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Introduction

The creation of a Comprehensive Plan is authorized by New York State Town Law 272-a, which states, "The town comprehensive plan is a means to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of the town and to give due consideration to the needs of the people of the region of which the town is a part".

In December 1995, the then Town Board adopted the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Wright after many years of committee work. In October of 1998 the Town Board authorized the formation of the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee (CPIC). The Board's intention, at that time, was for the CPIC to make recommendations regarding implementation of the plan. However, during the intervening three years, it became clear the original plan was in need of revision. Again after many years, a revised Comprehensive Plan was presented to the Town Board in the fall of 2005. After several months of open public meetings, the Town Board rejected that plan in December 2005.

In the summer of 2007 the Town Board revived the CPIC committee, with several new, as well as experienced members. The Town Board charged the committee with the task of creating a town wide survey regarding the perceptions of the community. Additionally the Town Board asked that revisions to the 2005 revised plan be made as necessary. A survey was created and then sent out in October of 2007. Assistance was provided by Schoharie County Planning who assisted with mailing, receiving and compiling the survey results. The results of the '07 survey are the basis for the recommended changes and revisions to the Comprehensive Plan.

This plan is the product of a careful and deliberate review of present and reasonably foreseeable future needs of the Town. It adopts general development objectives and policies that are consistent with the expressed will of the community.

The Comprehensive Plan should be used as a foundation for decisions regarding land use and development within the Town of Wright. The Plan will be useful for the Town Board, the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, and other community groups as a reference tool when making decisions. However, the Comprehensive Plan should be used <u>in conjunction</u> with other tools (e.g. mapping and technical data, site plan review processes, subdivision regulations, local laws, etc).

Periodic review and revisions of the Town of Wright Comprehensive Plan should be undertaken as the community changes, new information becomes available, and/or newer planning methods are developed.

Committee Members:

Bill Schlieder – Committee Chair Gary Neighmond
Robin Brion John Sanchirico
Kathy Catlin Bob Smith
Bob Loden Ed Thornton
Vicky McCaffrey Reta Youngs

History of the Town of Wright

The Town of Wright separated from Schoharie on April 4, 1846 and was named to honor Governor Silas Wright, who was Governor of New York from 1843-1846. The history of the town, however, predates its formation by 125 years.

Early in the eighteenth century, the Palatine Germans arrived in the Schoharie Valley and proceeded to settle the surrounding area, including the region now known as the Town of Wright, Some of the early names associated with the Town include Lawyer, Zimmer, Becker, Shaefer, and Hilts. Many of these names are to the present day represented by their descendants. The earliest land holdings were established by several methods. The Native Americans inhabiting the area granted the land to the settlers. The land was patented by the King of England or was confiscated outright.

However achieved, these early settlers established the precedent of "hamlets" in the Town of Wright by grouping their homes and businesses around the most reliable water sources, such as the Ox, Kings, and Fox Creeks. Two of the earliest hamlets, at Ox Creek and Shutters Corners, were the site of a combined Indian and Tory raid against the inhabitants on July 26, 1782. The prominent heads of the Zimmer and Becker families were the target, as well as the destruction of food supplies. At the time of the American Revolution, the region could boast not only its participation in the "Breadbasket of the Revolution", the Schoharie Valley, but additionally, the contribution made by numerous saw mills, gristmills, blacksmith shops and other businesses in the Town of Wright.

The principal hamlet of Gallupville was started around 1817 when Ezra Gallup Jr. purchased the land and built a gristmill on the Fox Creek. The first post office was established in 1825 and the first school had already been started in 1812 on Schoolhouse Road. The prosperity and growth of the township during the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century is evidenced by the number of homes, churches and other buildings that were built in the Greek revival style, most popular from 1820 to 1850. There are several excellent examples of Italianate, Gothic and Victorian architectural styles, which attest to the continued prosperity of the town through the rest of the century. The 1872 Gazetter of Towns credits Gallupville with "three churches, a saw mill, a gristmill, a tannery, a hotel, three stores, several mechanic shops and about 40 dwellings." Shutters Corners, at the same time boasted "a store, a hotel, a saw mill, a grist mill, and about a dozen dwellings." Even Waldenville is described as a "hamlet containing a store and glove factory."

