

**Village of Lansing  
Planning Board Meeting  
May 13, 2002**

The meeting of the Village of Lansing Planning Board was called to order at 7:30 P.M. by Chairman Ned Hickey. Present at the meeting were Planning Board Members Doris Brown, Phil Dankert, Carol Klepack and Maria Stycos; Trustee Liaison Lynn Leopold; Attorney Bill Troy; and Code Enforcement Officer Ben Curtis.

Hickey passed out an article from the Post Standard posted on the Cornell University web site regarding deer resistant plants.

Hickey also informed the Board about the May 22nd Local Govt. Officials Planning Board/Zoning Board overview at the Ramada Inn. Hickey noted that it is a worthwhile meeting and lots of handouts are provided particularly regarding SEQRA.

**Public Comment:**

Hickey opened the Public Comment.

John Piscopo, 62 Janivar Dr., spoke about a resident on Graham Rd. (Michael Aulbach) who has expressed concerns regarding traffic safety at the curve on Graham Rd. across from the University Heights apartments. He wants to know what can be done to slow traffic or otherwise improve the situation. Hickey stated there is an article in today's paper regarding a traffic calming meeting in the City of Ithaca and possibly Piscopo and Aulbach could attend and bring back information to this board. Brown is also concerned about the traffic which will cut through Burdick Hill Rd., Graham Rd., Oakcrest Rd., and Cayuga Heights Rd. when N. Triphammer Rd. and the bridge are being repaired. Brown would like to keep this in mind and ask residents for their opinions. Hickey stated gathering information is a good idea but then feels it should be passed to the Board of Trustees as they are the ones who approve improvements and allocate monies. Hickey is also on the N. Triphammer Rd. Planning Committee with Trustee Fresinski and he will notify him of the concerns regarding those roads.

There being no one else who wished to speak, Klepack moved to close the Public Comment period. Seconded by Brown. All aye.

**Unique Natural Area (UNA) #89, 90 & 64 – Cayuga Lake Cliffs:**

The first item on the agenda was a presentation by Nancy Ostman regarding the unique natural areas in the Village. Hickey stated that the Village would like to be sure that there are enough protective measures in the zoning law so that when development is proposed, particularly for area 64, the cliff edge and vegetation are protected.

Ostman brought a map showing UNAs in the Town and Village of Lansing, Town of Ithaca and Village of Cayuga Heights which was prepared by Rob Wesley. This map depicted vegetation on the cliffs and surrounding areas. The edge of Esty Glen is critical due to the thin soils. Having a buffer zone along the edge would protect the vegetation and Ostman feels 100 ft. should be a minimum but 150 ft. would be better, but acknowledges this would be difficult to determine and enforce. It would also need to be site specific. Measurement could be from the cliff edge or from where the soil is too shallow to plow. Ostman feels that once they knew what to look for, a Board member could determine where protection should occur and it would not be necessary to hire a botanist. Hickey stated that a survey of rare and scarce plants is required for UNAs such as in area 89 (McLain Subdivision). Ostman stated the person doing this survey could also look for changes in plants and the history of the site and fly-over photos could be useful in providing this information. Ostman stated there are several important criteria for UNAs: steepness of slope, thinness of soil, change in vegetation, and number of rare plants.

Hickey noted that UNA 90 (Esty Glen area) should not have any houses built there according to the *Tompkins County UNA Inventory* due to its smallness and steepness.

Troy asked Ostman for her response to someone who comes in with a detailed engineering study for a proposal to build in one of the UNAs. Ostman responded that although someone can build there safely since a building can be engineered for almost any site, it is reasonable to ask does it make sense for the community as a whole or will it destroy important vegetation and viewsheds?

Ostman stated her definition of viewshed is "Can you see out or can you see in?" The use of balloons can be helpful in visualizing.

