

October 24, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC)

CPC Chair Chris Foss led this monthly meeting at Caroga Town Hall for 1 hour from 6:08 PM to 7:08 PM. Committee members present were: Chris Foss, Rachel Simonds, Anita Long, Doug Purcell, and Jim Hale. Dave Cummings and Jeremy Manning were unable to attend. Mr. Manning gave input via email.

1. Prior Meeting Minutes

- The committee waived reading and accepted 9/24/2024 monthly meeting minutes.

2. Old Business: Budget

- Chris Foss noted that the Town Board approved the Committee's proposed 2025 Budget request.

3. Public Survey

Overall Scope

- Chris Foss noted that after the September meeting, Anita Long edited initial draft survey questions.
- Anita Long clarified, "Draft #2 is obviously still too long. Our goal is to keep working together on questions. As we do so, I wonder about scope: both the scope of the initial survey and the scope of the planning process. The public process can have multiple steps or stages such as, initial survey, later survey, informational meetings, public workshops, and stakeholder interviews. Perhaps some draft topics—the economy, natural environment, built environment, and land use—can be in later stages? I wonder if an initial survey might focus on what I've called 'The Caroga Experience'—issues, opportunities, and vision? What do others think about the scope for the survey and the overall plan?"
- Doug Purcell asked two questions. First, "How would we get analytical data out of a public discussion at the level of detail needed for planning and identified in draft questions?" Second, "How do we do a quick survey?...I understand points about simplifying...We need a quick survey."
- Anita Long agreed, "Yes. The initial rough draft is not a quick survey. I just think from the start, we—as a committee—need to consider what we need to write a *Comprehensive Plan*. That is about scope and issues. We don't just make it up. It's a collaborative process with public input. That said, I agree we need a short, simple, doable initial community survey."
- Chris Foss added, "We want all the information, but doing a survey can't be like taking a final exam... It's a quick survey...We need to find a way to keep it short...Maybe 15 questions."
- Doug Purcell agreed, "Initially, we need a short survey. Ultimately, we also need to get questions answered to have a decent *Plan*...Otherwise, there is not enough input, so when people try to get projects done, there is not enough public support."

Survey Topics and Questions

- Doug Purcell continued, "With the questions Jeremy Manning sent, he was able to get it down to something workable...as a quick survey...Those questions start to point us in the right direction."
- Anita Long agreed, "Yes. To me, he focused mainly on those initial questions about strengths, weaknesses, attractiveness, plus amenities...In some cases, he asked questions in a different way. Perhaps each of you also have different suggestions and ways of asking them?"
- Doug Purcell agreed, "Yes. He took similar topics and reworded some of them."

