

Village of Skaneateles Planning Board Meeting August 6, 2012

An update for the Planning Board on the current status of several Village project initiatives by Village Trustee Lanning.

Present: Bruce Kenan, Chairman
Bill Eberhardt, Member
Megan Keady, Member
Douglas Sutherland, Member

Dennis Dundon, Clerk to the Planning Board
Riccardo Galbato, Attorney for the Planning Board

Trustee Lanning

Absent: Toby Millman, Member

At 7:08 pm, Chairman Kenan permitted Trustee Lanning to provide an informational update to the Board. Trustee Lanning said, "I am Jim Lanning, newly-elected Village Trustee. I am the liaison to the Planning Board and the Zoning Board. Some of the projects that I wanted to update you on are the Village Hall renovations. We have submitted our application for the grant for assistance in helping us with some of the green infrastructure funding that we have proposed – a solar PV array on the roof of the structure, a geothermal heat system which will require five drilled wells, LED lighting. The grant proposal is through NYSERDA through the Governor's office. They will pay up to 75% of the cost of these additional things that we have added onto the project. Chairman Kenan asked, "Is the regional planning – the reason why I made the call to Rob Simpson today – are they the gatekeeper for the funds?" Trustee Lanning replied, "They will rate and review on a regional basis. The governor has demanded that the money be distributed throughout all the regions of the state, so it doesn't all end up in Manhattan, or with one particular group. So they are going to make recommendations and they are going to rank the different projects, and then they will forward those to the state planning and development group and the governor. The last round of funding – they pretty-much rubber-stamped what the regional boards had approved. So it's important that we do that. This is the second round of funding. We found out the third week of June that this money was out there. The state has allocated \$12 million for this greenhouse gas reduction initiative. We are hoping to hear from them quickly; hoping to hear by September."

He continued, "We had ten bids for the asbestos removal, which we were thrilled with, and a low bid below \$40,000. That's going to take place next month. We didn't have to remove every piece of asbestos in the building, but we decided that since we have the place torn apart, that we

would go ahead and do full removal; which requires the tiles, the mastic underneath the tiles and some of the elbows on the plumbing be removed. So we are hoping to hear from this by September. We have a plan A if we get the funding and a plan B if we don't get the funding. That's progressing well. Right now we are in the lobbying stage for that which is why I'm trying to reach out to Nancy Cantor from SU and Rob Simpson, Centerstate CEO, who are the co-chairs of this along with 15 or 20 other business entities and mayors who make up the remainder of the board. Senator DeFrancisco is a new member to that. This came out of Joanie Mahoney's Sustainable Development Conference, so she is in favor of it. Our hope is that we can showcase these technologies here in Skaneateles, where agricultural or manufacturing entities may not be able to do that as well as we can."

Chairman Kenan asked, "Are you considering making the building a LEED certified building?" Trustee Lanning replied, "Yes that's part of it. We are at least silver and hoping for gold. Using natural lighting and LED lighting..." Chairman Kenan said, "I have no idea what the applications are that are in, but it would seem to me that it would be a compelling argument in favor of this grant." Trustee Lanning agreed and said, "And we hope to be the first LEED certified, net-zero-energy-use municipal building in the state and showcase that. The solar panels will have a 32 inch TV screen inside the hallway that classes of kids can come and see how much electricity we're generating, see how the geothermal system works, and use it as an educational display."

Member Sutherland asked, "Who is doing the engineering?" Trustee Lanning responded, "Paul Sack of Sack & Associates is engineer and Connie Brace of QPK is architect. As part of that Fennell Street development, the Village Board has approved the study to bury the electric lines on Fennell Street." Chairman Kenan asked, "Has the Village Board seen and responded to, the study that was commissioned by the Village, some time ago, by EDR for the treatment of Fennell Street? The idea was, we have a wonderful pedestrian environment on Genesee Street and it thrives. People love it – of course we're near the lake. Fennell Street looks like a suburban strip shopping center – all the buildings by a parking lot. It's a car-focused environment instead of a pedestrian-focused environment. The Village, through the behest of the Planning Board, commissioned EDR to do a study for Fennell Street. In some manner, the Village Board formalized it, endorsed it, but no one has ever done a thing to promote it other than occasionally – when somebody comes to this Board – we try to force the applications into that pattern. We haven't had that many. I highly encourage the Trustees to adopt it and run with it. And go find money, from the feds or someplace else to do the curbing, and parking and streetscape improvements necessary to put it to realization." Member Eberhardt said, "If they are going to open it up, make sure you bury it all." Chairman Kenan stated, "If you are going to bury something, make sure you bury it consistent with this plan and not something that you have to tear up and do over again. And don't put it in a place where it is in the wrong place when we finally introduce this streetscape. One of the things we did was we narrowed the street. We put parking along the street, and curbs and sidewalks and street trees and stuff. Those things need to be coordinated and you need a plan to coordinate it to. Don't do it without coordinating to this plan or something like it."

