STRATEGIC PLANNING
Tuesday, June 30, 2015 – 6:00 p.m.
Police Training Room – Olean Municipal Building

Present: Members: Chairman Jester, Vice Chairman Gonzalez, Alderman Andreano, and Alderman Smith. Others: Alderman Barnard; Alderman Tertinek; Mayor William Aiello; Mary George, Community Development Program Coordinator; Tom Windus, Director of Public Works; Bob Bell, Fire Chief; Tiffany Lyman, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary; Capt. Ed Jennings, Code Enforcement Officer; Larry Sorokes, Greater Olean Area Chamber of Commerce; Chuck Banas and Chris Hawley, Chuck Banas Design; Jeff Belt, SolEpoxy, and Chris Michel, Olean Times Herald.

1. Roll Call

Alderman Jester called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committee members were present except Alderman leFeber, who was excused.

2. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Regular Meeting (Tuesday, June 2, 2015)

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 2, 2015 Strategic Planning Committee Meeting was made by Alderman Jester, seconded by Alderman Andreano. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

3. Unfinished Business

None

4. New Referrals for Consideration

   a. Presentation / Discussion – Form Based Code – Chuck Banas and Chris Hawley, Chuck Banas Design

Mr. Banas and Mr. Hawley of Chuck Banas Design presented a PowerPoint which showed the differences between conventional zoning and form-based code.

Conventional zoning is legally worded and text-heavy, while form based code focuses on being more user friendly, and includes illustrations to make it easier to understand. While conventional zoning focuses on the use of the land, form based code looks at the physical “form” of design and development. Conventional zoning is generally unrelated to the community’s plan, while form based code is based upon the community’s vision for a neighborhood. Design is the major missing piece between conventional zoning and form based code.
Mr. Banas explained that, with the North Union Complete Street Transformation Project, we are getting a good horizontal design. It is important for the City to consider the vertical “design”, and maximize development opportunities by making the City Center Zoning District more user-friendly.

With form based code, there is a place for everything. Elements work together to create a sense of character. It avoids a one-size-fits-all (or, most) type of zoning. It helps to realize the vision of the community, encourage a walkable mixed-use downtown, preserves historic character, creates a concise document that is easy to understand, use, and consistently enforce, creates a predictable development environment, and makes Olean competitive in the 21st century. We want to provide a vibrant, exciting environment that makes people want to stay here.

Mr. Hawley stated that we want to match the investment in the street with high quality investment in the private realm. We want to tap into the back-to-the-city movement, create value and attract investment. Attracting investment will aid in attracting people back to the City of Olean.

He continued in stating that there are three key demographics whom are statistically attracted to a walkable downtown: young professionals, empty nesters, and immigrants.

Mr. Hawley explained the steps of the process:

- Project kickoff (done – meeting with downtown stakeholders group);
- Documentation (which we are in the middle of);
- Diagnostic;
- Visioning;
- Drafting (which will occur later this summer);
- Exhibit (a public display, so that people can understand the new form based code prior to adoption);
- Adoption.

He provided a handout to the Council which shows the documentation format of the buildings on North Union Street, as well as a summary of the process.
He stated that his first impression of Olean’s zoning is that there is an absence of standards in regards to building design. The density control schedule is inconsistent with walkability goals, and off street parking requirements are excessive. Sign regulations are one-size-fits-all rather than different for each zone, and site plan review criteria are inadequate.

Turning the page and moving forward, we want to go from a heavy, legal-based text to a plain English, heavily-photographed, easy-to-read user friendly guide. We want to visually communicate the community’s vision. A good form based code understands complexity, and works it into the overall plan for a community. We want to be impressive to investors and architects as well to promote development.

In response to a question from Alderman Smith, Mr. Hawley stated that although it is rare, we can absolutely move to a form based code for the City in its entirety over time. Mr. Banas stated that it is best to start with the downtown area first, as it is the community’s common ground, and people are less defensive about making changes downtown than they are in their own neighborhoods.

Alderman Jester added that, moving from conventional zoning to form based code citywide, the City of Buffalo went from a 1804 page to a 300 page document that is consolidated and more user-friendly. Mr. Hawley added that Miami and Denver are the two largest cities with form based code citywide.

Mr. Belt expressed thanks to the Aldermen for being brave and taking on the challenges of something new, and the opportunity to transition the City into something better.

Unrelated, Alderman Smith questioned if there was a discussion regarding making Wi-Fi publically accessible throughout North Union Street. Mayor Aiello responded that it was discussed, but that it was very costly and is not actively being pursued at the time.

5. Approval of Committee Reports

None

6. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Jester, seconded by Alderman Andreano. Voice vote, ayes all. Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:05 p.m.