

## MEETING SUMMARY

**DATE:** November 21, 2003

**SUBJECT:** TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
NOVEMBER 20, 2003 - PUBLIC INPUT MEETING  
Hoover Elementary School  
Town Job Number 2655

**ATTENDANCE:** Ron Moline, Supervisor; Ed Umiker, Chair of Comprehensive Plan Board; Joseph Shiah, Town Board; Ray Sinclair, Town Board; Lynne Sutherland, Steven Achramovitch and Robert Morris of Comprehensive Plan Board; Andrew Reilly, Mark Mistretta and Ellen Parker of Wendel Duchscherer; members of the public.

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The meeting began with an Open House format. The public could view maps on display, or speak to project representatives. Eighty-six persons signed in, including project representatives, Town officials and the general public.

Councilman Ray Sinclair opened the meeting by welcoming the public. He introduced Town officials and members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee who were in attendance. Ed Umiker, Chair of the Comprehensive Plan Committee, made a brief presentation about the background of this planning project, and its importance.

Andrew Reilly gave a brief presentation to outline the Comprehensive Planning process—how the plan will be developed over the next year. He also discussed the purpose of the meeting, which is to hear from the community about issues of concern. He noted that there will be additional public input meetings in the future. He encouraged people to provide input so the Plan can reflect what the public wants for the Town's future.

The floor was then opened to questions and comments from the public. The following list summarizes the major points that were addressed, organized by topic. Many comments were brought up by more than one member of the public.

- **Town Services**  
Several residents spoke highly of the quality and responsiveness of Town services. Specific services that were praised included Highway, Recreation, police, and leaf and garbage pick-ups. Services for well seniors are very good (senior center, etc.), but Meals-on-Wheels is the only service for housebound or frail seniors.
- **Communication**  
There was a concern that there is not sufficient communication between government and the public, and that better advance notification is desired.
- **Trails**  
Many people spoke at length about the potential for a Rails-to-Trails project along the rail line from LaSalle Station in Buffalo to the Erie Canal. Opinions were divided. Opponents of the trail were concerned about public safety, maintenance, privacy, and costs for maintenance and patrolling. There was strong concern that there has not been sufficient advance information

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about the project, and that the neighbors have not been consulted. There was also concern about the removal of the rails, its timing, and what will be done with the property after the removal. At least one opponent indicated support for trails, but not in this location.

Other residents spoke in favor of greenways and trails. The tie to the canal and the Riverwalk was seen as a positive by some. Some of those in favor of trails did emphasize the need for adequate maintenance and monitoring, as well as a need to ensure adequate lighting, and fix areas of poor drainage in the vicinity. Many people noted that they would use the bike trail, and that it would be a popular feature to attract younger residents. Some commented that there are problems with the corridor now, with poor maintenance, anti-social behavior (drinking, littering, loitering) that may be lessened with a trail in place.

- **Economic Development**

There was interest in creating jobs and encouraging new businesses to support the tax base. Several people were in favor of doing more with the waterfront, whether for industry or tourism-related activities. One suggestion was to relocate businesses at Military and Sheridan to open the area up for larger-scale retail development. The Kenmore and Sheridan area was also cited as an area where redevelopment is possible. A person representing the River Road Fire Department urged new development in the riverfront area to boost the tax base. He recommended extending James Avenue to open up area for new development. Several people urged the redevelopment of existing commercial plazas with vacancies or in need of improvements or upgrades. The Colvin-Eggert Plaza was specifically mentioned. Opinions were mixed on the Elmlawn cemetery/ Colvin Woods project, with concerns about traffic and loss of greenspace.

- **Why Do You Live in Tonawanda?**

Responses to the above question generally centered around the high quality of services in the Town. Responses included quality schools, parks, the convenience, excellent recreational programs, nice neighborhoods, good mix of homes and businesses making it easy to walk to stores, and the responsiveness of the Town Board to residents' concerns.

- **Property Maintenance**

Residents want to ensure high quality of property maintenance throughout the Town. They want to encourage absentee owners to maintain the same high standards as owner-occupants. The doubles on Claremont were specifically mentioned. There were concerns about property maintenance on the part of utilities, particularly in regard to keeping grassy areas mowed. There were complaints about the new building codes, and how they discourage renovations due to added expenses in order to be in compliance. It was noted that the Town should try to devise ways to encourage property owners to invest in their properties.

- **Recreational Programs**

Several attendees noted that recreation in the Town is "second to none", particularly the programs, the Aquatic Center, and the Golf Dome. There were several comments about the desire for better ice surfaces. The existing ice rinks are older, and do not have good facilities for spectators. Also, as outdoor facilities, they have a limited season. There was support for additional soccer fields. It was noted that parking at Kenney Field is a problem. The diamonds at Mang Park were cited as a problem- adults are using them, and the dirt infields are difficult to maintain and cause dust. Parking at Mang Park is also an issue.

- **Traffic**

Traffic is a problem noted by many residents. Sheridan Drive and Colvin Boulevard were cited

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as high traffic roadways, where problems exist. One resident was opposed to bike traffic on Colvin. Specific problem intersections/areas include Parker and Englewood; Belmont and Colvin; Colvin and Eggert (including the entrance to Embassy Square Apartments); Sheridan Drive and Delaware Road (Tim Hortons); and Sheridan Drive and Parker.

▪ **Housing**

There is a need for housing that is appropriate for active seniors (one-story, smaller homes, or one-story rental units with garages). It was noted that long-time residents of Tonawanda must move out of town to meet their housing needs. Also, should consider assistance to elderly to maintain their homes (it was noted that the Town does have this program in eligible neighborhoods.)

There is also strong demand for home building lots. Whenever a lot becomes available due to a demolition, it sells quickly. Residents would like to be able to buy 4-bedroom homes in Tonawanda.

▪ **Miscellaneous**

--Sidewalk maintenance- there are areas where sidewalks are in very bad condition. Englewood was specifically mentioned.

--Beautification of Englewood area.

--Fencing at Lincoln Park to keep park users off neighboring properties.

--As a first ring suburb built at a compact scale, the Town could be very popular in the future as gas prices rise. Should consider mass transit.

--Need to keep mosquitoes under control, because of West Nile virus

--Need street lighting on Harrison Avenue between the tracks and Parker

The meeting was formally concluded at about 8:45 p.m., but many residents remained to look at the materials and talk to project representatives.