Meeting Facilitators:

Ethan Gaddy – County Planner

Matthew Smith - Junior Planner

Meeting Summary

County Planning and Zoning Group

September 16th, 2025 | 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Meeting Purpose
The group met to discuss the zoning update process, share best practices, and review the benefits of maintaining zoning codes over time. This work supports goals and actions identified in the recently adopted County Comprehensive Plan and several updated municipal comprehensive plans.

Introductions and Presentation
The meeting began at 9:00 a.m. with brief introductions.
Matthew Smith presented an overview of zoning, displayed on the TV, which guided group discussion.

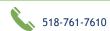# Discussion Highlights

Zoning Overview
- Zoning sets rules for when and where development can occur, guided by each municipality's comprehensive plan.
- Regular maintenance is more manageable than overhauling zoning codes after long periods without updates.
- Triggers for updates include:
    - Adirondack Park Agency (APA) requirements and Approved Local Land Use Plans (ALLUP)
    - State regulation changes
    - Local pressures such as demographics, STRs, housing needs, staff turnover, environmental regulations, and development pressure
- Examples of missing elements in codes (e.g., signage regulations for schools or fire departments).

Best Practices for Updates
- Keep a running list of needed improvements.
- Track data annually (permits, enforcement, variances, board decisions).
- Check with boards regularly about confusing, conflicting, or outdated sections.
- Typical update components include: text document, zoning map, use tables, standards, and graphics/flowcharts.

1340 State Route 9
Lake George NY 12845

planning@warrencountyny.gov
warrencountyny.gov/planning

518-761-7610

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Shared Practices

- Contact APA, DOS, and other local officials.
- Complete APA resolution and start SEQR in the first month of an update.
- Finalize SEQR determination only after the public hearing closes.
- Use moratoria by local law to temporarily pause certain uses while evaluating zoning.

SEQR and APA

- Discussed key SEQR steps and engagement with APA.
- Reviewed typical zoning update timelines and decision points.

Moratoria

- In-depth exchange on when and how to adopt moratoria, with local examples.

Short-Term Rentals (STRs)

- Compared approaches: STRs regulated within zoning codes vs. separate local laws.
- Noted enforcement challenges and growing community pressures.

Ridgeline Development

- Prompted by a Horicon project, the group discussed ridgeline development pressures.
- Sara Frankenfeld demonstrated a viewshed analysis tool developed for Horicon.
- Members expressed interest in countywide model ridgeline regulations.

Warren County BOA (Brownfield Opportunity Area)

- County received a BOA grant to inventory brownfield, vacant, and underutilized sites.
- Goal: identify clusters of properties and areas for reinvestment opportunities.
- Data will support county initiatives (e.g., housing) and benefit municipalities.
- Inventory will not impose regulatory or punitive impacts on property owners.
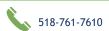
Recordkeeping

- Follow-up on recordkeeping improvements.
- GIS team will redesign the Building and Codes database to integrate with GIS and provide real-time building permit data.

County Grants

- Staff shared updates on active and pending county grants.
- Brief discussion of potential projects, including wayfinding, infrastructure, and water access site improvements.

Next Steps

1. Circulate local law search link.
2. Evaluate the need for model ridgeline development regulations.
3. Schedule the next meeting in Q4.

Prepared by: Matthew Smith
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