



STAKEHOLDER MEETING NOTES

Meeting with Tug Hill Commission May 12, 2008

Attendants:

Katie Malinowski, THC
Phil Street, THC
Jean Waterbury, THC
Matt Johnson, THC
Renee Beyer, Lewis County Economic Development
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates
Nan Stolzenburg, CPEA

MEETING NOTES

- Some towns/villages look forward to getting counsel and guidance from the County and THC
- Opportunities for learning from each other, sharing resources
- Communities don't have adequate land use regs to deal with natural resource extraction facilities (mines, water bottling, natural gas, hunting camps, etc.) - plan should provide the tools for addressing those sites—mitigating impacts to the community and the environment
- The Plan should be a partnership between the Counties, the towns/villages, and the THC
- A grass roots approach will be more successful—success is always more labor intensive
- Establish better communication between THC and County so each is aware of current initiatives, past plans/studies, available data and resources
- THC working on state-level legislation to keep seasonal roads seasonal. Also referred to as low volume roads. Broad support, but many legal obstacles
 - ⇒ Majority of seasonal roads are snowmobile trails
 - ⇒ Municipalities don't want them improved (cost, maintenance), increasing number of residents do (plowing, bus service, etc)
 - ⇒ If legislation succeeds, it would be a tool to allow locals to control their own destiny
 - ⇒ Not able to use "official map" to address this, although Pinckney has official map
 - ⇒ 4 towns have adopted low volume roads and maintenance
- Ag District 6 is pending approval. It will be a consolidation of 1-5.
- About THC
 - ⇒ 3 Divisions: Planning, Natural Resources, Community Development
 - ⇒ Funded by NYS to help municipalities, non-profits, and other agencies
 - ⇒ 18 staff, including Circuit Riders. Have done 14+ plans/studies over 11 years
 - ⇒ Staff attends most planning board meetings using Circuit Riders
 - ⇒ State mandate for the THC is to focus on the environment and economy
 - ⇒ No regional plan in place
 - ⇒ Have a Resource Management Plan (1978) that most towns in the region use as the basis for their local laws
 - ⇒ Function as a "free consultant", with voluntary involvement from each town/village

- ⇒ Have developed a number of "Issue Papers" (found on website) such as wind farms, Tug Hill aquifer, snowmobiles, winter logging, ATV, winter recreation, etc.
- ⇒ Grass roots approach, not top-down
- ⇒ Has created many model laws for different issues — Comp Plan should provide a tool that is a compilation of all models

- Comp Plan needs to assemble the expressed vision and goals from individual towns/villages
- Refer to St. Lawrence and Oswego County Comp Plans
- Towns struggle to design any complexities into zoning (limited staff, training)
- THC often recommends a joint Zoning Board of Appeals (more streamlined, more objective, not neighbor vs. neighbor)
- Shared services are somewhat utilized, could be used more—Comp Plan should provide shared agreement language
- Association of Towns has collected shared service agreements
- County does not have a preservationist atmosphere, but are looking for middle ground—smart growth that mitigates impacts
- THC recommends improving the County Hwy system—currently not logical system because of the many gaps and dead end roads—the network is an aid-based system, there should be a more extensive County Hwy system. Plan should provide recommendations for what should be considered a county road (minimum dimensions, conditions, connections)
- Plan should provide suggestions of how towns can save \$ reorganizing with County Hwy—expand county network, more logical system, consolidated services, etc.
- Explain benefits of access management. Specific areas of concern—south of Lowville, mines on Rte 12 in Port Leyden and Rte 26 north of Lowville, major farms on Rte 12 and 26. Multiple curb cuts over time can have negative impact on traffic flow.
- Plan should provide guidance on 239-m review program

Agriculture Round Table Discussion May 12, 2008

Attendants:

Michele Ledoux, Cornell Cooperative Extension
Jen Karelus, Lewis County Farm Bureau
Michael Kraeger, Ag and Farmland Protection Board
Arleigh Rice, Ag and Farmland Protection Board
Kelly Dickenson, Ag and Farmland Protection Board
Caryn Kolts, Ag and Farmland Protection Board
Fred Munk, Ag and Farmland Protection Board
Ashley Marlof, Ag and Farmland Protection Board
Haskel Yancey, Ag and Farmland Protection Board
Renee Beyer, Lewis County Economic Development
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates
Nan Stolzenburg, CPEA

MEETING NOTES

- Types of agriculture taking place in the County are:
 - 1) Dairy, dairy crops
 - 2) Forestry
 - 3) Maple
- Some beef production, alpaca, hunting preserves, few fruit crops
- Not much agri-tourism except during maple syrup season
- Majority of farms are 50-100 cows
- Regarding forestry, any State Lands outside the Blue Line can be commercial forestry
- Amish have moved into the region, mostly around Lowville and mostly in the last 10 years
- Majority of milk produced goes to Kraft through Lowville Producers co-op
- The co-op (<http://www.gotgoodcheese.com>) markets Lewis County cheese, cheese curd, maple syrup and Croghan bologna)
- Large amount of land, owned by non-farmers, is rented to farmers
- In Martinsburg, there are increasing conflicts between residential and ag uses, such as residents insisting that farmers reduce pesticide spraying and manure spreading
- Supposedly some developers have turned down opportunities in the Town of Lowville due to the smell
- Other than those instances, there are relatively low ag-res conflicts, but there may be more in the future. County needs to be proactive in preventing those conflicts, rather than wait for it to be a problem and take a reactive approach.
- Generally, wind farms are positive for farmers, providing supplemental income and helping land stay in agricultural production
- Wind farm conflicts are mainly related to noise levels and shadow flicker
- Farmers in general are losing some support service b/c of a decrease in overall farming, lack of rail service, and the fact that some of the larger farms have their own supply systems
- Many support services (parts, dealers, repair) used to be available in Lowville and some smaller villages, they are now concentrating in Watertown
- High unemployment discourages growth in farming industry
- Overall, number of farms has decreased
- Farm labor is an issue— immigrant labor force is growing
- Young people are moving away, so its difficult to pass the trade onto the next generation
- Ethanol has driven up the costs of feed
- Forestry industry is limited by seasonal road conditions and conflicts with snowmobiles. Seasonal roads can't support modern equipment
- Value of forestry land is based on recreation, not timber
- 70% of milk produced in the County goes to the co-op, 95% of that milk goes to Kraft
- 1 farmers market in the County, no CSA's. 1 new vineyard.
- Idea proposed to set up a co-op for the Amish so they can expand their business opportunities.
- A few farmers are using organic practices, but it is largely an untapped industry in the County
- Potential for new maple syrup bottling plant—County has put out an RFP for a feasibility study



- County is very interested in promoting/pursuing value-added products in all forms of agriculture (dairy, maple syrup, forestry, crops, etc.)
- Forestry products are primarily processed elsewhere. Paper mills are gone and are not likely to return.
- Need to emphasize smaller, home grown businesses
- Opportunities for alternative energy sources—currently a cellulosic ethanol plant in Lyonsdale, and a methane plant as part of the Kraft facility
- Opportunities for other wood-based technologies—utilize thinning and management materials from forestry, unadulterated wood that is a bi-product of the lumber industry, plenty of land for growing willow
- Corn-based ethanol has been a problem because of the reliance in the area on corn for dairy purposes.
- Opportunities for natural gas exploration, some is currently underway
- According to some farmers, County government is very supportive of agriculture; support agencies and ag groups are willing to work with farmers
- Ag Enhancement Plan (2004) is well accepted, though little has been implemented
- Chamber of Commerce recently underwent reorganization, new leadership is supportive of agri-tourism. Need to leverage multiple anchors (maple syrup, dairy, wind, recreation, Croghan bologna, etc.) in order for this to succeed.
- PDR programs may not have strong support because of low development pressures

**Meeting with ATV Association
May 14, 2008**

Attendants:

Dick Sellar, Lewis County ATV Association
Joe Onyon, Lewis County ATV Association
Floyd Rivers, ATV advocate
Bob Diehl, Lewis County Trail Coordinator
Renee Beyer, Lewis County Economic Development
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

Funding/Maintenance/Access Issues

- No ATVs on any state land, DEC truck trails are now closed — working on amending state law, would like to remove the language that states that roads can only be opened if it connects two ATV trails that are “otherwise impossible to connect”.
- State claims that ATV trails on DEC truck trails are not necessary.
- NYSDEC closed truck trails mainly because of claims of alleged damages.
- Some State Lands are Forest Preserve (forever wild) — no motorized traffic
- State Wildlife Management Area — no motorized traffic
- Now all County roads are closed.
- ATVs allowed only on designated routes, County Roads hope to be reopened in August
- DEC has in effect created a safety issue by restricting access — many people ride anyway

- Trail fund is depleted. DEC said they would build trails with fund, nothing has been built — all regular fees go to the general fund.
- B&L working on GEIS to add private lands, private roads, county roads to ATV system.
- Establishing network of ‘areas’ (properties) where landowners agree to allow ATVs – clubs can then connect the dots.
- Goal is to have extensive network on private/public lands, but need to connect the dots with County and Town roads.
- Some town roads are open, but network is not extensive enough to serve all the camps where riders stay — plan is to assemble properties on other roads, then connect the dots — getting roads open is just for connecting to each property.