Hickey stated that the *Tompkins County UNA Inventory* descriptions for all three UNAs in the Village of Lansing include scenic and aesthetic values. However, the current Village of Lansing Zoning Ordinance does not include conditions based on visual impact for special permits in UNAs. Hickey developed a form for evaluation of visual impacts based on the SEQRA Regulations and gave copies to the Board for their review. Hickey's form edited the SEQRA regs to be applicable locally, and Hickey feels this assessment of visual impact should become a part of the process for special permit approval. It would be applicable for development proposed in UNAs 64, 89 and 90. The first part is a description of the existing visual environment. The applicant should complete that part. Additional required information includes the following items: degree of project visibility, viewing context, and visual compatibility. The introduction page to SEQRA is attached to the back of the Visual Impact Assessment form regarding visual resources. An identification and inventory can be conducted. The Board must determine what visual resources they would like to protect such as the cliffs in UNAs 64 and 89. Brown stated there are other areas that need to be protected besides the three UNAs. Hickey stated it is easier to start with those three although he agrees there are other areas to consider protecting such as the pond on Sun Downs Farm. Klepack sees this as a complex process with legal issues. Hickey responded that conditions can be placed upon approval for special permits in UNAs which must be met by the applicant. Brown would like to see the UNAs protected. Hickey stated that when the McLain Subdivision was approved for 6 or 7 houses, there was a requirement to have the land reviewed by Wesley or Ostman for rare plants. When it was determined there were none there in UNA 89, the McLains were allowed to proceed. Hickey stated UNA 90 would take care of itself as probably no one would build there for practical reasons. UNA 89 would be a concern for the village. It is up to each municipality to decide how to protect the UNAs within its boundaries; it is not a county responsibility. Troy would like to review the Smokey Mountain Regulations regarding viewsheds and ridge lines. Leopold felt it is important to stick to objective criteria such as percent of slope and distance to center of stream. Hickey reiterated that it is the visual impacts he is trying to get at which is why he asked Ostman to recommend a distance for the setback from the cliff edge. Discussion ensued as to whether the viewsheds of concern are those from the property, from the lake, from west hill or wherever. The Board will continue to review this topic and possibly the amount of acreage required for buildable spaces in UNAs. For the next meeting, UNA 64 parcels will be reviewed to identify the number and size of parcels. Then the Zoning Law will be used to determine possible housing density. The density might allow for a provision limiting the number of houses permitted in a subdivision because it is in a UNA. Hickey felt it is also important to identify the 15% and 25% slope lines. Curtis stated there is a good map of the Village done by Steve Horn at the County GIS Office and the UNAs can probably be added to it, and possibly the 15% and 25% slopes.

- Leopold spoke about the importance of the biological corridor for various fauna. Hickey recommended having someone from the Ornithology Lab provide additional information.

Hickey stated he is reviewing the Comprehensive Plan and revisions need to be added specifying the natural resources in the Village. Hickey stated that although UNAs are listed, there is currently no reference to a biological corridor or woodlands and forestry. Leopold stated that the Natural Resources Inventory done by the Tompkins County Planning Dept. should also be included in the Comprehensive Plan. Hickey also asked whether the Cayuga Lake Watershed should be included and Leopold felt it might be worth looking into to see what is relevant for the Village of Lansing.

#### **Tree Inventory Report:**

Hickey stated that Lee Oplinger has given the Board his written report as well as a spreadsheet on disc. Samples of pages of the report were given to Board members for their review. The Board first looked at the inventory of the Village Community Park indicating the location of the park and the numbering of the trees and descriptions for each tree. Maps were also provided so a specific tree could be located. The results and recommendations were also

reviewed by Board members. Hickey feels it is important to add a category for forest resources to the Comprehensive Plan. This would include trees on municipal property and private woodlands. He asked Brown to develop the forest resource section and she agreed.

