

**MINUTES OF GREENWAY COMMITTEE MEETING
SEPTEMBER 23, 2015**

Attended by: Ronny Hardaway, Chair
Phil Dankert, Member
John Dennis, Member
John Gillott, Member
Gerry Monaghan, Member
Deborah Dawson, Secretary

Ronny Hardaway called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

The members introduced themselves and stated their specific interests in developing the Village's greenway system.

- Phil Dankert is a member of the Finger Lakes Trail Council, a former member of the Village Planning Board, and was a member of the original Village Greenway Committee. His particular interests are Village "walkability" and planning the new park to be installed on the recently acquired Dart property.
- John Dennis is a member of the Finger Lakes Land Trust, the Finger Lakes Cycling Council, and has been active in several national and international conservation organizations and initiatives. He is interested in expanding safe cycling routes through the Village, and in developing innovative and affordable ways for the Village to acquire public recreational access to private property.
- John Gillott is a member of the Village Planning Board and an avid cyclist. His particular interest is in expanding a system of sidewalks and trails for walking and cycling throughout the Village.
- Gerry Monaghan is a member of the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council and the Village Board of Trustees. He represents the Village on the Tompkins County Council of Governments and the newly formed Lansing Town/Village Trail Committee. He is interested in developing a walking and cycling trail system that would connect and integrate all of the Villages parks, neighborhoods, and major commercial destinations.

Hardaway solicited the members' first impressions of the 20-year-old Greenway Plan (the "Old Plan"). The Committee members first acknowledged that every aspect of the Old Plan is outdated, and all subsequent comments assume that the Committee's first order of business will be to bring Old Plan up to date.

Executive Summary: The members approved of the general structure of the Executive Summary, particularly the assignment of specific tasks to the Board of Trustees and the Greenway Committee. Monaghan offered to take point on approaching local organizations (*e.g.*,

the YMCA) and businesses to sponsor or subsidize elements of the Village greenway system. Dennis agreed to explore the availability of government and NGO funding for greenway development.

The Old Plan's Executive Summary "[i]dentified an area for a Village Center." Dankert questioned whether a Village Center is still a viable goal, and all members agreed that the Village Center concept is unlikely to be implemented given the current state of development in the Village. (Monaghan noted that, as things currently stand, the Ithaca Mall is our Village center.) For this Committee's purposes, the Village Center concept will be a long, long, long term goal, and contingent on substantial future development in the northern portion of the Village.

Introduction: The members generally approved of the Introduction, although Hardaway and Dankert noted that the reference to the 1987 President's Commission report will certainly have to be updated.

The Committee appreciated the value of setting goals at the outset of the planning process, and stating those goals in the Introduction. The members opined that this Committee could use the goals stated in the Old Plan as a basis for developing goals for the "New Plan." Monaghan opined that this Committee should add a goal that incorporated a universal access/ handicapped accessibility concept into the New Plan.

This Committee's statement of goals will be discussed/determined at the next meeting. Dennis asked that the Chair or Secretary furnish the statement of goals from the Old Plan in a format that would permit editing and tracking. These will be provided. Dawson cautioned that, because New York's Open Meetings Law likely applies, the members should not be exchanging emails and drafts among themselves between meetings.

Short-Range Plan: The members generally approved of the methodology of the Old Plan: *i.e.*, inventory current sidewalks and trails; identify destinations; and determine where sidewalks and trails should be added to connect destinations.

Obviously, the existing system of sidewalks and trails has changed substantially, and the Committee's first task will be to update the inventory accordingly.

Monaghan stated that the list of Village destinations should include neighborhoods, since the sidewalk and trail system should be designed to connect Village neighborhoods into an integrated whole.

Monaghan also proposed that the New Plan include a safely designed bike path/trail around the Ithaca Mall loop road. He offered to approach the Mall management and ownership about funding, or at least subsidizing the cost of, this trail construction, since it would bring additional pedestrians and cyclists to the Mall area.

The Committee reviewed the Old Plan's "Short-Range Plan Recommendations" (pp.7-9) to determine which of them have been implemented. The members concluded that only Nos. 1, 4

and 5 have been completed as recommended. Nos. 2, 3, and 6-11 remain unrealized, and will have to be re-evaluated.

