

Town Topics

Wawarsing CompPlan Project

Approximately 40 persons attended a *Town of Wawarsing Comprehensive Plan* kickoff workshop April 29th at the *Ellenville High School*. The resulting Plan will consider and set guidelines for future development, conservation, recreation, housing, infrastructure and all aspects of community life, including transportation, the quality of neighborhoods, and economic opportunity; future Town decisions must then conform to the Plan.

Following an explanation of the planning process and some key facts on the Town of Wawarsing's growth and development by consultants Peter Fairweather, AICP (*photo, right, standing*) of Fairweather Associates, and Thomas Shepstone, AICP, of Shepstone Management Company (*photo, top center; with Town officials, seated, front*) there was an extensive discussion of community assets and liabilities.

Attendees compiled the following lists:

ASSETS

Mountain features; High quality scenery ; Storefront availability for businesses; Historical treasures; Hospital land and facility; Sewer and water infrastructure; Organizational infrastructure; Excellent volunteer spirit.

LIABILITIES

Multi-family housing conditions; Low incomes; Lack of economic opportunities; Empty storefronts; Lack of zoning enforcement; Lack of youth recreation; Lack of pride in properties; Irresponsible landlords.

Several specific issues requiring attention in the *Comprehensive Plan* were also identified. These included the following:

- 1) **Rte. 209** needs major upgrading.
- 2) An alternate to **Rte. 209** (e.g. **Berme Road**) needs developing and associated upgrades.
- 3) High-speed Internet hot spots are needed (T-1 and T-3 lines) to accommodate business activities. Roadrunner is insufficient for this purpose.
- 4) Additional means of communication at the local level are needed to replace the loss of the local radio station (e.g. web-based communications, low-power FM, community access cable TV).
- 5) Health care needs are paramount and include not only saving the hospital in some fashion but also recruiting physicians and other services.
- 6) Protection of remaining farmlands is essential to community character.
- 7) Consolidation of services needs to be studied and pursued where feasible.



- 8) School system planning needs to be integrated into other governmental planning.
- 9) Water supply watersheds need protection.
- 10) Energy-efficient forms of development need encouraging.
- 11) Unique features of the area's character (e.g. wooded two-lane roads) that attract young people need to be preserved.
- 12) The "curb appeal" of areas such as Napanoch and Cragmoor as destinations needs to be protected.
- 13) Pedestrian safety, particularly along **Rte. 209**, needs addressing.
- 14) The Village and Town need to collaborate in providing infrastructure and services.
- 15) A proactive relationship with the media is needed.
- 16) The Town needs to take advantage of telecommuting opportunities to reinvent the community in a post-manufacturing and post-tourism environment that is compatible with its evolution as a bedroom community.
- 17) Arts and culture should be part of the attraction of the area, along with agriculture and other tourism.
- 18) Zoning needs to be updated to accommodate home occupations and economic development of this form.
- 19) The Town needs to establish a bona fide identity and promote it ("seek the truth - it builds business").
- 20) Veterans' issues need special attention.

A second meeting was held June 16th; a revised draft survey was presented, and the 1969 Comprehensive Plan was reviewed to see how well it was followed, and what were the main concerns then (a greater emphasis then on the resort/tourism business). Survey questionnaires will be mailed to a large random sampling of Town residents. The Plan will take about one year to complete, although a preliminary draft will be ready by autumn.

To see details about the Plan and the public input process, go to www.fairweathergroup.com/Wawarsing

State law stipulates that a comprehensive plan shall identify the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, and methods for immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development of a town. Once a comprehensive plan is adopted, it becomes the legal basis by which the town creates or amends its zoning ordinance.

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