THE CAROGA PROCESS

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

TOWN OF CAROGA
Fulton County, New York

- Anita Long added, “I had a reason for 4 initial questions: (1) ‘What do you like best?’, (2) ‘What do you want to change?’, (3) ‘What are major threats?’, and (4) ‘What are key opportunities?’ I was thinking of a strategic planning technique used for local planning in New York State: *SWOT* analysis... Naming *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats* helps define Caroga’s present and future. What are Caroga’s current distinct assets and challenges? What are the priority impacts to pursue? What risks need to be managed or prevented? Some strategic plans include a 2x2 SWOT table. Do we want to end up with that kind of 4-square chart, or do we want to frame issues in another way?”
- Jim Hale said, “I think that should be pared down. Like with the question about ‘threats.’ That turns you right off. What is a threat? I don’t know. It’s more, ‘What’s Caroga have, and what do we need?’”
- Rachel Simonds added, “Maybe reword it. Like maybe what challenges worry people?”
- Rachel Simonds continued and specified a framework plus target questions from the draft #2 survey. “My overall thought is to have sections to get an initial temperature of what is important to people...I’d like to have a sense of these 5 things before moving forward:
 - (A) **Demographics** (What are people’s age, gender, resident status? Are we reaching people?)
 - (B) **Assets** (3:like best? 7:public services? 12:economic development? 14:natural resources?)
 - (C) **Challenges/Worries** (5:threats?, 15:infrastructure needs?, 22:land use & zoning?, 23:planning?),
 - (D) **Vision/Forward-Thinking/Future Envisioning** (6:key opportunities? 10:vision wording?)
 - (E) **Major Projects** (21:STRs?, 17:municipal buildings?, 16:public sewer?, 18:clubhouse/multi?)
- Anita Long supported the basic framework to help understand current position and future priorities.
- Jim Hale selected and supported questions from the draft #1 survey with similar categories:
 - (A) **Demographics** (45: age?, 46:ed?, 44:residence?, 43:how long?, 52:housing?)
 - (B) **Place/Strengths/Weaknesses** (3:What makes Caroga the place it is? 5:like best? edit7:change?)
 - (C) **Priorities** (15:services? 16:rec? 24:trails? 21: infrastructure? edit20:economic development?)
- Jeremy Manning drafted 15 revised and new questions with related categories:
 - (A) **Demographics** (1.age, 2.employment status: *work from home-work in Town of Caroga-Work Outside Town of Caroga-Student-Retired-Unemployed*, 3.residence, 4.duration, 5.housing status: *rent a home-own a home-rent an apartment-own an apartment-other, please specify*)
 - (B) **Town Features/Quality of Life** (6.love most? 7.strengths? 8.weaknesses?)
 - (C) **Future Amenities/Services:**
 - 9.What, if anything, would make Caroga a more attractive place to live?
 - 10.Does Caroga have enough amenities and services needed in daily life?
 - 11.Is Caroga’s downtown an inviting place that offers amenities for both residents and visitors?
 - 12.Which of the following public facilities and local amenities would you like to have more of in... Caroga? *Athletic Fields...Playgrounds...Public spaces...Public beaches...Small businesses...Other*)
 - 13.Are there specific amenities or types of businesses you would like to see come to...Caroga?
 - 14.Do you feel that Caroga is a safe place to live?
 - 15.Is there something not covered by this questionnaire that you feel needs to be addressed?
- Chris Foss also noted the brief format of the example survey he shared from Fulton County Planning:
 - (A) **Quality of Life** (What 3 things... like best? like to change? improve/enhance the quality of life?)
 - (B) **Economic Development** (rate items: *strongly agree-agree-no opinion-disagree-strongly disagree*)
 - (C) **Housing** (sufficient diversity? rank 5 most important types of housing to be developed?)

(D) **Community and Recreational Facilities** (rate specific items)

(E) **Tell Us About Yourself / Demographics** (How old are you? What is your gender? Where do you live? How many years have you lived here? How do you use your property? Employment status? *Student, Employed Full-Time, Employed Part-Time, Self-Employed, College Student, Retired, Other*)

(F) **Do you have any comments not covered by this survey?**

- Chris Foss emphasized the length (8 target questions plus 6 demographic questions and 1 open-ended question). He said, "I wasn't specifying questions...Some of that about projects could either be in an initial survey or a subsequent survey."
- Chris Foss added, "Another thing that occurred to me is that a big change in Caroga over the past few years has been the CAC. Do we want to get into, 'What are your feelings about Caroga Arts, and what they are doing?' Or do we want to get into that later? Do we want to be specific or general?"
- Jim Hale responded, "That is a major focal point in the Town of Caroga now."
- Chris Foss continued, "Yes. The prior *Comprehensive Plan* focused on Town Center."
- Anita Long noted, "Maybe we could ask, 'Do you support the revitalization of Sherman's Park as a central anchor and gathering place of Caroga's Town Center?' or something like that?"
- Chris Foss said, "It's been one of the biggest things that's happened here over the last 10 years, and it's been one of the most controversial things that has happened over the last decade."
- Jim Hale responded, "It opens a can of worms for some people. You love it, you hate it, or you have a lot of mixed feelings about it."
- Doug Purcell added, "Ultimately, it is the elephant in the room that needs to be addressed."
- Rachel Simonds said, "Maybe we could have one question, or within major projects ask: 'What economic development objectives or projects do you support?' and make it a check list including Rebuilding Shermans, Rebuilding the Golf Clubhouse, and so on. That could get a temperature check about what people are thinking so far."