Other Notes

- Fuel costs not much of an issue, most riders will use around 20 gallons/year.
- County has one-day events sponsored by clubs / organizations that are fund raisers — State law allows County roads to be opened for one-day events.
- Public awareness is important — what’s open, what are the actual road/trail impacts, promote the positive effect on the economy.
- Vision of ATVing is to promote environmental stewardship, multi-generational experience, enjoy nature, community service / charitable functions.
- County working on educational programs with schools (through 4H) promoting education.

**Meeting with Board of Legislators
May 13, 2008**

Attendants:

David Pendergast, County Manager
Rick Lucas, Legislator
Patrick Wallace, Legislator
John Boyd, Legislator
Kelly Dickenson, Legislator
Jerry King, Legislator
Joyce Hoch, Legislator
Rich Graham, County Attorney
Warren Rosenthal, Lewis County Economic Development
Renee Beyer, Lewis County Economic Development
Andy Raus, Bergmann Associates
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

Plan Process

- Towns are currently critical of process – need to explain how Town Comp Plans fit in with County plan — letter prior to meeting with individual Towns.
- Need to address difference between CEDS and Comp Plan – compare two and summarize the difference.
- Provide summary of process, including addressing the above issues.

Economics

- Taxes and assessment is a big issue.

- Demonstrate that tax cuts will only come from cutting services or attracting more industry.
- For farmers to increase their land holdings, price of land is becoming prohibitive because of recreation driving the price up.
- County recently put out RFP for maple bottling / processing plant (feasibility study) somewhere in County — collaborative effort between County and Cornell Cooperative Extension.
- County is targeting value-added products for all agriculture, would like to connect better with local markets, outlets.
- No actual industrial park in the County (HDK is only company in Harrisville Park).

Consolidation

- Demonstrate benefits of consolidation or at least shared services.
- Provide range of opportunities for municipal efficiencies — don’t necessarily recommend outright, just provide the resources.

Transportation

- A variety of County agencies provide transportation services — need recommendations on how to improve / expand on services.
- Birnie Bus offers service to Utica.
- What is the vision for transportation?
- Need to improve infrastructure to attract development.
- No real capacity issues on highways.
- Only active rail line is in south to Lyons Falls.
- Northern sections are rarely used.

Other Current Issues

- Two mines coming on line (Leyden, Lowville).
- Use of roads for ATVs
- Zoning Issue – explain the benefits of zoning, consequences of not using it, ideas for how to address hot button issues, then let the communities decide what they want to do.
- Croghan and Greig have bottled water extraction projects
- Kraft has a new digester, they are investing in their facilities.
- County has created a municipal power corporation established that could potentially buy bulk electricity — last time they looked at it, only a 7% savings (that wasn’t enough) – potentially examine this again.

Meeting with Economic Development Staff May 13, 2008

Attendants:

Warren Rosenthal, Lewis County Economic Development
Renee Beyer, Lewis County Economic Development
Andy Raus, Bergmann Associates
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

- CEDS – not proprietary, use data whenever appropriate – can either reference it or insert data.
- Economic Development – major problem is no product to offer (shovel ready sites)
- County had entertained idea of a “community kitchen” where variety of agricultural entrepreneurs can utilize space to work on value-added products – possible facility exists at Maple Ridge Center.
- Major industries for the most part are stable, potential for paper and pulp site in Lyons Falls
- Most villages are quite small and face challenges in sustaining services, local businesses.
- Land Use / Zoning – address where certain uses are appropriate, mitigate non-compatible uses.
- Housing prices are high because of Ft. Drum and people downstate / New Jersey buying seasonal homes.
- Potentially create strategic plans for a Village type and a rural town type (forestland or farming).

Meeting with County IDA May 14, 2008

Attendants:

Ned Cole, Lewis County Industrial Development Agency
Andy Raus, Bergmann Associates
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

Economy

- Major industries – Burrows Paper Mill, Otis Products (gun cleaning kits, sights), KRAFT, AMF (now supplies bowling pins to Brunswick – makes 90% of pins in the world), Fibermark (paper), Climax (corrugated boxes), some mining
- Greatest potential is in natural resources, recreation
- IDA services large and small businesses – provides start-up packages to new businesses including business plan assistance, multiple details that need to be addressed in order to be successful
- Empire Zone program is so far not very successful
- Project Priority List is a separate document from CEDS
- CEDS Subcommittees continuously meet to discuss issues – they include

industrial, agricultural, forest products, commercial and tourism, local government, education

Major Issues in the County

- Windmills – have been very positive
- Harrisville Industrial Park is being expanded – very modern sawmill, expanding to a manufacturing plant
- Consideration given to consolidation of water & sewer services – some opposition from towns and villages

Alternative Energy Projects

- KRAFT has a methane energy plant
- Harrisville Industrial Park currently converting waste into energy
- Chip plant in Lyonsdale sees 15-20 truckloads a day, working with ESF to develop an ethanol process using willows
- Snowbelt Housing handles issues like Main Street revitalization (residential component)

Meeting with Snowmobile Associations May 14, 2008

Attendants:

Neil Pepper, Brantigham Snowmobile Club
Fred Siems, Brantigham Snowmobile Club
Brian Gillette, Lewis County Snowmobile Association
Gary Stinson, Lewis County Snowmobile Association
Bob Diehl, Lewis County Trail Coordinator
Renee Beyer, Lewis County Economic Development
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

Recent Trends

- Have observed traffic on Tug Hill steadily increase, now see about 30,000/weekend or 500,000/season
- Most riders are out of the County / out of State – registering out of County but riding mostly in Lewis County.
- Most sleds get 10-20 mpg, will be impacted by high fuel costs, already hearing of many riders cutting back.
- Have observed a decrease in snow fall in the rest of the state and other regions, but not in Lewis County.

Funding/Maintenance/Access Issues

- Trail fund created by user fees – trail reimbursement rates set by state’s pot of \$3-4M, now they think its \$7-8M, not sure where remainder of pot is going. State is saying they’re out of money.
- Reimbursement for maintenance used to be \$500/mile, now its in the \$300’s. Also changing the “high snowfall add on”.
- Most clubs have two groomers.
- NYSSA (New York State Snowmobile Association) – Club’s liaison with New

York State – administer insurance for trails.

- Snowmobiles allowed only on trails shown on map
- Need for education / promotions about access limitation issues in the County.
- High level of policing, but still can’t have patrols on every trail.
- Need for making some logical trail connections – get riders into villages for goods and services.
- State won’t allow any more miles in the county because they’re out of money.

Transportation/Highways Discussion May 15, 2008

Attendants:

Tom Sweet, Lewis County Highway Superintendent
Matt Bush, NYSDOT Resident Engineer
Frank Dolan, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

The transportation network in Lewis County provides the backbone for the movement of people and goods throughout the region. The network is comprised of roads and bridges owned, operated and maintained by New York State Department of Transportation, Lewis County Highway Department and the towns and villages.

Roads

- New York State DOT has the responsibility for three hundred and sixty (360) lanes miles of roadway, Lewis County four hundred ninety six (496) lane miles and the towns and villages approximately one thousand eight hundred (1800) lane miles.
- The system ranges from two lane gravel roads to four lane arterials.
- Based on discussions with Matt Bush Resident Engineer for NYSDOT in Lewis County and Tom Sweet Lewis County Highway Superintendent the majority of roads on the NYS and County system are rated to be in good condition with a small percentage as poor.
- The focus of the State and County on highways is to have the resources available to properly maintain and keep in good repair the road network.
- While there are no planned new roads planned to be constructed emphasis is on reconstructing existing roads that are experiencing failures due to sub base conditions.

Bridges and Culverts

- Bridges and Culverts are a critical element of the transportation network. NYSDOT has the responsibility for thirty seven (37) bridges, Lewis County ninety one (91) bridges and the Towns and Villages thirty eight (38) bridges.
- On the NYS system four (4) bridges have a rating of 4 or less, with twenty five (25) bridges on the County system with a rating of 4 or less, ten (10) have a load posting of 16 tons or less and one (1) bridge is closed. The Town system has eleven (11) bridges with a rating of 4 or less, twelve (12) bridges have a load posting of 19 tons or less, seven (7) bridges are closed.
- One (1) bridge on the village system is posted at 10 tons or less.
- Both Matt Bush and Tom Sweet expressed concern over the resources to maintain the bridges under their respective jurisdictions.



- Culverts maintenance is another major concern within Lewis County. Many of the culverts are old and need replacement of major maintenance.
- NYSDOT estimates that approximately 17% of the culverts under their jurisdiction are in need of repair.

Rail

- Most of the rail lines within Lewis County are inactive at this time.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

- Both Matt and Tom were not aware of any active projects at this time.

Shared Services

- Within Lewis County there are excellent shared services agreements between the Highway departments NYS, Lewis County and the towns and villages. These agreements allow for good utilization of the limited resources.
- Both Matt Bush and Tom Sweet expressed concern about the future and having the available resources to adequately maintain the roads and bridges in the County.
- Lewis County has extensive tourism throughout the year with snowmobiles in the winters and ATV's in the spring, summer and fall. Good roads and bridges are important to maintain this business.