Agriculture has historically dominated the economic base of the Town of Wright. In the 1855 census for example, there are 242 heads of families who are listed with the primary occupation of "Farmers." This core population, however, supported numerous other families including 37 carpenters, 11 shoemakers, 8 blacksmiths, 5 wagon makers and 8 merchants. The census list includes the occupations and business of masons, physicians, innkeepers, teachers, tailors, clergymen, a tinsmith and even one attorney! Various and numerous crops were raised for both personal use and trade. Winter and spring wheat, rye, oats, corn, buckwheat and barley were all grown throughout the township. Later in the nineteenth century, hops were added as the Town of Wright joined the rest of Schoharie County in the production of high quality hops for beer making. In the mid-nineteenth century, oxen and horses were the primary draft animals,

with sheep, swine and some dairy cows also being raised. The County Directory of 1899 lists teachers, barbers, blacksmiths, harness makers, shoemakers, physicians and merchants sprinkled among the ongoing, predominant occupation of "Farmer."

The economic diversity and vitality continued until the mid-twentieth century. Many of the older residents of today's Town of Wright can still remember the clothing and general merchandise stores, the meat market, the mill, mechanic shops and several small manufacturing businesses. As the world has changed so dramatically in the second half of the twentieth century, so has the Town of Wright.

The traditional character of the Town has evolved gradually over many years, during which time farmsteads and a village center grew slowly without land use control. It reached its greatest population in 1860 (census of population, 1, 171), the year before the outbreak of the Civil War. The Town of Wright's population dropped steadily afterwards, bottoming out in the 1930 census, the year after the stock market crash. Since 1930 however, Wright has seen a steady rise in population. Like the rest of Schoharie County, this is due to an increased use of the town as a residential community for the Capital District. According to the 1990 census, Wright has a population of 1,385 people and is classified as rural.

The history of the Town of Wright does not have any "important" historic dates, battles, persons or events. Rather, it is a history of the pioneering Palantines settling on the then frontier; the defense of liberty during the American Revolution by ordinary citizens; and the disciplined industry of its people to provide prosperity and growth during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is full, however, of the personal histories of families, homes, and neighborhoods.

References:

Silas, Solomon "Summary of Schoharie County"

Simms, Jeptha R. "History of Schoharie County and Border Wars of New York"

Roscoe, William "History of Schoharie County" Burton, Allen "History of Town of Wright"

Zimmer, Chester "Compilation of the Road Wards for the Town of Wright"

Goals, Objectives and Policies

The goals and objectives of the town's residents are the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan. These broad statements are intended to form a basis for more specific land use and community facilities plans and are not listed in any order of priority. The policy statements are intended to serve as guidelines for successful implementation of these goals and objectives.

GOAL #1 MAINTAIN A PLEASANT AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT* IN LIGHT OF INCREASING PRESSURES FOR DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVES:

- Preserve and enhance small town rural character.
- Seek to establish reasonable control of density, based on health, safety, and welfare.
- Utilize various development strategies to preserve rural character and natural resources.
- Identify natural resources to live in harmony with the environment.
- Provide guidance for business and commercial development and seek to ensure orderly growth.
- Promote visually aesthetic development in the town (i.e. viewsheds, roads, etc.).
- Encourage community activities that preserve the small town rural environment and are of benefit to town residents.

POLICIES

Opinions offered at public meetings, as well as responses to the comprehensive plan survey sent to town residents, show that consensus supports the preservation and enhancement of the rural-agricultural character of the town. This small town rural character is an important part of most residents' identification with the town, and is also central to what brings new people here. Along with the town's natural beauty, rural character is defined by the independence and inter-dependence of the past and present town residents. The town's many churches evidence this, the Gallupville House, the Town Park, and Nature Trail, and its volunteer boards and committees, as well as its agriculture and interesting architecture and history.

- A) The town should utilize the Comprehensive Plan as a basis for development oversight.
- B) Contemporary development strategies should be utilized to encourage open space. The Planning Board is authorized to review and approve subdivision plans, and can therefore review, among other things, availability of sewer and water services and sources, and the ability to construct wastewater systems in accordance with local regulations and standards (i.e., those of the Schoharie County Department of Health).