Residency Questions

- Rachel Simonds emphasized, "Another thing we can do is build the survey to branch, where one of the first questions we can ask is, 'Are you a resident?...If they respond, 'No. I am a visitor', then the survey could go to a specific set of questions, such as, 'What brought you to the Town of Caroga? Would you come back?' Versus, if they specified resident, then they could go to other questions."
- Anita Long supported that approach and noted that another survey branched to ask visitors, "How often do you visit? Why do you visit? Have you ever considered moving here? What factors would keep you from moving here? What would be the key factor to convince you to move here?"
- Jim Hale noted a basic residency question, "I don't think the question should ask zip code."
- Chris Foss noted, "The zip codes aren't needed to pinpoint where they live. Just ask, 'Do you live here, or do you live somewhere else?' Somewhere else doesn't matter where it is. We don't need zip... Maybe, 'Do you live within 50 miles?' or 'Do you live within New York State or another state?'"
- Jim Hale noted specific types of part time residents: seasonal residents versus weekend residents.
- Anita Long suggested asking, "'Are you a resident of the Town of Caroga? No, I am a Caroga visitor. Yes, Permanent 12-Month Resident. Yes, Part-Time Seasonal Resident.'" If visitor, do branch questions. If part-time, perhaps ask, 'Do you primarily come to Caroga on weekends?' and 'On average, how many months do you spend in Caroga?' and then return part-time seasonal folks to the resident questions."

- Chris Foss suggested, “If seasonal, on average, how much time do you spend in Caroga? *6 months. 3 months. Less than 3 months. Weekends.*”
- Anita Long asked, “Should we start or end with the demographic questions?”
- Jim Hale and Rachel Simonds both said, “Start,” Adding, “If someone starts and does not finish, then we want that information at the beginning.”

Response Format

- Chris Foss asked, “Jeremy got into questions like, ‘What do you most love about the Town of Caroga?’ Do we want to leave that as a fill-in-the-blank, or do it as a multiple choice or ranking?”
- Anita Long responded, “Either way. Maybe some open-ended and others check boxes? This also relates to the question Barb DeLuca asked, ‘How will this be analyzed’...It’s valuable to think ahead to how results will be summarized into a short report...Probably we will write that, not Survey Monkey, especially given paper surveys. It needs to be brought into a spreadsheet to do summaries. So, for example, I envision a report that has, perhaps, pie graphs or box charts that basically say, ‘78% of respondents said they most love Caroga’s lakes and mountains’, for instance. Questions can be graphed to summarize and present results. We can interpret categories for open-ended responses, and check boxes already have categories. Check box responses are easier to analyze and graph.”
- Chris Foss agreed, “Yes. It will be easier to analyze if most everyone checks one box...At the same time, with an open-ended question, we may get something we’re not expecting.”
- Doug Purcell added, “Responses may be similar but not exactly the same...My opinion is that I really struggle when it comes to the open-ended questions. I’d much rather rank items. That’s personal. Others might be different.”
- Rachel Simonds added, “We can just add, ‘Other’ to rank questions [and give space to specify].”
- Chris Foss and others agreed, “Exactly. Other, or None of the Above, and so on. Write in option.”