TOWN AND VILLAGE MEETING NOTES

**Town & Village of Lowville
June 23, 2008**

Attendants:

Mark Tabolt, Village Superintendent of Public Works
Eric Virkler, Village Clerk/Treasurer
Ruth Larabee, Town Councilman
Arleigh Rice, Town Supervisor
Charlie Stevens, Town/Village Code Enforcement
William Kilburn, Town/Village Planning Board
Richard Denning, Town
Renee Beyer, Lewis County Department of Economic Development
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

Farming/Amish

- In recent years, Amish moving into the town
 - Buying/preserving small farms, investing
 - Successful farmers
 - Softening the blow somewhat of the decline of farming
 - Introducing more crops to the ag industry
 - Need for a co-op to coordinate efforts, get tax # to collect sales tax, similar to Lowville Producers (work w/ Cornell Co-op Ext to do this)

- County should leverage their presence as an asset

- Need for expansion of farmers market (currently at the fairgrounds) – perhaps increase in crop farming from Amish and others can support the expansion
- Major smell impacts from local farms – hinders retail, tourism
- Local grocery stores don't get produce or dairy from local farms – growing season too short and most of milk goes directly to KRAFT plant

Roads

- Heavy truck traffic has an impact on local roads
- Few seasonal roads left, not an issue compared to other towns Lack of funds available for maintaining roads
- Informal sharing of services between town/village exists
- Hesitant about formal agreements as they introduce another layer of bureaucracy – may be more appropriate for smaller towns/villages
- Creative, case by case approach to shared services is recommended for the County plan
- Shared Municipal Service Incentive grant being pursued for feasibility study – joint venture between Lowville Academy, Village, Town, County, and State DOT for a shared facility – may be an expansion of an existing property or built on a new property

Growth Pressures/Real Property

- Not substantial development pressures, more growth should be stimulated
- Need for infill development, nodal development, not sprawl
- Many landowners selling properties at unreasonable prices – hinders development
- Village has many tax exempt properties that are utilized by people outside the village
- Ames property owner very uncooperative with Village – content to leave it vacant as a tax write-off – negative impact on the Village, important property for infill/ redevelopment
- Retail development in town hasn't had a noticeable impact on village businesses yet, although Wal-Mart is only a few years old and P&C is struggling; Kinney drug didn't lose as much business as anticipated
- Developer having trouble selling outparcels by Wal-Mart, may be an indication of lack of development pressure
- 801 housing (military) recently converted to market rate, had some negative impacts on the local economy
- Lowville is better positioned to absorb growth from Ft. Drum than surrounding towns (LeRay, Philadelphia) – Lowville has the schools, infrastructure, established community that may be a better for future expansion of the Fort – work with Fort to address this issue

Fuel Costs/Cost of Living

- 33% increase in Town Hwy Department's fuel costs over course of 6 months
- Believe fuel prices will result in redensification of villages, at least Lowville – need for aggressive approach to setting up the Village for redensification
- Example of impact of fuel costs – sidewalk to Wal-Mart is utilized more than

expected – also an example of proactive design preparing for redensification

- Role of town and village is to be the geographic and commercial center of the county, including county offices and medical services; should also be the center for services/amenities provided to recreational tourists
- County DMV moved outside the Village – critical that remainder of County departments remain in Village to retain critical mass of daytime workers to support businesses, also to preserve jobs that are in walking distance or short drive from residences

Other

- Needs to be more recreation initiatives other than snowmobiles and ATVs – established recreation programming in the town/village is lacking
- County should share tax revenue with towns and villages
- Cooperative models are needed for many industries, not just dairy

**Town of Lewis
June 23, 2008**

Attendants:

Jane Allen, Town of Lewis
Karl Pewsele, Town of Lewis
Nan Stolzenburg, Community Planning and Environmental Associates

MEETING NOTES

What are the primary challenges facing the Town?

- Lots of land being bought for second homes and that has driven up the cost for land for everyone. At least there is the perception that taxes have or will go up as a result. However, only 6 people went to grievance day for tax assessments. The second homes are mostly for recreation use and there is little to no demand on the town from them.
- Seasonal residents want to use the solid waste transfer station and they have needed to start a ticket system. Other than that there are few demands on the town by the seasonal homes.
- Long term residents more concerned about loss of farms than new comers.
- Would like to see more local businesses.
- Landfill recently opened up. It is still an issue mostly because of truck traffic. Local towns fought it and local residents can not send trash there. No real complaints but they mentioned that there is a lot of bad feelings related to it.
- Roads: it is getting harder to maintain paved roads due to costs. They have no records of official roads due to loss of records and don't know what is seasonal or abandoned. Road ownership is an issue related to maintenance.
- Land in Core Forest area is mostly owned by paper company and they keep selling it. There is not a lot of stability there. State has development rights to a lot of it so they don't figure it is much development potential.
- Needs new file storage for town records.



- They own land in the village but can't build on it because it is small. There is well/septic separation distance issues. They want a new town hall and want to have a combined town hall, post office, sheriff satellite office. They don't have the land to do all that though.
- Feels they are left out of the county and often forgotten. They feel that Lowville gets the lions share of attention and that there is a need for more attention to the other towns.
- Land going to biofuels puts more pressure on farmers who rent that land. There is competition for the land. Corn is not a big crop due to the short season, but biofuels are contacting landowners for land contracts and this may make it harder for farmers to rent land they need.
- Law enforcement in town can be sketchy. It is too far for state police or sheriff. The Sheriff is seeking a sub-station in town to process DWI and other tickets, but not to beef up staff.

What opportunities are there that would address these or other issues?

- There is a National Bike Trail that goes along County 46 through town and it should be promoted much more than it is. Most people don't know about it.

What kind of development pressure is the Town facing?

- Little. There are 5 to 6 building permits for new homes per year, and the number has decreased over the past few years. Last 2 years has seen no subdivision activity at all.
- Loss of farms – 6 farms left; 4 lost in last year – they were older farmers and smaller farms. Farms have gone out, but much of the land has gone to other farms. Most ag support available.

What land use regulations or other Plans, if any, are in place? If none, how are impacts of new developments mitigated?

- They do have a planning board and zoning with 3 acres on road frontage; 5 of 10 acres needed for off-road frontage, and the Core Forest area requires 40 acres.
- Has new land use map and law (1999)
- So far they seemed very satisfied with their land use regulations and no real problems.

What shared resource initiatives are in place? Are there opportunities for more?

- Equipment with the county. But they would like to see more work and sharing with the county, especially in the summer.
- Fire departments. (issue with fire department is that their shared partner (Town of Ava) cannot bill the town of Lewis for their share. Makes paperwork a harder thing to do as a result.
- Same assessor as Town of Turin.
- Sharing file storage area with Town of Leyden.
- They use a circuit rider from Tug Hill Commission and are very happy with that arrangement.

What would make the County Comprehensive Plan most useful to the Town? The Plan will include guidance and recommendations on certain issues. Which would the Town/Village like to see addressed?

- Would like larger town-oriented maps because they have no real good maps now.
- General ag map is wrong for their town – needs updating.
- Show on recreation map the state owned easements which make up a lot of town.
- They would like to know what grants are available to them.
- Thinks seeing the county comp plan will help them learn what other towns are doing and thinking. They feel somewhat removed from the county and thinks this may help.
- Copies for the entire town board
- Have a website that allows public input during the planning process.

How do you see the Town's role in the County and region? What role can the Town play in meeting the objectives of the County and region?

- They are working with landowners and local landowners: ATV club is seeking year round access to land.
- Other than feeling isolated, they really didn't have much to say on this one.

**Towns of Lyonsdale and Leyden, Village of Port Leyden
June 23, 2008**

Attendants:

Lynette Ripp, Port Leyden Village Trustee
Rosalie White, Leyden Town Supervisor
David Rounds, Town of Lyonsdale
Peter Smith, Port Leyden Village Trustee
Donald Gydesew, Town of Lyonsdale
Pete Kraeger, Port Leyden Village Trustee
Nan Stolzenburg, Community Planning and Environmental Associates

MEETING NOTES

What are the primary challenges facing the Town/Village?

- Lack of employment is biggest concern. People are leaving and not coming back. Hundreds have lost jobs. Lack of employment for kids in the summer is a big issue. Nothing for them locally. They seemed very open to big business, industrial uses, etc.
- No young families coming to area. Smaller and smaller enrollments in school is not good.
- In Town of Leyden: quarry moving is next biggest issue. The quarry wants to move but local people don't want to see it due to trucks, noise, dust, safety. There is not a lot of employment with it, but taxes, and they were concerned that there is an anti-business attitude. Feels it is very hard to have big businesses come to town.
- Senior housing shortages – there is a big demand.
- Seasonal home market has changed the land values and market dramatically. Taxes are hurting residents.
- In Village – poor sidewalks and need to improve them is significant issue. Lack

of street trees or need to replace them an issue too.

- In Lyonsdale – big trucks for co-gen plant are tearing up roads. They are trying to get county to take over Moose River Road as a result. The CHPS money is not enough to keep up with the paving and repair needs.
- Village – west side of river has sewer but it is old and has a DEC consent order on it and they need significant repairs. The community has defeated this improvement twice now. Village has good water and good water quality but sewer is the limiting issue.
- Lyons Falls has sewer on one side and they feel that is a limiting factor to business growth.
- ATV's: In town of Leyden it is all open to ATV's and they have wanted to leave them open to help the county. County has draft trail in place. But, they don't really need all roads open and this should be looked into as to which ones. Recreation in town is really important. But no roads in Village are open to ATV's and that is contentious. Snowmobiles bring in lots of \$\$ to the local businesses.
- Lyonsdale has no agriculture left – it is not a land use in town. Much too wooded. But, Leyden has many small family farms still and they are struggling. Feels there is a need to protect ag lands there. Lots of maple sugaring and logging.
- Village – homes need to be restored. There are lots of historic buildings, but no \$\$ to fix them up. The Snowbelt Housing, Inc. has helped in the village somewhat.
- Concerned about upcoming winters cost of heating homes – especially for senior citizens. One person mentioned how there are many programs for seniors and low income folks, but average folks with median incomes also are in trouble and need help and there are no programs for them as they are not eligible.

