

Village of Skaneateles Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting August 28, 2012

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

Present: Lisa Banuski, Chairman
John Crompton, Member
Stephen Hartnett, Member
Larry Pardee, Member
Craig Phinney, Member

Dennis Dundon, Clerk to the ZBA
Riccardo Galbato, Attorney to the ZBA

James Lanning, Village Trustee

At 7:48 pm, Chairman Banuski thanked and permitted Trustee Lanning to provide an informational update to the Board. Trustee Lanning said, "I am Jim Lanning, newly-elected Village Trustee. The Mayor appointed me as the liaison to the Zoning Board and the Planning Board. I want to have regular meetings and conversations with all of you. John and I are on the steering committee for the new Village Hall project. Asbestos is being removed as we speak. We're focusing just on the structure and getting the Village office moved in, then the Police Department. Then the site plan will be another stage with parking and easements and walkways. One of my primary concerns for being on the Village board is to make this a more walk-able Village."

[Member Hartnett excused himself and left the meeting due to prior commitments.] Trustee Lanning continued, "We can alleviate parking, we can create safer walking zones. It really something that's better health, better on so many fronts. And I am pursuing that. The Fennell Street master plan has been kicked around for about ten years. I dusted it off and pulled it out and I'm carrying the banner on that. We've undertaken a study to bury the power lines underground, and the feasibility of that. Right now it is preliminarily from the Town Hall pole to the pole in front of the Creekside Books. That's what we're planning for. We are also dusting off the plans for the creek walk behind the five properties – the Old Stone Mill, Kirby Janke's building, Bob Hood, Shirley Feldmann and Victor Ianno. I have met with each and every one of those individuals; they have all been very amenable to the idea – and have been for years. In my opinion, the creek walk has never happened because we made it too big of a project – going all the way down to Elizabeth Street. We tried to encompass construction, easements, rights-of-way – and then it never gets off the ground. So those five individuals are the main players. They are all in favor of it. And that gets it almost to Kelley Street. Sometimes there is six million gallons per day going down, and sometimes it is 200 million. That's the challenge to the creek walk, because some of those properties flood – which means having to raise a boardwalk. There may

be options for construction of a pedestrian bridge that could expand down Hannum Street to Griffin and then tie it in with the new housing development creek walk. So, get what we can, while we can. All five players are on-board with this and the challenge is probably Bob Hood's property and maybe Kirby Janke's. Kirby doesn't have the real estate behind his building; it's very tight there, and Bob has tossed around some great ideas of horse-trading with the Village for parking back there. He owns all that parking space and he owns the teasel barn, so he wants to hear ideas and suggestions. As part of this, if any of these five individuals come before the Zoning Board of Appeals for anything, try to take the creek walk easements into account."

Trustee Lanning continued, "We might be three or four years down the road, but I just keep plugging away at it. I've seen other plans from Old Stone Mill to Elizabeth Street all at once, and you end up before the Village Board with a half-million dollar proposal that isn't going to get three votes." Member Phinney asked, "Is that secondary to the Fennell street plan or is that part of it?" Trustee Lanning said, "You know it is part of, because part of the Fennell Street plan calls for the 'Four Sisters' (four houses in a row) to lose their front driveways and get driveways from the rear." Chairman Banuski said, "I actually think it would benefit each of those properties to do it that way." Trustee Lanning said, "If we enhance all of Fennell Street, everybody's property value goes up."

Chairman Banuski said, "The comprehensive plan that you are working with is not the vision from the people who did the Notre Dame School of Architecture, correct? Because they actually proposed for where the new Village Hall is going to be – to raze that building and bring buildings to the street, so you don't have the big, gaping teeth missing along that street. And obviously with this plan it does not. Those ideas were never incorporated into a formal comprehensive plan. But those ideas are not going to happen. Correct?" Trustee Lanning said, "There are a number of thoughts and proposals. The problem with these plans seems to be that everybody nods their head and then they go into a file. And then you change the Board." Member Crompt said, "The thing with the comprehensive plan and the Notre Dame plan is that there are some really great ideas. But are they really feasible? Is anyone going to really do them? They just kind of drift away." Chairman Banuski said, "As a Village we can't afford to do it – as the Village. To knock down that building and build an office right there, which is really what should happen. I was heartened when we didn't build the horrible pole barn of a new fire house up off the hill. I do think that there is a place for municipal buildings to be cornerstones, landmarks in a village – courthouses, libraries, firehouses, town halls, village halls. So I do think it's kind of a shame but I do get that at this particular time we do not have a Village that's going to be knocking down a building and putting something up for cosmetics."

Trustee Lanning said, "From the other side of the street, from Mr. Lynch's corner property on down, when we bury the electric lines we have to discuss among ourselves, who would pay to run the electric line underground to each individual house. What the precedent is here. I'm doing some research on what happened on Genesee Street here. There are some people who are not going to want to pay that out of their own pocket. Whether the Village takes it on then the Village takes on precedent. So I'm researching that some more."

He continued, "What I'm asking the Zoning Board is to consider these plans. If anybody from fennel Street comes in for a Zoning Variance, consider the fact that we want to build a creek

walk, and we want to bury electric lines. On Kane Avenue -- when we got into it with the Prentiss Drive folks -- those two properties just to the south of the fire department; what a disappointment that we didn't get sidewalks in front of those houses." Chairman Banuski agreed, suggesting that they are also needed on Onondaga Street. Member Pardee noted the same conditions on West Elizabeth Street.

Trustee Lanning said, "One thing I glazed over is that the City of Syracuse, in addition to the water department building, a little piece of real estate behind the Sherwood Inn parking, and the stream and all of the bank real estate. The City Water Commissioner and staff are very pleased that we are embarking on this endeavor, they apologized for not having maintained the stream better. The only things they asked for in return is good publicity and an offset to their current \$400 property tax bill. They are on-board with this and most of the creek walk could actually be built on their property. But we still need easements." Chairman Banuski said, "Terrific. I think we all do need to be on-board. I like the idea that you'll be coming to our meetings."

[Attorney Galbato arrived.]

Member Pardee asked, "Can I ask you a question about the DPW and Police Department. What's going on with the manpower in DPW and Police? Are we doing away with the police department?" Trustee Lanning responded, "No, we are not doing away with the police department. We have a lot of part-timers now; I believe we have two full time employees, the chief has retired and we have gotten conflicting responses from the State as to whether we need to replace the Chief or whether we can have a sergeant-in-charge. Right now it looks like we are leaning toward having a new Chief. If you have a chief, you have the chief. If you have a sergeant-in-charge, then he can be riding around in a patrol car, doing sort of both jobs. But it's not going to go away. We are renovating a third of the new Village Hall for the Police." Member Pardee continued, "Any plans to beef up the DPW? Personnel got cut in half in the last year or so." Trustee Lanning said, "We went from seven to pretty much three. State-mandated pensions and health-care costs are forcing municipalities to lay people off. We got Tier 6, but that doesn't help for 30 years." Member Pardee said, "I'd rather see my taxes go up by \$50 a year to pay for another body in that DPW to maintain the services that we have become used to. If we had had snow this year like we had last year, we would have had snow in the streets until July, I think. You dodged a big bullet this year -- a big bullet." Trustee Lanning agreed that it was a lucky year.

Trustee Lanning said, "That's it in a nutshell. I would love to have an open dialog with all of you. Thank you." The Board agreed. Chairman Banuski said, "We will keep all of that in mind. Thank you very much."

This portion of the agenda concluded at 8:02 pm.