- C) Home occupations and small-scale commercial business should be encouraged by the Town. The Town's physical features and infrastructure can affect both home occupations and commercial sites. The Town's site plan review document(s) should clearly outline parameters that can be used to determine whether or not a home or commercial business would be subject to the Site Plan Review process. Considerations such as parking, traffic flow, impact on neighbors, etc. should be included in those parameters. By encouraging home occupations and reasonable commercial development, community members will have the opportunity to live and work close to home and the Town will benefit from a more vibrant business economy.
- D) The town should explore adopting and enforcing its own site specific based standards for septic system design, maintenance, and changes in use. This will ensure the proper functioning of septic systems and decrease the risk of pollution.
- E) Stringent enforcement of current mechanism, i.e., site plan review process, code enforcement, is highly desired by the citizens. This ensures the safety and welfare of the town's citizens with all development.

*For purposes of this plan, the word environment shall be defined as follows: "Environment-the physical conditions which will be affected by a proposed action, including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, noise, objects of historic or aesthetic significance, existing patterns of population concentration, distribution, or growth and existing community or neighborhood character."

GOAL #2 CONSERVE AND PRESERVE OUR NATURAL RESOURCES (LAND, WATER, AND OTHER)

OBJECTIVES

- Compile and maintain an inventory of wildlife, flora, natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Minimize the adverse impact of development on wildlife, flora, and natural resources.
- Encourage contemporary, sound stewardship of natural resources.

POLICIES

Certain physical conditions throughout the town as illustrated on the various maps prepared as part of the Comprehensive Plan (i.e. cavernous limestone, soils, wetlands, topography, floodplains) require special consideration and protection. The following policies serve to guide the implementation of the above goals and objectives.

- A) Cavernous Limestone (Karst)-Developmental guidelines should be updated and strengthened for Karst areas of the town. A substantial portion of the town consists of limestone formations, including caves, fissures, sinks and underground streams.
- B) Karst Overlay Areas, Stream Corridor Areas, Watershed Rules and Regulations, Wetlands, Sediment and Erosion control Plans, Storm Water Management Plans, and

Floodplain Areas. The town must adhere to all applicable local, state and federal laws, and/or regulations from either the state or federal authorities to preserve the important aspects of water quality throughout the town. Additionally, the town should be mindful to any special considerations, particularly in the area of stream corridor/watershed management through the current town laws.

- C) Surface Water- Intelligent land use controls should be adopted to protect water from contamination and avoid flooding and soil erosion. The preservation of surface water is essential. Future water development projects will depend on intelligent and consistent land use policy.
- D) Wildlife and Flora- Developmental plans are encouraged to leave existing natural resources in their original state. Flora and fauna are important natural assets that add to both the rural environment and aesthetics of the town and potential developments. Wise use of these resources enhances the economic base and is of special value to outdoor enthusiasts.
- E) Energy and Material Resources- Policies that encourage resource conservation by new construction guidelines and public education can lessen ground water demand, well water problems, and obviate the need for public water and sewer projects. Contemporary conservation measures should be utilized incorporating alternative methods where appropriate.
- F) Education- Programs should be developed and information provided for residents and government officials; helping better understand the local environment, and promote conservation and the wise use of resources. Education helps avoid unnecessary regulation, and fosters public appreciation and conservation of natural resources as well as support for necessary environmental controls.
- G) Contemporary Conservation Planning Tools- Conservation easements may be utilized to conserve resources such as stream corridors, floodplains, and water sheds. They are provided for in New York and Federal law and are widely used to conserve natural and cultural resources. Landowners may voluntarily convey some or all of their development rights to a nonprofit organization or the government, either in exchange for money or tax benefits.

GOAL #3 PRESERVE THE ESSENTIALY AGRICULTURAL* CHARACTER OF THE TOWN AND WORKING FARMS OF THE COMMUNITY

OBJECTIVES:

- Maintain valuable agricultural land by encouraging its conservation and continued agricultural use
- Improve the economic base of the town by promoting agricultural and related activities.
- Support efforts to provide locally grown and raised food.