What opportunities are there that would address these or other issues?

- There is a need for more motels and hotels.
- Would like to see more kayak and canoe opportunities to take advantage of the Black and Moose rivers more.
- More picnic areas and boat launch areas needed.
- The 2 rivers are underutilized. There is more acceptance for recreational related development so this should be pursued.
- In Lyonsdale – they feel their future must be in recreation.
- More shared services. There is much opportunity for sharing between Town and village especially. They also could see Greig and Lyonsdale working more closely together – especially highway. Feels County will eventually have to step in to help with road costs.

What kind of development pressure is the Town/Village facing?

- It has really slowed down – not much.
- Lyonsdale has the co-gen plant, refinery and Otis. They feel there is a lot of development going in town.

What land use regulations or other Plans, if any, are in place? If none, how are impacts of new developments mitigated?

- T. of Leyden has zoning but no subdivision.
- Lyonsdale is in process of doing zoning – they are afraid of big developers coming in. They have site plan review which the Town Board approves.



- Village of Port Leyden has no planning board and those present did not know if there was zoning in the village or not. They did something with the Tug Hill Commission to fix up storefronts, but they had no specifics on that either.

What shared resource initiatives are in place? Are there opportunities for more?

- Leyden shares assessor with Turin and they share a judge. They feel there is opportunity to share in the gas station clean up between the town and village.
- All have shared service agreements with the County. Although they admitted that it was confusing as to who has responsibility for fixing or maintaining which road as a result.
- Feels county will have to play more of a role in road maintenance.

What would make the County Comprehensive Plan most useful to the Town/Village? The Plan will include guidance and recommendations on certain issues. Which would the Town/Village like to see addressed?

- Maps would be very helpful down to their scale.
- There needs to be more sharing of tax dollars from rich towns and county to poor towns and village. Wants to see more services provided by County.

Follow up Conversation with Mayor Scoutin of Port Leyden (July 8, 2008)

Biggest Concern: industry is gone and the village is mostly older/retired residents. There is no money to make the infrastructure improvements needed.

Sewer system needs serious repairs and his concern was where to find the dollars to upgrade it as required by DEC.

Public water is in great shape however, and he is exploring the possibility of selling water. They have ascertained that there is excess water and selling this spring water would not affect current or potential users. He has sent feelers out to two companies and the county but nothing concrete yet.

Other concerns is fuel prices, need for more big businesses, and NYS Route 12. Construction of that 4 lane highway through the village changed the character of the town from which they have not recovered. Not only does it change the visual character, but affected business, and pedestrian – lack of sidewalks. He felt that the state disproportionately put money into road improvements on Route 12 in Lowville, but neglected where it passes through the Village of Port Leyden. He felt the highway was a serious impediment to getting sidewalks.

Did not want to see the County get stretched too thin – feels they need to concentrate on maintaining their own infrastructure instead of taking over for towns and villages. Feels that certainly the villages will not be able to survive if the county does not take care of itself.

**Town of Greig
June 24, 2008**

Attendants:

Judith Wilson, Planning Board
Audrey Drake, Zoning Board of Appeals
Marilyn Patterson, Supervisor
Renee Beyer, Lewis County Department of Economic Development
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

Land Use Issues

- Town has good zoning in place
- Need to be able to address outdoor furnaces
- Need guidance on funding sources for facilities improvements – town barn, town hall, etc.
- Proposal for a water bottling plant is a major issue – developer wants to utilize artesian wells on old farm off Sweeney Rd to extract water, pump it across the river to Route 12 in Turin, then bottle and ship
- Town is concerned about potential effects on Brantingham Lake – study performed was inconclusive
- Town currently trying to initiate a moratorium on water extraction
- Town considering purchasing land around Little Otter Lake (crosses into Herkimer County) – APA has a program whereby its making 500 acres per year available for sale to Towns of Greig and Watson
- Enforcement of ATV/snowmobile riding needs to be more strict (age limit, speed, location)

Fuel Costs/Cost of Town Operations

- Currently \$8 round trip from Brantingham to Lowville – need for public transportation
- Town considering returning the stipend for county road plowing, having the county be responsible for county roads

Economy

- Howard G. Sackett Technical Center (BOCES, based out of Watertown) currently focuses on machine shop skills, mechanics – need for small business training – train people on marketing, accounting, etc. – many of the County’s small businesses would be much more successful if they had access to training on the basics of business
- Research Sun Feather Grants, a local business out of Potsdam that has set up grant programs for small businesses
- Cornell Vet School has mentioned possibility of expanding – can they establish a vet location in Greig, or somewhere else in the County? Not necessarily Cornell, but a vet would be a great new business
- Need for middle income / affordable housing – St. Lawrence County works with Adirondack Housing Trust on affordable housing

**Towns of Pinckney, Harrisburg, Montague & Martinsburg
June 24, 2008**

Attendants:

Jean Waterbury, Tug Hill Commission
Phillip Street, Tug Hill Commission
David Chase, Harrisburg Town Councilman
Daniel Pearson, Town of Pinckney
Terry Thisse, Town of Martinsburg
Stephen Bernat, Town of Harrisburg
Jan Bogdanowicz, Montague Town Supervisor
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

Land Use Issues

- Pinckney – concerned about development pressures in the County – don’t want sprawling development, don’t want whats happening outside the fort – development is good, but it needs to be controlled, zoned, designed well
- County’s land use plan should address commercial growth along Route 12 – development should be encouraged south of Lowville (close to town line) or in other hamlets/villages/areas where infrastructure is in existing and discouraged elsewhere

Roads

- County not spending all of the County Roads budget on improving roads
- Condition of roads is terrible relative to Jefferson, Oswego, St. Lawrence Counties
- Concern about mismanagement of county funds regarding maintenance
- Need for County Hwy Dept to meet with town hwy supers to address this problem
- Rising costs of fuel – county stipend for plowing county roads not keeping pace
- Seasonal land owners want roads plowed, towns want to keep some as “minimum maintenance roads” – Martinsburg especially, won’t improve/plow despite seasonal camp owner’s requests
- No fuel savings in combining highway departments – still have same # of road miles to plow
- Strategic placement of barns is important so that, for example, a county truck isn’t traveling 15 miles to get to a town, and then start plowing

Other

- Wind farms – utility pays the taxes on easements, tax benefits go to: schools (44%), Harrisburg (11%), Martinsburg (12-13%), Lowville (10%), County (22%) – approximate numbers
- General opinion is that wind farms have been very positive
- Break ins at camps – people used to steal precious metals, now they steal gas, guns
- Need for enforcement of recreational uses
- Concern about social services dept growing too much
- Montague and Osceola have a shared assessment agreement



Town of Watson
June 25, 2008

Attendants:
Jim Freeman, Councilman
Jeff Hoch, Councilman
Ron Pominville, Councilman
Virgil Taylor, Supervisor
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

Land Use Issues/Development Pressures

- Good relationship with APA – worked well with them on Chases Lake subdivision
- Town has a moratorium on subdivisions – want to have regulations in place before developer comes in and does something without meeting with the Town (APA regulates anything that happens inside the Blue Line)
- These small but important development pressures are a recent issue, some are seasonal some are year round homes
- Currently updating their zoning, adding subdivision regulations section
- Outdoor furnaces is another new issue – town’s attorney is currently drafting a law regulating them (DEC is banning open barrel burnings) – research how APA has dealt with outdoor furnaces
- Snowbelt Housing built 32 units in hamlet – too dense, sandy soil is not good for septic systems
- Building permits rising fairly high in last few years, although not too concerned about development impacts – not much more room in the hamlet

Roads/Infrastructure

- County roads are in good shape, well-maintained, County plans to stripe all county roads
- Speeds are too high on County Roads
- Watson water users are part of the Lowville water district
- Share paving services with Greig, Croghan and New Bremen (informal agreement)
- Town will continue to plow County Roads as they are the access to all the town roads – no advantage to driving the County Roads with the blade up
- Town does a good job of plowing roads, maintenance, although difficult to keep up with plowing expectations, such as residents that work in Oswego County who need to leave very early in the morning to get to work
- Town plans on cutting back on paving because of increased costs – example: originally budgeted \$4-5,000 for fuel in February, ended up spending \$9,000

Recreation

- Horse trail system – not bringing significant economic benefits compared to snowmobiles/ATVs – no fees to use facilities, generally don’t spend much money in the town or county – some negative impacts including traffic, manure in woods and near lake

- Snowmobile/ATV riders resentful of horse riders because of apparent preferential treatment given to them by the State
- Can county trail system use water line or power line easements for snowmobiles/ATVs?