Trustee Lanning said, "To back up, Bill [Eberhardt] gave me a copy of that and I have read through the whole thing. It has gotten forgotten about and then we changed members of the

Board...” Chairman Kenan said, “This is a pedestrian community – it’s not Dewitt, it’s not East Syracuse, it’s not Manlius – and we don’t ever want to be that.” Trustee Lanning said, “Well my vision for the Village is that it be more of a walkable community, and that’s why I insisted in having public restrooms in the Village Hall that will be open from 6 am until midnight, even when the Village Hall and Police Department are locked up. We have bathrooms in the gazebo, we have them over here, but that section of town – some of the seniors, some of the women tell me that it’s too far between distances. So if we’re going to have public parking surrounding the Village Hall – I envision that we will have people walking to the Post Office, to CVS, to TOPS and not have to get in their car and go to each different business.” Chairman Kenan said, “That Post Office almost went out to the far reaches of Fennell Street, and if it wasn’t for the actions of this Board it would have. The Fire Department down here was almost a concrete block building and if it hadn’t been for the actions of this Board and some others who supported us, it would have been.”

Trustee Lanning said, “Two things – one the two year term on the Village Board has changed to four years. So a lot of these plans, when it’s only a two year cycle – when you are only a Trustee for two years, these plans don’t get carried forward.” Chairman Kenan, “When did that change take place?” Trustee Lanning, “This spring. I didn’t vote on it, but right before I came in. My term is three years, just to set it in sync with the others, but from now on, they will all be four year terms. So we will have longer-serving Trustees who will be more aware of the comprehensive plan of the Village. The fourth part of the Fennell Street project that I’m really working vigorously on is the creek walk project. I have spoken with the property owners that border that. The City of Syracuse actually owns the creek and they own the banks. I met with the City of Syracuse water commissioner and she gave me her full staff, and they are fully behind this. I thought it was going to be a problem for us to remove trees along the creek in order to build a path – and she started by apologizing that they didn’t have the budget to keep the creek better maintained.”

Trustee Lanning continued, “So I see a great opportunity here. The City is behind it. They pay some \$450 a year in property taxes. All they have asked for in return – they suggested that maybe we could lease the land from them for the amount of the taxes. And they asked for a little public relations, because they take the hit for the water being too low, for the water being too high – and they would like to showcase that they are working with the Village of Skaneateles to develop and promote this beautiful creek walk.” Chairman Kenan, “So for \$450 a year we would have a lease on it and control over the property?” Trustee Lanning, “Potentially, we could. I’ve talked to Bob Hood, who is the biggest player in this, he has the largest stretch of creek, he has been behind this for 20 years and frustrated that it has never been called to fruition. When we had the Duck Dash, we cleaned up down there and it really opens up your eyes to how beautiful it could be; it’s a forgotten part of the Village.”

Chairman Kenan asked, “Have you walked the creek walk from Elizabeth Street outbound?” Trustee Lanning said, “Yes. I do that frequently with my dog.” Chairman Kenan said, “Give your credit to Mr. Sutherland, here.” Member Eberhardt said, “At the inception, Jim, the outlet – for the first time in a long time – has three successful owners controlling the property. There’s progress there. With Ted Kinder getting the Seitz Building, and Jason [Slottje] owns the Stone Mill, and the Pioneer building. They are all willing to talk.” Trustee Lanning said, “Yes. I think