POLICIES:

Agriculture is important to the town's economy and plays a significant role in preserving its rural character. There are large agricultural districts in the Town of Wright (certified pursuant to the New York State Agricultural and Markets Law) and many lands have been identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Conservation Services as prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance. The following policies should be followed:

- A) Establish and map an Agricultural Economic Development District (AEDD) featuring all properties presently engaged in agricultural business activities, including those properties having a history of agricultural business use, as well as those lands where potential exists, but no discernable history can be established, thereby encouraging continued and future agricultural use. This would include lands in the two NYS Agricultural Districts located within the Town. The AEDD would be non-regulatory. It would provide a means for the Town to identify, encourage, and assist agricultural businesses in the Town. The AEDD should be updated annually after adequate public notice to include or exclude properties that may have changed use. Annual notice should be provided town-wide perhaps via a town newsletter to explain the AEDD program in the Town. List other resources and benefits available to Ag businesses, for example, Ag and Markets, Cooperative Extension, USDA and Farmlink. Appoint Agricultural Advisory Committee (as part of the Planning Board, CAC, or as a separate committee) to advise the Town Board on the AEDD and Ag-related issues in the Town. One role this committee could play would be to review local laws and recommend ways to ensure that they remain farm-friendly.
- B) Subdivision, Site Plan Review, and other applicable land use laws should be reviewed and amended to ensure that agricultural parcels are provided with adequate buffering and continued farm access when adjacent lands are developed. New project site design and layout should be flexible to ensure maximum retention and continued use of agricultural lands. The Town should allow use of contemporary planning tools to retain agricultural lands during development.

- C) Target Agriculture related programs to properties located in the AEDD. Such programs should include:
 - 1. Educate owners of agricultural lands about state and federal tax incentives that apply when these lands are protected in some way, such as with conservation easements."
 - 2. Eligibility for these programs should be more inclusive than the \$10,000 in income and seven (7) acres of land minimum used for the State Ag-Assessment program.
 - 3. Provide educational materials to landowners about existing state tax programs such as Ag districts, Ag assessments, farm building exemptions, farmers school tax credit, and the NYS 480-a Forest Lands program.
- D) Ensure that all provisions of NYS Ag and Markets Law 25-aa, Section 305 and 305-a are fulfilled by the Town when making planning and land use decisions to ensure that these decisions are not at odds with policies of the Ag District law of NYS.
- E) Educate property owners whose lands contain wetlands about resources which will identify compatible agricultural/wetlands uses, e.g. DEC, Army Corps of Engineers, etc.
- F) All active agricultural operations, that qualify, should be encouraged to apply for "agricultural value assessment" available through the NYS Department of Agricultural Markets."
- G) Encourage development of further Agricultural Districts in the Town of Wright through application and enrollment.
- H) Tax rolls should be reviewed to ensure that parcels used for agricultural activities, as well as underdeveloped open land, are taxed as such, rather than for "highest and best use".
- I) The town should allow and encourage all farming and agricultural activities regardless of profitability or size of operation.
- J) Community activities celebrating the town's agricultural history and its importance to the town economy and character should be promoted. The town should allow the use of community facilities such as the Town Hall and Gallupville House for such activities or assist in developing and advertising them.
- K) Provide educational materials to new home and landowners regarding the "Right to Farm" Legislation and farming operations.

^{*}For purpose of this plan, the word agriculture shall be defined as follows: "Agriculture or Agricultural use means the employment of land for raising, harvesting and selling crops (including timber), or feeding (including, but not limited to), grazing, breeding, managing,

selling or producing livestock, poultry, fur-bearing animals or honeybees, or by dairying and the sale of dairy products, or by any other horticultural or viticulture use, aquaculture, hydroponics, silva culture, by animal husbandry, or by any combination of thereof. It also includes the current employment of land for the purpose of stabling or training equines, including, but not limited to providing riding lessons, training clinics and schooling shows, and other on-farm niche marketing promotions.