Town of Osceola
June 25, 2008

Attendants:
Francis Yerdon, Town Board
Arlene Mosch, Zoning Board of Appeals
Jane Jones, Tug Hill Commission
Julie Painter, Supervisor
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

Land Use Issues

- At one point Cooperative Council (5 towns) had a joint Planning Board – broke up because towns wanted to retain local control – need to consider this again, as it is increasingly difficult to find volunteers for boards
- Currently have a joint ZBA
- Planning and zoning training meetings (sponsored by the County) need to be in a variety of locations, evenings are best
- Current Planning Board is too quick to approve projects – making subjective decisions
- Concern about board members’ lack of interest, professionalism, training
- Current zoning and subdivision regulations are antiquated, need to be updated to reflect best practices, modern issues

Roads

- Have had many requests from new home owners for updating, maintaining, plowing roads
- County may be able to maintain dirt roads better than black top
- Town doesn’t receive anything from the County except road maintenance – frustrated about where their County tax dollars are being spent

Forested Lands

- 480A tax incentive program for forestry lands – approx. 80% tax breaks for forestry land owners, remainder of land owners shoulder the remainder of the tax base
- Increase in 480A lands, which amplifies the shrinking tax base problem
- Too much non-taxable land
- Development companies buy forested land, subdivide and sell for recreational camps – sell to out of state people for very high prices so assessors are forced to raise assessed value of surrounding property – locals can’t afford it

Other Notes

- Important to review survey done by 4-Town Comp Plan (Martinsburg, Harrisburg, Montague, Martinsburg) – good summary of values of residents
- County should return portion of sales tax revenue to the towns/villages

Town of Diana, Village of Harrisville
June 25, 2008

Attendants:
Sheri Young, Harrisville Mayor
Bill Kellerhals, Village Trustee
Leroy Davis, Village Trustee
Jim Hunter, Village Trustee
Kimberly Baptiste, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

Primary Challenges Facing Village

- There is no land available in the Village for new development, not even good places for redevelopment
- Focus needs to be on rehab not new development
- Need to share services with Town – explore opportunities
- Interested in sharing Town offices and facilities
- Village Hall site – condemned in December – waiting for asbestos results – big concern is getting the building down – Village using Fire Hall in interim
- Village DPW – no place to house right now
- Already a shared services initiative in place between Village and school – joint fueling station at school – project being held up by grant requirements – may end up falling through if logistics can’t be worked through
- Town and Village now share Fire Department but Village doesn’t think Town pays its fair share
- ATV and snowmobile use on roads – only open road if it connects to existing trails
- Complete road analysis for snowmobiling
- Support sustainable economic development (Fort Drum not sustainable in long term, potentially)
- Area is impacted by Fort Drum – concern is Fort Drum is thinking too big – should utilize existing facilities and infrastructure before expanding too fast
- No ability to retain young population in area
- Good quality-of-life in region, but no jobs
- Electronic infrastructure – need better access
- Feels like County ignores Village, but the Village just ignores the County, too
- Village residents go to Watertown, not Lowville
- Feel like a bigger part of St. Lawrence County
- No place for people to stay overnight between Lowville and Cranberry



Opportunities

- Schools are important to involve throughout County
- Water system is not bad
- Plan completed to look at putting in sewer – cost would be \$5 million, Village is only worth \$14 million – would be in 3 phases with low density areas excluded
- Have zoning in place
- RR tracks cross streets and are not being used – easements – used for trails
- Unique recreational opportunities in Town and Village – cross country ski trails
- Promote Route 3 as the Olympic Trail – Gateway to the Adirondacks
- Play up local artist community – art is interesting to visitors – music is big here
- Maple syrup potential (County – RFP for maple production facility)

Miscellaneous

- Bad idea to get rid of Village of Harrisville as own entity – the best government is one that is close to the people
- County helped them to write a grant to do the playground adjacent to Fire Hall
- Large local employers include Viking, HDK, school, and the combination of Village business owners (Drs., Stewart’s, various restaurants)
- Lots of special events associated with the Village that should be better promoted regionally – Tour of Trees (cycling), Harrisville Sports Car Rally (not occurring this year), Extreme Sports Triathlon (ended), kayaking
- Four day school days do not actually improve the situation with regards to gas consumption
- Harrisville Sports Car Rally through Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) – close roads and race through Town – brings in people from all over

**Town of Denmark, Villages of Copenhagen & Castorland
June 25, 2008**

Attendants:

Mark Moshier, Castorland Trustee
Charles Fanning, County Legislator
Ben Colton, Castorland Mayor
Donna Loucks, Castorland Clerk/Treasurer
Thomas Fleming, Denmark Supervisor
Mark Birchenough, Castorland Superintendent of Public Works
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

Land Use / Property Values

- Some assessors service multiple towns, such as Rutland/Champion/Denmark
- Plan should address appropriate location for industrial uses
- Military presence is driving housing prices up – people on fixed incomes, young people, can’t afford housing increases
- Percent of county tax is increasing faster than other towns because of military presence – perhaps a cap on raising assessments rather than a cap on property taxes would be more effective

- County consider county-wide assessment office to address inequalities in land values – need for training of local assessors to understand the big picture of the impacts of real estate values
- Croghan threw away their zoning because too many people opposed to setback requirements and other complexities in the code – rather than fixing these problems in the code, they removed the entire law – need for better education on the value of good land use regulations
- Croghan has major utility presence (dams, power lines, pipeline) that are paying taxes, which puts the town in better shape financially

Consolidation Issue, Municipal Challenges

- Castorland concerned about remaining a village – considering dissolving – lacks the population to support it
- Castorland has 3 large tax-exempt properties that hinder the tax base
- Concern that training requirements are increasing for water/sewer/hwy staff
- Generally support the idea of a water authority in the interest of efficiency, a possible result of the water study currently being performed
- Foreseeing a consolidation of services – water, sewer, fire, ambulance, etc. – as a trend statewide
- State and federal mandates (increases, more stringent requirements) are making operations at the local level cost prohibitive
- County should return the sales tax to the towns, although it might benefit some towns and hurt others if money is distributed proportional to the presence of business

Other Notes

- Need for accurate floodplain mapping – current maps are grossly outdated
- Concern about recent changes in State policy for ATV use – ATVs wouldn’t have the negative environmental impacts if a proper trail system was in place
- Stewarts in Copenhagen – snowmobiles are approx. 30% of winter business
- Note from a farmer – concern that the majority of people that will be involved in the project are farmers – who tend to be self-sufficient, independent thinkers, and at times close-minded – these are valuable traits in some circumstances, but the progressive approach needed in the Plan may be in conflict with such a mindset
- Important to emphasize what the plan can give the towns/villages – educate them on issues, give answers, not questions

**Town & Village of Croghan
June 27, 2008**

Attendants:

Ruth Ann Hammond, John Jones, Jack Sweeney
Liz Jones, Bruce Widrick, Glen Gognier
Andy Raus, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

What they would like to see the County Comprehensive Plan Address

- How to organize a local municipal or intermunicipal comprehensive plan.
- Tools to help set up a local zoning ordinance or other land use regulations
- Potential for County Plan to have enough detail to function as the local municipal plan and the basis for future zoning or land use regulations
- How to maintain Main Street viability
- How to take advantage of the Empire Zone
- How to deal with an aging population, housing stock and difficulty of getting to basic services
- Possibilities for local municipal consolidation of services or consolidation of government (long term)
- How to set up an intermunicipal planning board and/or zoning board of appeals
- How to enhance code enforcement for property maintenance
- How to enhance local recreational resources (old bridge near Croghan dam, future multi-use of rail line connecting to Beaver Falls)
- How to increase usage of municipal services (sewer/water)
- Ways the County can enhance services for local municipal economic development initiatives including grants writing and administration
- A way for the County to target manufacturing/distribution associated with the value added products and services produced from local commodities (maple syrup, dairy, etc.)

Threats to the Community

- Continued increase in taxes
- Loss of Jobs
- No youth moving back
- Age of housing stock
- Proximity to health care
- Loss of tourism industry due to increasing regulations and cost of gas
- Lack of daily services in village area

Opportunities Specific to the Community

- Better services from County
- Croghan dam replacement, possible hydro dam retro-fit
- Incorporate old bridge by dam into recreation system
- Expand water and sewer system to appropriate growth locations
- Multi-use path between Croghan and Beaver Falls

Towns of Turin & West Turin, Villages of Lyons Falls, Constableville, and Turin
August 4, 2008

Attendants:

Ron Dorrity, Lyons Falls Mayor
Edward Hayes, West Turin Town Supervisor
William McGovern, West Turin Councilman
Jeff Hoskins, Lyons Falls Village Trustee
Jason Gibson, Lyons Falls Village Trustee
Mike Skorupa, Lyons Falls Village Trustee
Tina Paczkowski, Turin Town Supervisor
Grant Moshier, Constableville Mayor
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

Primary Challenges

- Oil prices increasing, difficult for towns/villages to budget
- Jobs moving out of town, need for more jobs & better paying jobs
- Loss of taxpayers, no new families moving in
- Paper industry has been bought out by international companies
- Loss of grocery store in Lyons Falls (locally owned) — affects fixed/low income residents who can't afford to drive to Boonville or Lowville
- Out of staters not invested in local communities (transients), presence is driving prices up
- Farms continue to subdivide

Important Assets

- Route 12 and RR provide good access, good infrastructure
- Otis Technology steadily growing
- Recreational facilities, although County/towns/villages should be very cautious about basing their economy just on recreation

Opportunities to Address Challenges

- In light of rising costs, may have to cut back and limit paving in the future, or cut back on employee benefits
- County-wide assessment may reduce inconsistencies and bring more equality to taxes (well supported by group)
- Preserve Black River and other natural resources
- Support development of the Blue Way Trail
- Redevelop paper mill— group open to industry, more hydropower, recreation-based businesses (kayaking) or some mix thereof
- Take more advantage of locally-harnessed energy
- Need something to offer businesses, i.e. energy discounts
- More windpower, other “green” power
- Open to the possibility of some consolidation, certainly more sharing of services, but want to preserve local representation

