

THE GENEVA CITY COUNCIL

JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

March 25, 2025 – 5:30 PM

City Hall – 2nd Floor Council Room

47 Castle Street

Geneva, NY 14456

Presiding – Steve Valentino, Mayor

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Clr. Whitfield (arrived at 5:34), Clr. Moracco, Clr. Petropoulos, Clr. Gillotte, Clr. Grimaldi, Clr. Lavin, Clr. Brennan

Absent: Clr. Pealer

2. DISCUSSION – Comprehensive Plan

Mayor Valentino posed a few questions about the Comprehensive Plan to Council: Why are we meeting, what do we want out of this meeting, and reminded everyone of the shared a goal of giving direction to staff.

Councilor Petropoulos emphasized the need to update the Comprehensive plan post-Covid, as the current plan is in many ways no longer relevant. City Manager Hendrix reminded Council that the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning corollate, and are needed for projects. Councilor Brennan observed that a lot of the current plan is obsolete, and will require a professional consultant. He recommended updates for certain economic indicators, and to shrink parts of the Comprehensive Plan the City doesn't really need anymore. Director West explained that some parts of the plan are tied to grant funding requirements. Councilor Brennan added that economic development guides ways to grow Geneva, not just shrink the budget. He also expressed the importance of architecture, how it can accentuate the positive, and a focus on the lake and tourism. DRI components were discussed, as well as Zoning that will need to be updated in the Comp Plan. Councilor Brennan noted that form based and hybrid scenarios should be addressed. Mayor Valentino reminded Council that zoning is a living document, that will continually be updated, and needs to tie in with the comp plan. Councilor Lavin wondered if the plan is used for attracting and explaining opportunities for people coming to the City, discussion followed. Director West explained that the Comp Plan is important, but zoning is more important. He explained that the Comp Plan should be changed first, then zoning changes can be made to support the Comp Plan. Councilor Petropoulos wondered if TUD is mandatory for consistent quality design. Director West explained that that part of the plan is related to old zoning.

Councilor Gillotte would like to see a focus on increasing revenue, tourism, upgrade neighborhoods, and addressing housing issues. He recommends prioritizing direction rather than playing the whole field, utilizing a consultant to help stay focused. Director West suggested looking at what the City has done that the Comp Plan directs (5 Priorities), noting that some things aren't accomplished because staff don't currently have capacity. He also recommended going through the plan, and where it says "you should do this," did we? And do we still want to? Councilor Petropoulos explained that he'd like to see downtown property owners motivated to fix their upstairs units. Mayor Valentino applauded the conversation with good staff direction, and hears the need for a consultant and community input. Councilor Gillotte explained how important it is to get people involved. The involvement will help increase enthusiasm over all and get better ideas, noting that there's lots of talent in Geneva

to tap. Councilor Whitfield agreed that community input is important, and wants to listen to the voices that haven't been heard. He stressed the importance of including areas that surround downtown. He reminded Council that visitors will see the whole City, neighborhoods that aren't downtown, and these areas need to be attractive as well. Discussion followed around zoning, and how to survey the community for their input. Town Halls and the Neighbors Together group were suggested as good platforms. Discussion followed around neighborhood grocers. Councilor Lavin noted that there is a need for more than public input, and suggested that the City has assets poised to fuel the future of the City. He suggested a consultant can look at assets with clear eyes.

Director West commented that the scope of the plan should not be too specific, and built to last 10 years, showing what Council wants staff to address with limited resources. He suggested considering how programs are run, City Hall hours, strategies to reduce flooding, and job pathways. He further explained that the plan isn't what projects should we do, it's community defining most important problems to work on. Councilor Grimaldi advises keeping the plan general, vague, and broad, something that says "this is what we want to do, this is where we are going." Director West provided examples of Comp Plan items vs. Master Plan items, for clarification. Comp Plan items include layers of planning; for example, walkable, allow shops in neighborhoods; or data of why we need housing density. He also explained that Master Plan examples are more specific pointing to certain lots, nodes of retail, and changing zoning. City Manager Hendrix explained that if Council wants to look at another phase of DRI, it would be wise to tie in the County's strategic plan into the City's Comp Plan, as it will open up funding opportunities. Director West recommended incorporating a housing needs/demands analysis into the plan as well. City Manager Hendrix reviewed the Economic Strategy document with Council, noting that it will give ideas of what has been done, and what we want to do, and what to focus on. Councilor Whitfield noted that he'd like to see a focus on people already living in Geneva as well. Mayor Valentino reminded Council to familiarize themselves with the current plan and be prepared for the community to potentially disagree with what Council sees as priorities for the Comprehensive Plan. Councilor Lavin noted the benefit from allowing more density downtown, more height, which gained the interest of Developers. He also expressed an interest in working on items such as taxes and density questions.

While discussing timeframe Mayor Valentino explained that he'd like to move forward with the plan this year. He noted that Council has agreed on engaging a consultant, gathering community input, focus on tourism and lake access, and an unbiased look at assets. He applauded this good direction.

Councilor Petropoulos wondered about public safety, corridors, and how to enhance the border areas of the City. Safety was discussed, and Director West noted that safety can be an issue raised, as a useful question. He cautioned against asking questions about things that we can't do anything about. He noted that urban planning, daycare and jobs are all connected to safety.

City Manager Hendrix reviewed Council's consensus to include: engaging a consultant, developing a system for Comprehensive Plan, noting that the first zoning update started housing conversations with developers, start basis with RFP, community involvement and consultant are key, town halls and groups the consultant doesn't have can enhance the process, and a way to find some of the voices that are hard to hear.

To begin, Mayor Valentino would like to develop an RFP, and cautioned Council to be prepared to hear community ideas that may differ from theirs. He also recommended that Councilors talk with members of the previous Comprehensive Plan Committee. The RFP timeframe will drive the next meeting.

3. ADJOURNMENT

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Petropoulos; seconded by Clr. Moracco

MOVED THAT the meeting be adjourned at 6:39pm

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Nicole Tilletson
City Clerk