starting it behind the Old Stone Mill, the creek walk, then we get into Bob Hood who is fully in favor, the Feldmann family who is in favor of it – and I think it’s important that we get these easements and get the agreements even if we don’t have a master plan.” Chairman Kenan said, “I agree. If they are telling you now that they are in favor of it, sign them up for an easement right away. Any of the names you just mentioned – they were never in favor of it when it was a matter of having to give an easement in exchange for an approval of some kind. So sign them up quick.” Member Keady was in agreement. Trustee Lanning stated, “My criticism is that it’s been designed as a project 3 or 4 times and then you add in construction costs and you end up with a \$400,000 price tag and then the whole project gets scrapped. So my belief is that where we can get one easement, we should sit down, have the survey done and get that agreement. And just piece-meal it. Continue to chip away at it.” Chairman Kenan, “I think when Kinney Drug came in, and it was Feldmann’s property, I think we extracted, with the approval, an agreement that they would donate the land necessary for the creek walk along the creek property.” Member Sutherland said, “That’s somewhere in our documentation.” Chairman Kenan said, “We did the same thing with Creekside, they agreed to donate land for the creek walk – and that, other than the Elstein subdivision – are probably the only properties from which we extracted either the development of the creek walk or an agreement to dedicate the land necessary. Anybody who comes in for an approval along the creek, that’s part of the order of business. So maybe Bob Hood, Feldmann, and Creekside. I would look into the records for the approvals by this Board.”

Trustee Lanning said, “Right. Most of the creek walk is going to stay on, in my view, as close to the creek as we can and on the City of Syracuse property, since they are amenable to it. We will have to get some easements from Bob Hood and those...” Chairman Kenan, “Particularly if they are saying favorable things now, sign them up quick.” Member Eberhardt quickly agreed. Member Sutherland asked, “For the City-controlled property, how far beyond the bank does it go?” Trustee Lanning said, “It’s difficult to say. The creek changes -- from the 6 million gallons per day that they are putting down now, to sometimes upward of 200 million gallons. So the size of the creek changes; sometimes it goes into the parking lot behind CVS.” Chairman Kenan asked, “And how far downstream from the dam does their control go?” Trustee Lanning said, “I believe they go all the way to Elizabeth Street. And I see anything beyond the Creekside as another project. When you get into all the private homes, they are going to view this project differently. So one of the thoughts that we have – because we own the Creamery property – is to put a foot bridge across to the Creamery and go down Hannum Street to Griffin Street, and then pick it up again.” Chairman Kenan said, “We also developed a plan, at one time, for a bridge somewhere in the middle of that block – from the rear of the Sherwood over to that Fennell Street commercial corridor -- so pedestrians could communicate between the two commercial areas.”

Trustee Lanning observed, “And what a short walk, if they park behind the new Village Hall, to get to the Sherwood, the boats, the band concerts...” Member Sutherland said, “With the realigning of curbs on Fennell, we picked up a fair number of parking spaces along there, and we also had a couple of other isolated lot opportunities – the old Trabold property when combined into the Post Office lot, so you could go into the Post Office, through Trabold, and then come back out on Jordan Street. There was a logic to a whole bunch of those pieces. If you take a look at EDR, it kind of shows how those things work. But, as you are saying, one of the keys is that parking doesn’t do you a lot of good if you feel that you have to walk a half-mile to get into

Sherwood.” Trustee Lanning said, “That’s the challenge. I think one option is between Kinney’s and CVS where there is that single fence; obviously the creek walk is only seasonal, so if we could get Kinney and CVS to put two rails with a sidewalk in between and allow pedestrian traffic...” Chairman Kenan said, “The next time Victor Ianno comes in here for an approval, that railing is gone away. He put it in as a ‘spite fence’ when Kinney was built, and if he ever needs anything from the village it is going to disappear in a hurry. Don’t talk about two rails; it’s going away.”