- There are some inefficiencies that come with worrying about jurisdictional boundaries, i.e. plowing, patching potholes
- Need for more coordination between County and towns/villages for service

Development Pressures / Land Use Issues

- Mostly seasonal/recreational camps, only Otis and The Edge are expanding
- A few subdivisions for camps on the hill
- Some lots may be too small for water/sewer — need better subdivision regulations
- Lyons Falls considered zoning at one point, but abandoned the idea because it appeared overly complex, also because the mix of uses spread out across the village doesn't lend itself well to traditional zoning
- Lyons Falls is content with having this mix, would like to encourage more but traditional zoning may not achieve this
- Turin and West Turin have zoning, C-ville has some, all are somewhat outdated — West Turin facing frequent appeals from small businesses
- May be interested in design-based or form-based zoning for villages — this would help simplify the process for the benefit of both developers and administrators

FOCUS GROUP MEETING NOTES

Focus Group Meeting:
DAIRY
September 15, 2008

Attendants:

Jen Karelus, Lewis County Farm Bureau
Joe Schultz, Lowville Producers
Dwight Houser, Lowville Producers
Charles Sullivan, Comp Plan Steering Committee
Nan Stolzenburg, Community Planning & Environmental Associates

MEETING NOTES (*notes in italics* should be considered when developing objectives and actions in the Comprehensive Plan)

Positive Aspects of the Industry

- Great Lakes expansion will cause a large increase in the demand for milk. Farmers have already increased production to meet that demand.
- County's smaller farms don't have to comply with CAFO regulations yet and they don't have as many immigrant labor issues. Eventually, the regulations that are now applied to large farms will trickle down to smaller farms, we just don't know how long that will take. Small farms still have trouble getting reliable, local help.
- Past trends were that larger farms were getting larger and smaller ones were going out, but the Amish have helped balanced that out.
- Not much loss in farmland. Most land is sold to other farmers.

- Land competition is not too bad.
- Still good support for ag in Lewis County in terms of agri-businesses and other supports for farming.
- Very positive feelings about the number of children and next generation people who want to stay in farming.
- Maple syrup is a growing niche market.
- County still has a critical mass of farms, along with Kraft and Great Lakes allows efficient milk-truck pick up.
- Wind farms seen as a positive — mostly by those farmers who have land that can lease land to wind.

Negative Aspects of the Industry

- Highway budgets not big enough to maintain roads and bridges in good repair. Need to replace bridges can seriously impact farmer's ability to travel to fields.
- CAFO requirements cost those farmers who have to comply quite a bit of money
- Concerned about tourism and more people from the outside coming to Lewis County resulting in changes in land values so it makes it harder for farmers to afford land to buy and rent.
- Nuisance complaints from non-farmers are at a pretty low level now but there is concern that as more non-farmers move in that will become a problem.
- *New residents put pressure on towns to maintain seasonal roads to year round roads and this relates to taxes, which will impact the farmers.*
- Land rental rates are increasing. Big farms are causing higher land rental prices due to their need to spread manure. As they get bigger and need more land, they drive up the rental prices for all.
- Biggest challenge is the price increases in production costs.
- Lowville Farmers Cooperative – going downhill, and if they go out, this could be a problem for small items farmers need locally.
- Farm transfer from one generation to the next is a challenge from an economic point of view.
- Not much need for or interest in any kind of value-added farming related to dairy. No need for it so far.
- *If landowners who rent land to farmers decide to sell then most farms in County will be negatively impacted. We need those rented lands.*
- Participants were not aware that the county had an Ag Enhancement Plan.
- *ATV's that pass over farmland can be a problem.*
- Labor for large farms is more of a problem than for small farms. Immigration issues are of concern.
- Lack of cultural awareness and support for the immigrant labor pool.
- Water may be an issue for farms in the future.
- *Lack of high speed internet and quality phone service for farms.*

Opportunities to Enhance the Dairy Industry

- Keep nuisance complaints low – right to farm laws at town and county levels
- Land is still able to be bought and sold as farm land – keep land values affordable for farmers



- *Have IDA focus much more on ag-related business development.*
- Don't let farmland get fragmented because that is what is keeping it all together so far.
- *Find options and funding for farmers to sell development rights. Not a lot of interest now, but there will be.*
- *Continue to research the idea of a community digester for regional manure management and local energy production (it hasn't been established that this idea is feasible).*
- *There needs to be more education of realtors in knowing their role in informing buyers about the Ag District.*
- *There needs to be more education of Planning Board members in their role in following the Ag and Markets 25-aa requirements (ag data statement, etc.)*
- *There is a need to inform people about the County Ag Enhancement Plan*
- *There is a need to get the County to implement the Ag Enhancement Plan and strengthen its role*
- Heighten the importance of the Ag District
- Strengthen the role of the County Ag Legislative Committee and make them the ones in charge of overseeing implementation of the Ag Plan. They were not seen to be effective.
- County should place emphasis on ag economic development.
- County should make more effort to help the immigrant labor pool be more comfortable, supported, and welcomed here.

Focus Group Meeting:

FORESTRY

September 15, 2008

Attendants:

- Fred Munk, NYS DEC
- Rodney Buckingham, Lewis County Reforestation Foreman
- Duane Farney, Farney Lumber Company
- Carlton Carpenter, AMF Quibica
- Carl Golas, ANCA
- Evan Zehr, Lewis County Maple Producers
- Haskell Yancey, Lewis County Maple Producers
- Nan Stolzenburg, Community Planning & Environmental Associates

MEETING NOTES (*notes in italics* should be considered when developing objectives and actions in the Comprehensive Plan)

Positive Aspects of the Industry

- DEC harvests approximately 1000 acres of State Forest land in Lewis and Jefferson counties every year, with the majority of the acres located in Lewis County. The harvested wood is shipped many different places, including a number of wood products businesses in Lewis County
- Maple syrup industry is very positive. Prices are at an all time high. Everyone is expanding.

- Cornell Cooperative Extension still active related to maple syrup.
- Chip Plant in Lyons Falls. If not for this, there would be lots of loggers out of business. Chips are a major forest product now in County.
- More of the forest is being used now due to the biomass plant and increased demand for other forms of wood fuel such as pellets and wood bricks. Slash and trees that used to be left on forest floor are now used. This trend is expected to increase in the future.
- 29,000 acres in Lewis County are enrolled in the state 480a (Forest Tax Law) program.

Challenges for the Industry

- Loss of sawmills is very alarming
- Not profitable for sawmills – lots of costs for low price for product
- *Concern over introduction of exotic species and invasive species that could harm forests.*
- Forest product economy is poor – can't turn a profit by turning logs into lumber and the price of lumber has plummeted.
- Landowners may be more interested in leasing land for mineral rights or other uses if they can't make money off of timber operations.
- Foreign competition is a big problem for value-added wood products such as furniture. That has put a lot of small furniture manufacturers out of business.
- *Land is getting subdivided rapidly and that means it will be less likely those landowners will log.*
- Seeing either great big timber operations or very small family operations. Not many small logging firms left. Fewer people doing logging due to economy.
- Maple trees not dripping like they used to – might be weather related.
- Tree health is a concern to maple producers.
- Feels forest product industry in Lewis County goes under the County radar and is not recognized as a large part of the economy. Feels County is not really involved in the forest industry.
- National housing industry has a significant impact on the lumber industry – fewer houses/building means poorer economy for the forest products industry. Feels this will take a very long time to recover from.
- Traditionally, landowners here appreciate timber value but that is changing rapidly where timber land value is being converted to recreational land value.
- Perception that lots are worth more as building lots than the timber is worth.
- *Assessors tax land according to timber value, but this varies a lot from place to place. Theoretically if timber is sold then land value decreases for tax purposes.*
- It takes a lot of maple syrup to earn enough money to be eligible for the ag tax exemption.
- Labor may be difficult issue for maple syrup in the future.
- *Road maintenance on seasonal roads or lack of it that prevents logging trucks from getting to woods.*

Opportunities to Enhance the Forest Products Industry

- Forests need to be managed as well as possible to provide for future forest products.

- Developing a value-added wood pellet plant
- Industrial dryer for firewood.
- *County should have role to enhance the maple syrup industry.*
- Don't take timber forest value of land into account for taxes
- *Offer local tax incentives for maple syrup in addition to those through the ag exemption program.*
- *County should consider forest products industry in any decision making and program they make. They feel that the forest product industry is worth more to the county than the ATV effort. County decisions should have no negative impact on the forestry industry.*
- *Pass right-to-forestry laws may be important in the future.*
- Do not have towns pass logging permit programs. Doesn't want to see permits needed, nor additional fees or taxes to do this activity.

Focus Group Meeting:

TOURISM & MARKETING

September 15, 2008

Attendants:

- Anne Merrill, Lewis County Chamber of Commerce
- Lisa Becker, Lewis County Historian
- Robert Diehl, Lewis County Trail Coordinator
- Nan Stolzenburg, Community Planning & Environmental Associates

MEETING NOTES (*notes in italics* should be considered when developing objectives and actions in the Comprehensive Plan)

Positive Characteristics

- Lewis County Historical Society very active with lots of historical/cultural events.
- Lots of resources and things to do
- New winery
- Quaintness of village
- Chamber of Commerce – has marketing and website.
- Wind Farm
- Currently preparing a bike plan
- Good cooperation regionally for snowmobiles and ATV's.
- Chamber is preparing a map showing all recreational locations in the County.