The Committee discussed the difficulties inherent in proposing substantial additions to the existing system of sidewalks and trails. These are largely budgetary – *i.e.*, who pays for building and maintenance? Dennis mentioned that new technologies are available for photo-voltaic sidewalks. He will explore the availability of funding and grants for installing these in the Village. Meanwhile, Hardaway suggested that the New Plan’s recommendations could/should be expressed in terms of a target number of square feet of sidewalks and trails to be constructed on an annual basis.

Long-Range Plan: The Committee unanimously agreed that the Old Plan’s use of Tax Parcel numbers to identify the locations of proposed greenway system elements was neither useful nor productive. The members all preferred a detailed map of the greenway system as a means of identifying existing and proposed elements of the system to the various Village Boards and Committees, as well as members of the public.

The Old Plan contains a map of the proposed greenway system between pages 19 and 20. That map shows a proposed park and trail system on the currently undeveloped “Sundowns Property.” A question arose as to how the previous Greenway Committee determined where to place that park and trail system. (Hardaway will ask Carol Klepack, who chaired the previous Greenway Committee, what that Committee’s process was with respect to the Sundowns Property.) As far as anyone knows, no one acting on behalf of the Village has ever approached the property owner(s) about locating a park and trails on the property. Most of the members felt that it would be presumptuous to retain the Old Plan’s proposals for the Sundowns Property under these circumstances. Although the Village’s subdivision law requires a developer to set aside a percentage of the subdivision’s area for recreational and open space, it does *not* empower the Village to decide where on the property that space will be. Dennis suggested that, based upon the procedural models used by larger national and international conservation organizations, the Village should be more assertive and proactive in designating where it wants the required recreational space to be. Dawson opined that following those models would require more funding and political will for green and open space than the Village currently has. This will likely be an ongoing issue for the Committee.

Hardaway deferred discussion/evaluation of the rest of the Old Plan until the next meeting, so that the Committee could consider two additional issues.

First, Hardaway advised the members that Mayor Hartill and the Trustees had asked the Committee to include provisions for landscaping Village properties in the New Plan, because the DPW staff is not able to handle these duties. The Committee will be considering ways to obtain landscaping services at minimum cost to the Village. Dawson offered two suggestions that she had discussed earlier with Village Clerk Jodi Dake and Planning Board member Lisa Schleelein.

First: Dake proposed a Village Volunteer Gardening Day, to occur 2 or 3 times a year. She would like to try this idea out by scheduling a tryout in October, to be announced in the upcoming newsletter. Dawson suggested that we might identify Villagers who are garden club members and/or BOCES Master Gardeners and might be willing to come and supervise the volunteers. The members agreed that this is an idea worth trying.

A second proposal was to set up an “Adopt a Garden” program, whereby local individuals, groups or businesses might “adopt” a piece of Village property adjacent to their location and keep it planted and weeded. Dawson stressed that the success of this program would depend on the DPW’s commitment to keeping the adopted gardens watered. (Schleelein reported that she and her husband had expended considerable time and resources on planting flowerboxes under Village signs, only to have them die because DPW did not water them. An experience like this would certainly discourage adopters from participating on an ongoing basis.) The members agreed that the “Adopt a Garden” proposal merits further consideration.

Monaghan reported that he and Dawson represent the Village on a joint Town/Village Trail Committee. The Town trail initiative is ambitious, and aims to connect the Town Center with the City of Ithaca through an integrated system of pedestrian and biking trails. The Town’s committee has obtained trail access through private properties by negotiating revocable easements with several owners, although it has hit a couple of obstacles just north of the Town/Village border. Meanwhile, the Village’s “assignments” at the last joint meeting were to make progress on the Village Comprehensive plan and on the establishment of a new Village Greenway Committee. Mission accomplished!

On a motion by Dankert, seconded by Gillott, the meeting was adjourned at 8:22 pm.

Next meeting: 7:00 pm, Wednesday, October 28, 2015
Village Hall

Action items: Dawson to check applicability of New York Open Meetings Law
Hardaway or Dawson to send editable/trackable “Goals” from Old Plan
Members to develop proposed “Goals” for New Plan
Members to review remainder of Old Plan and be prepared to evaluate