Hickey noted there are 7 trees which need to be removed because they have no value, they are in poor condition or they are dead (white oak on Bush Lane, 135 Graham Rd. honey locust). Troy recommended they be removed soon. Hickey will see that Superintendent of Public Works Reinhart receives a copy of the report. Hickey will also make a presentation to the Board of Trustees but feels it is up to the Mayor to initiate implementation.

The Community Park was just a sample of the work completed by Oplinger. Also reviewed were Highgate Walkway with a total of 184 trees, Shannon Park (105 trees), Dankert Park (10 trees), Community Park (74 trees), Votapka Greenway (10 trees), Area behind Village Office (48 trees), and Janivar Greenway (30 trees). Klepack also noted that the 6 new trees on Cinema Drive need to be added to the spreadsheet under "Off ROW Trees". Curtis will do this if someone will provide him the data. Hickey also noted that only trees of value were counted and thus all the junk trees were not counted. Hickey noted that in the Janivar Greenway, there is a butternut tree worth \$1900. The cost of providing this report was approx. \$800-900.

**Approval of Minutes – April 30:**

The Board reviewed the minutes for April 30<sup>th</sup>. Dankert moved to approve the April 30<sup>th</sup> minutes as revised. Seconded by Klepack. All aye.

**Reports:**

*Trustees:* Klepack attended the Trustees' meeting. Klepack stated Janivar Dr. residents are concerned about drainage problems and Mayor Hartill recommended they write a letter and then he would respond in an official way. Brown was reappointed for a 5-year term on the Planning Board. Edwin Teeter was hired as the seasonal laborer. There was mention that there is a vacancy on the Board of Zoning Appeals due to the expiration of the term of Bob Batterman. Klepack also stated that Mayor Hartill will give an update on the status of sewers at the next Trustees' meeting.

*Greenway Trail:* Hickey stated he is awaiting direction from Trustee Moore. Hickey has received a complaint from the president of the Lansing Trails Homeowner's Assoc. that the trail connecting Leifs Way to Janivar Dr. is overgrown with grass. Hickey recommended a memo to the Mayor and Hickey also notified Reinhart who stated he would get on it.

**Other Business as Time Permits:**

Hickey has spoken with and will meet with Tom Mank (County Planning) regarding the revisions to the population sections of the Comprehensive Plan.

*YMCA Landscaping Plan and Light Plans:* This was on the agenda but plans were only recently received and the Commission has not met so it may be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. Klepack and Dankert noted it is difficult to read the materials submitted and Curtis will request larger, more-detailed plans with keys indicating species and sizes of trees and shrubs from Paul Grinnell, YMCA Director. Hickey stated there are 9 trees being removed and only 5 being planted so there is need for a minimum of 4 trees. The 6 spruce trees in the drawing are for parking lot screening and do not count in the total. Leopold would also like to see a separate lighting plan.

Hickey noted the Board should look at the excellent job ProLawn is doing at the Pyramid Mall berm with the landscaping. He also noted there are an additional 60 trees in the tree bank awaiting planting there. Hickey has also advised Gary Sloan that Stycos will meet with him in the fall regarding removal of the dead trees on the Billy Bob Jacks property and replanting on the northwest corner utilizing groupings. This will screen Billy Bob Jacks from the residential area on Oakcrest Rd.

Troy reported that Gerald Talandis is agreeable to a quit claim deed for his property on Wakefield Dr. Mrs. Tran is having concerns about deeding property in the same area.

Hickey stated he has met with Viola Miller and the trail from Bush Lane to Lansing Trails is slowly being resolved. She stated she might be coming in for a small subdivision.

Leopold expressed concerns about the water leaving the Pyramid Mall blasting through the culvert during the recent rains.

Leopold also noted that Bill Cooke's sign was still lit although the business was closed. Curtis explained that our law requires signs to be turned off by 10:00 PM or when the business closed whichever was later. It is common practice for businesses to put lit signs on a timer to go off automatically at 10:00 PM.

**Adjournment:**

Klepack moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 P.M. Seconded by Dankert. All aye.