Negative Characteristics

- Chamber lacks money to do more marketing and other organizations lack money too.
- People drive through County to get to Adirondacks but do not stop and stay



- Lacking downtown businesses in Lowville and other villages that cater to tourists. Wal-Mart killed local businesses and there is nothing to attract and keep tourists.
- *Unattractive streetscapes. There is a lack of curb appeal.*
- Lack of hotels. Can't get bigger chains to come in due to low summer use.
- Restaurants not busy enough in summer
- Major highways bypass the county
- Perception among people that there is nothing to do in Lewis County.
- Downtown merchants struggle to unite around a common direction/vision, partially because there is a limited number of merchants who participate in the Lowville Downtown Merchants Association
- There is no County office of tourism, no county legislative committee in charge of tourism and marketing, etc.
- Lack of coordination among organizations and agencies – everyone is pretty much on their own and doing their own self-promotion.
- Lots of people buying land for seasonal homes have the potential to drive up land values.
- Road systems do not support villages (by pass or cut them)
- *There is no brand, theme to market.*
- There is no vision or unified front on what kind of tourism is desired.
- Community has mixed feelings as some don't want the word to get out about the many things going on because they don't want to see more people and more growth. This was seen as a primary issue.
- Resentment among some residents over the growth of ATV and snowmobiling. Some long-term residents feel that the quality of life and peaceful nature of the county has decreased as a result. Conflicted over this.
- CEDS hardly touched on tourism.
- We are a hard area to get change through – it is very gradual, and many prevent change and acceptance of new ideas.
- Didn't feel that there was a lot of awareness of all the things going on among local residents as well as seasonal ones.
- *Didn't feel that the message about what a great quality of life Lewis County offers is getting out to potential employers*
- The good cooperation seen among snowmobile associations, and ATV interests does not extend to other recreational or cultural events.

Inventory of Strengths that Lewis County has to offer tourists:

- Tug Hill
- Black River
- Erie Canal
- 4-seasons
- Scenic beauty
- Small hometown feel
- Safe
- State land
- Recreation

- First and foremost is snowmobiling
- Speedway
- Horseback riding
- State Park
- Black River, Blueway Canoe – flat water
- White water
- Fishing
- ATV – base is growing, and soon there will be 7 counties connected and be among the largest ATV trails in the NE.
- Snowmobile Associations
- Kite Skiing
- Heritage Tourism
- RR Society in Croghan
- Maple Museum
- Mennonite Heritage Farm
- North American Fiddlers Hall of Fame – Osceola
- Constable Hall
- General Martin Mansion
- Festivals

Opportunities to Enhance Tourism and Marketing

- *Improve downtown streetscapes – they need to recreate what it used to be like and create an image in the core area of downtown.*
- *Do a walking tour of village.*
- Did not want to promote large venues and attractions (such as Water Safari).
- Quaintness of area should be the key to marketing and promotion as that is what people are looking for.
- Wind farm could be a bigger draw for County. It is already a tourist draw and this could be capitalized on.
- Market to Canada – should be a big draw.
- *There needs to be a vision and a meeting of the minds to bring people together as to what kind of and amount of tourism is appropriate.*
- *County could play a bigger role in developing appropriate tourism and marketing via a tourism plan. (on the other hand, they were aware that big government that tells people what to do is also not desired)*
- *Black River Canal for walking/skiing path.*
- *Market Lewis County to potential employers and emphasize the quality of life that could be offered to new employees.*
- There are lots of opportunities to cross-promote events and activities.

**Focus Group Meeting:
HOUSING
September 15, 2008**

Attendants:

- Kathy Manning, Project Manager - Karcher Country Estates
- Cheryl Shenkle-O'Neil, Snow Belt Housing
- Jennifer Jones, Lewis County Dept of Social Services
- Monique Branagan, Snow Belt Housing
- Brenda Monnat, Housing Program Manager
- Tina Stanford, Lewis County Office for the Aging
- Andy Raus, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES (*notes in italics* should be considered when developing objectives and actions in the Comprehensive Plan)

General Comments

- *There is an increased demand for senior affordable housing.*
- Current units available may not be very attractive or up to date.
- Affordable senior housing may be needed in Port Leyden, Lyons Falls, Croghan.
- Many affordable senior housing complexes funded through the USDA 515 Program allow for disabled persons of all age groups creating conflicts.
- Seniors want to stay local but often times need to move to other locations to find affordable housing which can be stressful and unsuccessful.
- *It is very difficult to provide affordable housing to seniors who desire a rural lifestyle.*
- There is market rate senior housing in the region now that is attractive to seniors that can afford it.
- There are existing programs for housing rehab and upgrades such as HOME, WRAP, Lewis County Opportunities, Church of the Nazarene and North Country Affordable Housing Trailer Replacement Program.
- *It is difficult for young families and first time buyers to find affordable housing.*
- *There is a service gap for households earning more than HUD low income threshold but still below median household income.*
- Transportation for seniors and low income families is a great concern.
- Rental opportunities are very limited in the County for lower income seniors and families.
- *Most rental rates are inflated due to influence from Fort Drum. This may change as the Fort is encouraging on-base relocation.*
- Homelessness, and programs for managing homelessness is a continuing problem in Lewis County.
- Affordable single family home programs, Watson Farmers Home Rural Subdivision, are difficult to build due to cost of materials and labor associated with each unit.
- Homes in Lewis County often have multi-generations in each structure and they are passed down.
- *Promotion of existing programs is currently released using newsletters, articles, postings at pharmacies, on the radio and at senior day.*
- Dead beat landlords are a real concern, impacting housing and neighborhood quality.



- *Lack of code enforcement is also a major concern.*
- *Property owners do not reinvest in the community due to fear of rising taxes.*
- *Housing in villages may not be diverse enough to support all groups, such as seniors.*
- *Rental options are not available for all income levels or groups; it's either for low income or high income.*
- *Many rentals are in bad condition in villages. Owners, often absentee, do not use rental rehab funds because it would require low income users.*
- *County should look into a strategic approach to RESTORE, NY for rehab of key Main Street structures in Villages that will allow for upper story housing opportunities.*

**Focus Group Meeting:
REAL PROPERTY ASSESSMENT
September 15, 2008**

Attendants:
Roger Tibbets, Assessor
Brian Klossner, Assessor
Caryn Kolts, Lewis County Real Property Tax Service
John Whitaker, ORPS
Janet Lasell, ORPS
Erin Gratch, Assessor, Town of New Bremen
Ron Terrilion, Assessor
Eric Sunderhaft, Sunderhaft Appraisals
Tom Spina, Resident
John McDonald, Resident
Britt Abbey, Abbey Appraisals
Andy Raus, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES (*notes in italics should be considered when developing objectives and actions in the Comprehensive Plan*)

Assessment Grant

Janet Lasell of the New York State Department of Real Property Services presented the recent State grant program for improving the consistency of real property assessment statewide. Lewis County was awarded a \$25,000 grant to analyze the current assessment procedures utilized at the County and local levels. The County will receive an additional \$25,000 when the study/analysis is presented to the Board of Legislators. This effort will result in a report that indicates potential opportunities for improvement. It will not recommend a preferred approach as this will be left to the County and local municipalities to determine. The report shall include an analysis of current practices and procedures, opportunities for improving transparency of the assessment process, the potential for defining a common re-assessment cycle and the definition of a consistent re-assessment process. The report should be completed by December, 2008 and will be available for our use when developing the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Lasell provided an overview of programs currently funded by NYS Department of Real Property to assist with the cost of improving the assessment process. Current programs include:

- Up to \$5.00 per parcel annually if an annual reassessment process is adopted
- Up to \$5.00 per parcel every three years if three year reassessment process is adopted
- Up to \$7.00 per parcel one time grant for forming a Cooperative Assessment Program (CAP - multi-jurisdictional). This is pro-rated over ten years so, if a municipality pulls out of the program, then it will need to pay back a percentage of the grant.

General Comments from Focus Group Attendees: (*notes in italics should be considered when developing objectives and actions in the Comprehensive Plan*)

- Some local officials are not comfortable with full assessment because of the potential tax increase implications it would have on residents.
- The State should mandate a cycle period for assessments statewide.
- The profession is aging and interest is not present in younger generations to become assessors. This is partially due to it being undervalued as compared to responsibility.
- *The County Assessors Office could help local assessors by providing staff that will evaluate and verify sales countywide to ensure a consistent process.*
- There needs to be improved coordination between local assessors.
- *The County should explore a reasonable value system for assessing rather than basing everything on sale value due to impacts on affordability for local residents.*
- Assessors who manage more than one municipality generally receive more training opportunities from the State.
- *There is greater efficiency for the local municipality when an assessor manages more than one community due to sharing of reimbursable costs and operational overhead (office space, etc.).*
- Assessors by IAAO standards are only recommended to manage 2,500 parcels.
- Today, private assessors receive \$8-8.50 a parcel.
- *RPTL 1537 provides a framework for cooperatively sharing the duties for assessment between local municipalities and the County.*
- *In Schuyler County, NY local assessors were hired by the County to improve coordination and consistency. This was facilitated under RPTL 1537.*
- *CAP's should only happen with communities of similar land use makeup. Example, a community with waterfront property should not be combined with one that does not have waterfront property. This will skew the accuracy of the assessment.*
- *Others felt that it would not distort the accuracy of the assessment, but that it would be harder to maintain uniformity and the same level of assessment.*
- Seasonal and waterfront properties are increasing in value faster than other properties but forcing all properties to increase as well.
- Fort Drum, based upon past experience, has temporary impacts on assessment values.
- Waterfront property investment is not only out of town people. In fact, the Focus Group felt that local residents were actually buying more waterfront property than the out of town population.
- State allowed exemptions shift the burden of property tax to a smaller number of parcels while benefiting a few.