GOAL #4 IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS NEEDED COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

OBJECTIVES

- Maintain centralization of the town government offices within the hamlet of Gallupville.
- Provide adequate, ecologically and economically responsible waste management.
- Strengthen cooperation with adjoining towns.
- As needs change, explore and encourage public transportation.
- Review and encourage training requirements and opportunities for town officials.
- Awareness of the needs of the elderly such as housing, medical care, and activities should be a Town priority.

POLICIES:

The following policies should be implemented to help the town encourage and support appropriate development, provide needed services and facilities, and maintain rural character.

- A) The development and/or upgrading of community cultural and recreational facilities should be encouraged. Costs could be offset through the use of recreational fees.
- B) The Town should explore and participate in an <u>effective</u> recycling program, as well as continue its own recycling efforts.
- C) Community activities, such as the celebration of the town's history and agriculture, should be promoted. Ongoing educational and recreational programs should continue to be supported.
- D) The Town (and its departments, boards and committees) should strengthen ties to other local governments, when cooperation between the municipalities can reduce budget expenditures, provide better services to town residents, or help meet educational needs of the town residents or local officials.
- E) The town should endorse a policy encouraging training for all local government officials including those appointed to the Planning and Zoning Boards. This policy should encourage training requirements as well as set procedures for reimbursing individuals for any associated costs. Advantage should be taken of organizations such as the New York State Department of State, the New York Planning Federation and other associations that offer training programs.

- F) The town should continue to work together with community groups that support and enhance the management of public recreational and educational facilities (i.e., Town Park, Gallupville House, etc).
- G) The town should establish policies for the use of public facilities that allow local groups and individual's access to those facilities for meetings and events. Reasonable fees should be established to offset some of the costs associated with the use of the facilities.
- H) It should be the endeavor of the Town to make public facilities as user friendly as possible.
- I) The Town should have more active participation in providing information and access to various county and regional services.
- J) The Town should assist, whenever possible, the recruitment of new volunteers to the Gallupville First Responders, Scho-Wright Ambulance, and the Gallupville Volunteer Fire Department, among others.

GOAL #5 MAXIMIZE EFFICIENT AND COST EFFECTIVE HIGHWAY SERVICES

OBJECTIVES

- Build and maintain roads that are safe and suitable for the type and volume of traffic that the roads are designed to handle.
- The roads shall be constructed and maintained to reflect the character of the lands through which they pass. Future needs of the farms, businesses and residential areas should be considered.
- The Town should do periodic assessment of existing highway conditions.
- Utilization of industry-accepted standards for road construction and maintenance.
- The Town should do periodic review of Town policy for proposed roads.
- Strengthen highway department personnel levels of skill through education and training.
- The Town should avail itself of every opportunity for shared services and equipment with neighboring townships.

POLICIES

A system of roadways has long been the lifeline to community growth and survival. The importance of construction and maintenance of this system is evidenced by the magnitude of town revenues budgeted annually for that purpose. All phases of highway activity must be continuously examined to provide optimum service at the lowest operational cost. The following policies are guides to achieving this goal.

A) The Town Board shall formalize and make permanent the appointment of a Highway Committee to guide the Highway Department in relation to its duties and responsibilities according to industry-accepted standards consistent with the law. This Committee shall be composed of town elected officials, the Highway Superintendent, and interested citizens.

This committee should establish a grievance procedure to deal with concerns regarding the Highway Department.

B) The Highway Committee and the Highway Superintendent shall assess existing highway conditions to develop and implement a short and long range (10-year) written plan for highway maintenance and improvement and present it to the Town Board.

This plan should be considered a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and should outline not only highway maintenance and improvement priorities and schedules, but should detail staff and equipment needs in five-year intervals. A CIP is useful not only for budgeting, but also for equipment and staff management, and as a tool that can help increase communication between the highway department and the public. The Capital Improvement Plan should include details on standards and practices for the maintenance and improvement of existing roads so that they are consistent with high quality rural roads.

The town shall update and amend its existing highway law (Local Law #1, 1998) to reflect appropriate rural road standards for the construction of new roads. The town's local road standards for construction, maintenance and improvement should protect, enhance, and preserve the aesthetic qualities such as unpaved roads, trees, stonewalls, etc. to maintain rural character.

