

Town of Chatham Comprehensive Plan Implementation

Ad Hoc Advisory Group

Necessity

In spring 2003, the Chatham Town Board appointed a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee to review and update the Town's 30 year old Comprehensive Plan. The Committee embarked on a multi-year effort that engaged hundreds of Chatham residents and professional planner *Nan Stolzenburg*, AICP (www.planningbetterplaces.com) in determining the Town's desired future based on three questions:

Question 1: *What are the current conditions, features, and character of Chatham?*

Question 2: *What does Chatham want for itself in the future?*

Question 3: *How will Chatham attain the desired future state?*

In September 2009, the Chatham Town Board adopted the final Chatham Comprehensive Plan (the Plan) which is available on the Town's web site www.chathamnewyork.us. The Comprehensive Plan was developed to cover a 15 year time period. The next step was to modify the Town's outdated zoning regulations, long overdue for review, to support the implementation of the Plan and bring it to life.

In September 2011, then Supervisor Jesse DeGrootd convened a Zoning Implementation Committee (ZIC) to produce the legal language for modifying the zoning regulations to implement the Plan.

In December 2015, the ZIC provided its document to the Town Board. It is available on the Town's web site www.chathamnewyork.us.

In March 2016, the Town Board again hired *Nan Stolzenburg* to professionally assess the comprehensiveness and efficacy of the ZIC's zoning recommendations to fully implement the Plan.

On April 5, 2016, Ms. Stolzenburg presented her findings to the Town Board and public. Her conclusion was that the ZIC document provided a good but incomplete foundation on which to build the full range of zoning modifications necessary to fully implement the Plan.

Assigned Charge

On April 5, 2016, in order to efficiently and effectively implement the Town of Chatham Comprehensive Plan (the Plan), Town Supervisor Maria Lull tasked Board Member Bob Balcom with convening an ad hoc advisory group to:

- To produce a feasible, efficient action plan to fully implement the Chatham Comprehensive Plan

- To present this plan to the Town Board for its consideration

Assumptions of the Advisory Group

1. The Comprehensive Plan is a finished product, having been through the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) process and legally adopted by the Town Board.
2. Although the Plan calls for its review and update every 5-7 years (Plan, p. 6), the Plan has not yet been implemented via the key mechanism of modified zoning regulations; therefore, no review is possible or anticipated as part of the advisory group work.
3. The process would be two-fold. Firstly, to have a professional planner/attorney write draft law that improves or adds to the work of the ZIC. Secondly, to have the advisory group review draft work for further recommendations before forwarding to the Town Board. Areas and issues that emerge as potential amendments to the Plan should be expressed as a separate recommendation and left to the Town Board to convene as part of ongoing preparation for the Plan's eventual review and update.
4. Due to the need for expediency, the advisory group members will be drawn from members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and the Zoning Implementation Committee or have significant knowledge of the development of the plan and its composition. The advisory group will have up to 5 members including a Town Board member. Every effort should be made to complete the work of this group within six months.
5. The advisory group's meetings will be open to the public with meeting notices posted on the town website. All documentation will also be posted in draft and final form. Comments will be accepted throughout the process.

Possible Recommendations to Spark Advisory Group Discussion

1. As the Comprehensive Plan has already been approved the advisory group should insure the work being done improves obtaining the goals and strategies and fully implements the plan. In that regard, the focus is improve upon the work that has been done to date.
2. The Town Board hires Nan Stolzenburg to finish improving the ZIC recommendations to fully implement the Plan and produce the language for review and eventual adoption
3. The Town Board considers for adoption the complete list and language for zoning modifications necessary to implement the Plan
4. If needed, the advisory group recommends the design and operation of a public process to identify, review, and evaluate emerging issues as potential amendments to the Plan
5. The advisory group recommends that the Town's charge to its Zoning Board of Appeals and its Planning Board be aligned with New York State guidelines for such bodies.