Survey Methods & Mailing Lists

- Chris Foss asked, “Do we have a consensus yet about how to do the survey? Is Survey Monkey the way we want to go?”
- Rachel Simonds responded, “I think so. I talked to Barb DeLuca, and she agreed that we could do that within the approved budget. We could use Survey Monkey, and we can do as many surveys as we want... And people may be familiar with it and more likely to use it and do the survey.”
- Doug Purcell agreed and said, “Yes. If people have done surveys, they probably have encountered it.”
- Anita Long agreed and asked, “Have you developed and created surveys with that platform before?”
- Rachel Simonds replied, “Yes.”
- Chris Foss added, “I think that’s great. It’s easy to use. People have used it before. We’ll nail it down.”
- Doug Purcell noted accessibility issues, and asked, “How would you envision getting surveys to people who do not want to do it online? Put the forms out there, collect them, and then have someone enter the information?”
- Rachel Simonds agreed and added, “Yes. We could have paper copies here at Town Hall.”
- Anita Long supported that paper option too, and said, “Yes. We can code the paper responses to be part of the results. No problem. I expect that many people will do it online, but it’s hard to tell. Maybe on an announcement, we can write something like the following.”

THE CAROGA PROCESS

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

TOWN OF CAROGA
Fulton County, New York

Please complete this initial Community Survey by X DATE. You may complete this Survey online or on paper. Paper surveys can be requested and then mailed back or dropped at Town Hall. For a paper survey, please write to the Town of Caroga Comprehensive Plan Committee; PO Box 328; Caroga Lake, NY 12032 or ComprehensivePlan@TownOfCaroga.com. Thank you for your input.

- Doug Purcell agreed and noted experience with the local public in his work with the Caroga Museum noting, "Some people say, 'I will not use QR codes.'"
- Jim Hale agreed and pointed to problems with QR codes for restaurant menus. He wants paper.
- Rachel Simonds added, "I think we still need to mail a card with a QR link and a way to request paper. What we send should have forwarding, so that it gets to where ever they are now."
- Anita Long asked, "Do we do that as an Every Door Direct Mailer (EDDM), where we do not specify addresses, unless they are outside the 12032 zip or PO Boxes? If it is a 1-page card stock mailer, then it can have that QR link plus the invitation to get a paper copy to participate."
- Chris Foss added, "We can also take cards and put some in the Campers' Corner Store, Canada Lake Store, and other local businesses. We can reach additional people that way."
- Doug Purcell noted, "EDDMs for Caroga are a problem. In addition to the post office and 12032, residents of the town also get Johnstown mail or Gloversville mail."
- Anita Long replied, "Agreed. Some need to be addressed and mailed with stamps."
- Rachel Simonds noted, "I think that the Post Office can do the 12095 and 12078 within Caroga."
- Doug Purcell agreed and noted, "Yes you can. With those sections, you also get Bleeker, and down to Johnstown at the Town Line Museum on Route 29 before Trackside near Johnson Hall."
- Jim Hale asked, "How do people like me get it, when my address is Scotia?"
- Doug Purcell noted that EDDM mailers are not forwarded to other addresses, raising needs to mail to people individually. (He confirmed with USPS staff. Mailers without addresses cannot be forwarded.)
- Anita Long noted, "In addition to developing questions, maybe we need to start working on a mailing list of resident property owners from the public online tax roll records."
- Chris Foss summarized, "So, we agree about using Survey Monkey. Ultimately, we want to draft questions and then put the draft on Survey Monkey and share it with everyone on the committee, so we can review it before it goes live. Before it goes live, we all want to go through specific wording."
- Rachel Simonds agreed and added, "One of us could bring a computer and put it up on the screen and all look at it at the same time. We probably will not have that until January."
- Chris Foss said, "I think it will be easiest if we all go through this and work on it. We've discussed a lot of topics but have not gotten to the specifics of questions and wording, so we can do that next time."

4. Next Meeting

The goal for the coming month is for each committee member to work on initial survey questions, and then the committee will come together to agree on specific questions and wording.

Due to Thanksgiving, the next meeting date will be Tuesday, November 26, 2024 at 6:00PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Anita McMartin Long
CPC Member and Secretary
ComprehensivePlan@TownOfCaroga.com