- C) The town's subdivision regulations should take into consideration methods to control future traffic congestion by reducing the number of driveways from a subdivision to an arterial road. These techniques include: restrictions on the number of driveways that are allowed from a subdivision to the arterial; use of shared driveways and/or access roads to the public roadway; setting minimum separation requirements for driveways; and requiring that the subdivided properties will have driveways entering to the lowest classification of road serving the property.
- D) Subdivision roads must be constructed to industry-accepted standards before the Town can consider assuming responsibility for the maintenance of such roads.
- E) The town shall review, develop and adopt policies detailing conditions under which private roads could be considered for inclusion in the town highway system. Said policy will be developed by the Town Board and administered by the Planning Board.
- F) The practice of designating low maintenance and seasonal roads reduces maintenance costs, limits traffic flow and permits recreational use of snow-covered roads. The seasonal road concept is consistent with the goal of maintaining rural character and should be continued.
- G) The town should continue to evaluate abandoned roads and discontinue them as town highways as appropriate. Consideration should be given to maintaining abandoned roadways for recreational uses.

- H) One special problem will continue to be bridges. All of the public bridges in the town are now the responsibility of the state or the county. However, the town will need to be vigilant in working with those jurisdictions to set repair and upgrading priorities and to ensure that needed work is done.
- I) The Highway Committee and the Superintendent of Highways shall develop a responsible policy for communication with landowners along town roads where maintenance and improvements are planned. This communication could take place via post cards, telephone calls, personal visits or inviting landowners to come to a meeting to discuss planned work. The policy draft will be reviewed by the Planning Board and adopted by the Town Board.
- J) Within 12 months of the adoption of this plan, the Town Board shall administer a study to determine the benefits and detriments of changing the Highway Superintendent's position from an elected to an appointed position. This study shall be used to educate the public. Upon completion of the study, a public hearing shall be held.

GOAL #6: IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE HAMLET (S)

OBJECTIVES:

- Designate hamlet areas and then establish their boundaries.
- Develop programs necessary for the regulation of traffic control, water quality and waste treatment.

POLICIES:

Higher density, hamlet style development in Gallupville, Waldenville and Shutters Corners is now limited by site conditions such as soil characteristics, water availability and the ability to construct wastewater treatment systems. In the future, single and multi-family residences, low intensity commercial uses, service businesses, churches and schools will be considered only with the creation of adequate infrastructure to include waste water treatment, water supply and roads.

- A) Recommend that a group of citizens from the hamlet be appointed to recommend and advise the Town Board of the special needs of the hamlet to address hamlet issues. A group of residents from the hamlet(s) shall be appointed within three (3) months of the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.
- B) Hamlet regulations shall be developed apart from general town regulations where appropriate.
- C) Regulations related to traffic control within the hamlets shall be developed. These regulations would include traffic flow, vehicle speed, and parking.
- D) A drinking water quality/quantity/-monitoring program should be developed to help insure the health and safety of the residents. The feasibility of joining an existing municipal water supply should be explored.

- E) The Town should examine and determine the feasibility of contemporary treatment of sewage. The Town should advocate with other authorities (County, DOH, etc.) the utilization of such contemporary methods.
- F) Hamlet expansion or increased density should only be considered after extensive research of water supply and quality, as well as, waste treatment methods and capacity.
- G) Develop appropriate space requirements and facilities for the keeping of large and small animals within the hamlet. Additionally, the lawful removal and disposal of animal waste should be addressed. These regulations should be consistent and coordinated with state and county regulations.
- H) Regulations related to empty condemned/abandoned buildings within the hamlet should be developed recognizing the safety issues and negative impact on the rural character.
- I) Regulations should be developed to address activities that could impact negatively on the ability of hamlet residents to enjoy their property, health, safety, and welfare.
- J) The storage of trash, such as appliances, unlicensed motor vehicles and garbage that constitutes an aesthetic or environmental impact, or are of such concentration (visible or not visible) as to have an effect on the health, safety and welfare of the citizens should be addressed by Town Officials.
- K) The Town should work cooperatively with community groups and volunteers to reestablish the good working condition of the sidewalks in the Hamlet.