertising of open positions would go a long way to opening up village service. Voter lists can be used to identify recipients of advertising of open positions. A well devised system will create a population more aware of village operations and knowledgeable future leaders.

A Zoom option for meetings is very important to attract a broader number of people. Our own meetings have shown it to be a viable function that helps parents with young families to be involved.

Another subject from last meeting was the benefit of all the greenery throughout the village and how the trees and shrubs make the village pleasant place to walk. Jared reported on a recent

meeting of Malta Avenue School administrators, neighbors, and village officials at which safe sidewalks were discussed. A common refrain was the need for painted crosswalks and signage. Speed bumps and dips to slow traffic were also discussed. Past experience has indicated not only lack of enforcement but also lack of understanding by enforcers.

A question was raised if committee/board seats are open and the village needs to fill them? The two attending trustees indicated current committee and board seats are filled but there will be ad hoc committees needed in granting processes when the village receives grants. A second question asked if positions are currently filled by a who-knows-who process or if there is a system in place to generally solicit residents. In response, it appears there is no system, positions may be posted on a Facebook page, but people are often selected through personal associations.

It was noted there appears again to be a communication issue. If there is insufficient publicity then people do not hear of a chance to participate, and valuable participation of newer or younger residents will not happen.

In response, it requires extra work to solicit participants, and it is natural human action that appointments are filled by who knows who, not just in Ballston Spa, but everywhere. The Master Plan Committee was originally named that way. There being no system to fall back on, the two open seats of the Historic District Commission were filled that way. Also, there are relatively few seats on governmental boards and committees. Other committees of residents could be established, like a budget committee or ad hoc groups to sift through issues in major topics for Village Board decision making.

In a discussion regarding vacant buildings and enforcement of codes, it was noted that vacancy isn't a problem as much as the appearance of a property. It depends on who the village wishes to attract. Like 'success breeds success' if properties have unkempt lawns, siding falling off buildings, derelict autos, people will be put off from investing in the village. Enforcement mechanisms are in place to discourage property neglect. There must be a willingness to use those mechanisms.

In some circumstances blight may result due to homeowners not having the wherewithal to maintain their properties. Fines become punitive and ineffective in those situations, which may be better addressed through partnerships with entities like Rebuilding Together. Our local organizations can bring residents together to

help the aged, the single parents balancing family and job, the economically stressed, and others who wish to maintain their property but cannot. Other communities have organized days when volunteer work parties took on such tasks. The village could do the same.

Barring a door-to-door survey, there is no accurate way of determining if blighted properties are due to out-of-town owners, homeowners facing challenges, or other causes. The results of any survey would become quickly dated. In most communities, property upkeep has little correlation to age group or any other demographic. Process will have to be addressed on a case-by-case basis through enforcement.

When considering parks at the last meeting, it was obvious the one park area that has remained undeveloped is Victory Circle. Its development will be a benefit to residents of the northern portion of the village. One Colonial Hills resident had suggested the circle include a playground and a dog park. Increased use of Victory Circle will probably necessitate sidewalks be planned to accommodate pedestrians from other parts of the surrounding community and Colonial Hills itself. Due to the speeds on Greenfield Avenue being in the 35 to 45 mph range, there is a much higher risk of fatalities than if speeds were topped at 30 mph.

The Eastern Avenue Recreation Field is another recreational resource of the village. It is owned by the school district, not the village, but is used by residents. It could be used to extend the Zim Smith Trail into the Village. However, the major focus is its need for sidewalks. The speed of autos along that section of Hyde Blvd. is of special concern. Signs with flashing lights can be erected to alert motorists to pedestrians, and they work.

The lack of striped crosswalks, signage, recognition by law enforcement all affect the walkability and desirability of the village, impacting residents and visitors, alike.

A major concern is how to bring in the younger residents of the community not only into village government but also into social organizations and non-profits. If current community members are not willing to pick up the slack as the older generation pulls back, the future will be problematic. Perhaps government and non-profits should partner and yearly or semi-annually hold an event to showcase the opportunities to volunteer and take part in the non-profits and government.

Village volunteer groups have been seeking to increase membership, but traditional methods are failing. Perhaps use of the electronic media can be centralized and the position of business liaison discussed in an earlier meeting can be broadened to include interaction with the public. However, responsibility to grow a membership belongs with each organization and it is important to cue its leadership to methods of member solicitation and publicity. The Garden Club, through the leadership of a new member, was able to triple its membership.

To entice younger residents, membership efforts have to focus on where they are, such as school events, village celebrations and the like. An effort is beginning to do just that with the ice cream social and band concert, which will feature village non-profits. The Malta Ave. PTA's motto this year is to "Reconnect with Community." That group is uniquely able to develop community leadership.

The survey is out and for the first week there have been 135 responses. So far 200 survey forms have been printed and laminated posters with the QR code are ready to put in store windows. The village office and library have posters and forms. The survey will be mailed with water bills.

It was noted the County government is contemplating moving its operations to the former State Farm Insurance site at Exit 12. There is little the Comprehensive Plan Committee can do to address that specific potential loss to the village other than to provide guidance for future action that will make the village a more attractive place for investment and families.

Provision of up-to-date information technology infrastructure is a major need to attract families moving into the area due to expansion of the chip plants and other reasons. When people opt to move to the Capital Region and look over communities, whether its high-speed internet or charging stations, Ballston Spa should not be lacking.

As an example, the Town of Milton is planning on charging stations at the town hall, but Ballston Spa hasn't discussed with the town or applied for those grants to have charging stations in the downtown, which would encourage people to shop while their car is charging. Fiber optics are essential for people working from home. Marilyn offered to work on grants for these items.

Collaboration, not just between government and organizations but among organizations, is important to foster

communication among residents and supporters of the village and improve village amenities and delivery of services. Whether accomplished through a paid liaison or otherwise, a robust, inter-related network of non-profits is essential to bring up-coming generations into leadership positions in the government and community. As the volunteer base increases, so will the known talent pool for governmental positions, allowing them to turn over regularly.

The visioning workshop will be held for two hours, 7 to 9 on August 30 at the county special facilities building auditorium. It was decided Land Use will take two meetings, September 15 and October 6, and the last meeting to discuss how our proposals may fare in the real world will be October 20. Meeting was adjourned at 8:15.