Member Sutherland said, “Jim, one thing that may help you on the bridge going over, and I’m trying to remember exactly where it lands – it’s either city property or Sherwood or Sherwood-leased-from-the-City – because we got rights for the creek walk behind Kinney drug, that may be a good landing point. You have a lot of room to work with; it’s not like you are constricted. It would give you good landing spots on both sides.” Trustee Lanning said, “I envision both footbridges being built. The other proposal that has not gone public yet, is for the Historical society to purchase Ron Fisher’s garage – there are 4 garages with two apartments. It was a shoddily-built building, even in its day. If they can raise the funding to purchase that, they have a plan to put some parking spaces in and then picnic tables and some green space. That’s another opportunity for a bridge to go across. The Syracuse Engineering School has designed some foot bridges that would be strong enough and meet code to handle pedestrian traffic. The challenge with the bridge across to the City property would be dumping pedestrians out in the Sherwood parking lot. I’m not sure how the lawyers would view that or how the Sherwood would view that. It brings some more traffic in, but it also gives you some foot traffic though private property. Again it is important to chip away at it while the Feldmanns and Bob Hood are still in favor.” Member Keady asked, “What property is the Hood property?” Trustee Lanning said, “The teasel barn, and he also owns the Endurance Monster and the Janke building next to it. His concern is that he not lose any parking spaces back there. The Sustainable Development Conference had a session on walkable communities. One of the things that they do is to put curb at the end of the parking spaces and then drop the creek walk or whatever pathway behind it so that you have a cut-off between the vehicles and the pedestrians. That’s pretty much it.”

Chairman Kenan said, “I’ll speak for myself but I suspect others agree. We are absolutely behind reorganizing development along Fennell Street. The pedestrian bridges make a lot of sense. Anything this Board can do to move the creek walk forward; we pushed it periodically over a number of years and the Trustees haven’t had any interest in it.” Trustee Lanning indicated that he intended to be “obnoxiously relentless” over this.

Chairman Kenan continued, “So we did get a creek walk from Elstein as part of the subdivision approval. He had to develop it. Doug put a lot of effort into the design of it and into seeing it implemented.” In response to Trustee Lanning’s request for documentation on the various agreements discussed, Mr. Dundon indicated that he would research the past minutes for Kinney, Creekside, and Bob Hood, who got parking approved behind the houses on Fennell Street.

Trustee Lanning said he would talk to the Zoning Board of Appeals, but asked if the Village is exempt from its own zoning. Attorney Galbato said it is not exempt. He asked if the Board thought that there were any Zoning issues. Chairman Kenan replied, “For a creek walk, probably not. Probably the worst thing that would happen is that a conforming lot might become a non-

conforming lot. If you take it by easement, it probably does not affect it, but I'd still take it by fee if you can."

Trustee Lanning raised the possibility of needing a raised boardwalk in places, because of the fluctuations of the water. He reiterated the need to separate the construction phase cost estimates from the obtaining of easements, so that the eventual price tag does not doom the project in its early stages. Fundraising is a possibility; he noted the successful Duck Dash as an example.

Member Sutherland suggested that the project be viewed "as year-round if you can do it, and seasonal only if needed on an interim basis." He cited his involvement in the development of the Syracuse creek walk, and noted that it receives year-round usage. Chairman Kenan mentioned his own involvement, stating "it was done with private money, private initiative. The City eventually did pay for it, which was the original intent. That original segment, from Franklin Square to the harbor was done 22 years ago. It has matured and is an absolutely beautiful area. The City has stepped up and done from there out to the lake and from there toward downtown in the last couple of years. Those haven't settled in and become as mature. You ought to walk that – it's a very nice environment."

Trustee Lanning said, "If we tie into the Town, I see this eventually going all the way to the Charlie Major Nature Trail. The Davy's Forest Foundation, that I started, is in the process of having a piece of the creek donated to it between Fennell Street and Old Seneca Turnpike." Member Sutherland noted that the City rights-of-way go from the Elstein property all the way to the Charlie Major Nature Trail (CMNT). He suggested that, "You deal with them and them alone, to give you that access to extend the Elstein trail to Charlie Major. In effect that's occurring today, with snowmobilers and cross-country skiers using that same path through the winter months. There would need to be some formalized agreement so you could make fairly modest improvements. If you could do that, it might be that you have a trail from Mottville all the way back to Elizabeth Street."

Chairman Kenan asked what had become of the Skaneateles Short Line Railroad right-of-way, which had been used for CMNT. Trustee Lanning indicated that the Town is the sole owner of CMNT. The railroad ROW has been used for Fennell Street.

Trustee Lanning thanked the Board for its input and "blessing".

Chairman Kenan thanked Trustee Lanning for updating the Board. He also suggested that Trustee Lanning contact S. Richard "Rick" Fedrizzi, the President of the US Green Building Council to gain an expression of support for the Village's grant application.

Upon acclamation, the meeting was adjourned at 7:48 pm.