- *An educational program may be of value to help local owners understand the assessment business and process.*
- *The County should consider allowing people to pay taxes in installments rather than all at once. All tax bills should be lumped into one payment.*

**Focus Group Meeting:
REGIONAL COORDINATION & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
September 15, 2008**

Attendants:
Kevin Jordan, Development Authority of the North Country
Eric Virkler, Village of Lowville Administrator
Dave Zembiec, Tug Hill Commission
Renee Beyer, Lewis County Dept of Economic Development & Planning
Andy Raus, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES

General Comments from Focus Group Attendees: (*notes in italics should be considered when developing objectives and actions in the Comprehensive Plan*)

- Tug Hill Commission to provide a list of all cooperative planning efforts currently underway or recently completed within the County and surrounding region.
- Town and Village of Lowville currently have a joint planning and zoning board and a joint comprehensive plan. Currently, zoning codes and land use regulations are separate. May be good to look at consolidating into one set of regulations.
- County to provide a list of all known formal intermunicipal, county/municipal agreements.
- County to assist with developing a list of known informal agreements, which are very common and effective in the County.
- *The Plan should include an informal cooperation "case study" for informational purposes.*
- May be opportunities to share municipal financial services between several municipalities.
- Shared volunteer boards such as planning and zoning board of appeals may be the only viable option for many communities due to population size.
- The North Country Home Consortium is a good example of an intermunicipal cooperative approach to obtaining grant monies for housing rehab. Municipalities had to pass a resolution to be included in the Consortium. This cooperative approach allows the region to tap into funding that is not readily available to rural areas. This results in \$1.5M annually.
- The perception of intermunicipal cooperation, specifically government consolidation, is driven by fear of change. "I have to do what the group wants to do." Also, the fear of not having local representation is a big issue.
- *In the plan, we should list known examples of cooperation going on.*
- *The Plan should identify gaps in service where, if cooperation was in place or enhanced, the gap could be closed.*
- *Coordination efforts should focus on easy, quick fix opportunities at first. Government consolidation should be looked at as a last resort.*



- Education will be essential to building comfort with greater levels of cooperation.
- *Utilize local examples of how cooperation has led to improved quality of life benefits. Bring in speakers to discuss after plan is complete.*
- A potential case study for sewer system improvements in LeRay, Champion, Rutland, and Black River is currently underway.
- The County water study recommendations should provide insight into future cooperation for potable water service.
- The future land use recommendations in the comprehensive plan should be consistent with the water study recommendations.
- *There should be a designated Comprehensive Plan Implementation Coordinator position after adoption of the document.*
- *A topic area and training program should be created for the top five or six opportunities for cooperation.*
- *The County needs to complete a 5, 10, 15 year cost of services analysis for local governments to understand the fiscal condition it can expect in the future. This will help to educate decisions on cooperation. There is currently a funding opportunity for this through the NYS DOS.*
- *The Steering Committee should select five or six key areas for cooperation from the following list: water/wastewater, highway, land use planning and regulation, municipal facilities, economic development and grants, government financing and administrative services, housing, environment, alternative energy. Each of these areas should be focuses for education and building a cooperative framework for future implementation.*

**Focus Group Meeting:
EDUCATION
September 17, 2008**

Attendants:
Mary-Margaret Zehr, Copenhagen CSD
Jay Boak, BOCES
Ken McAuliffe, Lowville Academy
Leueen Smithling, Beaver River CSD
Rolf Waters, Harrisville CSD
Bill Kellerhals, Harrisville CSD
Frank House, South Lewis CSD
Doug Premo, South Lewis CSD
Sarah Bullock, Lewis County Department of Econ Dev & Planning
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES (*notes in italics* should be considered when developing objectives and actions in the Comprehensive Plan)

Challenges

- Loss of population (less state aid), lack of affordable housing.
- Influx of Ft. Drum, mainly an issue in the Copenhagen and Harrisville District.
- Brain drain – no jobs available.
- Sparse population, schools are the community center. So most people have to travel long distances.

- Lack of economic development in recent years (industry, ag) other than Otis, green energy.
- No longer have some of the traditional sports rivalries (i.e. Beaver Falls – Lowville football)
- Districts want to avoid the tipping point where remaining population can no longer support operations.
- State aid is in jeopardy, roughly 2/3 budget. How do we respond to this? Can steps be taken to reduce our dependence on the state, prior to the bottom dropping out? Some districts have attempted initiatives in this direction, but they lack support because they involve cuts in funding/programs.
- Pre-emptive steps have been explored but lack public support.
- Possibility of consolidation, more efficiencies in terms of teacher/student ratio, admin/staff. Mixed opinions about this, as local control and identity is very important.
- Most not willing to entertain consolidation unless can demonstrate bottom falling out, local identity, heritage, control are too important.
- Assessments have increased significantly in Denmark/Copenhagen.
- Transportation network not sufficient for economic development, same with higher education.
- Removal/decrease of state aid forces schools to raise taxes. Simultaneously, state has not raised income taxes (which would increase state aid) in a few decades.

Positive Aspects

- Development at Griffiss starting to have positive impact on South Lewis.
- Desire to preserve small town character, element of isolation.
- Small classrooms, small schools – can offer more in terms of relationship but maybe not in terms of amenities, technology (bells and whistles) that suburban schools in upstate might offer.
- Primary resources are natural resources (water, wind).
- South Lewis – athletic facilities are all free, offer a variety of services. Also offer 44 credit hours worth of higher education classes.
- “Summer vacation” no longer exists – events / programs available all summer.
- Local school boards generally offer almost anything locals ask for in terms of programs and services. The schools are the primary community center of most communities. This is why budgets mostly are approved – people recognize the value of these community centers.
- Most districts have some form of shared services/facilities.

General Comments

- BOCES – offers great programs but there is a lack of interest.
- Copenhagen, about 50% of students go to BOCES, although very few enter the fields they study.
- Started an entrepreneurship class, where kids learn how to write a business plan.
- Got a grant to start a photography-based class. (21st Century Learning Grant)
- Districts are providing transportation services that help make up for tight individual budgets. In effect creating a form of public transportation.
- Lewis County Opportunities also has a presence in the schools.

Opportunities

- *County can take wind turbine revenues to stabilize taxes. Need for County to seed economic development.*
- *Potential for more on-line learning programs.*
- *Districts are renting out buses to not-for-profits and municipalities. Possibility for expanding this and promoting it?*
- *More agencies (like Lewis County Mental Health) should provide more support services at local schools. One effect has been to keep kids in school longer (don't have to travel so far).*
- *Need for greater presence of Mountain View (private company that provides drug and alcohol counseling).*
- *Need for mini BOCES or apprenticeships available at 9th or 10th graders. Get them interested early on.*
- *Possibility for BOCES or Districts to offer more training for students and existing local businesses. Many programs exist (shadowing, internships).*
- *Kids are interested in these, interested in owning their own land, being their own bosses, but there are problems with work ethic (not wanting to work long hours).*
- *Opportunities for more internships / shadowing with emerging businesses (currently primarily student – driven). Can be more District driven based on knowledge of business. New winery cited as an example. Others include aqua farming, nurseries and landscaping, forestry, maple syrup, other non-traditional agri-businesses.*

**Focus Group Meeting:
RENEWABLE & SUSTAINABLE ENERGY
September 17, 2008**

Attendants:
Jon Elmer, Brookfield Renewable Power
Steve Murphy, Brookfield Renewable Power
Tammie Toth, TMT Biofuels
Bill Seifried, DANC (Rodman Landfill)
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES (*notes in italics* should be considered when developing objectives and actions in the Comprehensive Plan)

Description of Businesses Represented

- Brookfield Renewable Power – 100% renewable (hydro-electric, wind), currently in a growth mode.
 - *Currently working with SUNY Oswego County to develop an energy based degree to meet labor needs.*
- TMT Biofuels in Lyonsdale – utilize vegetable oil to create bio-diesel
 - *primarily getting their waste from restaurants (more promotion opportunities?)*
 - *began construction about one year ago, in operation about one month.*
 - *county will use these bio-fuels for their fleet, about 20-30% of use. (more promotion opportunities?)*
 - *glycerine is their waste bi-product (large surplus), which has potential for use as a cleaning application (soaps, de-greasers).*



- Rodman Landfill (Jefferson County off Rte 177) — 1/3 of workforce is from Lewis County, 20% of waste comes from Lewis County.
 - 40-50% of waste is organic.
 - Currently wasted opportunities for lost methane.
 - 1500 acres, majority is a buffer (non-landfill).
 - Looking at possibilities for locating industries to benefit from energy production.
 - Looking at greenhouse possibility utilizing excess heat from landfill (pursuing a tomatoes contract with Tops / Wegmans), would need to pipe in large quantities of water (hydroponic).
 - Benefit of landfill is there is a constant fuel source (no variables).
- State and utility regs are too burdensome (to slow to adapt) to facilitate expansion.
- Logs are shipped to Canada for processing and shipped back to consumers b/c cost of energy of New York is too high.
- Exploring possibility of kiln utilizing local energy in order to overcome this
- Life of Phase I (75 acres) is 2018, Phase II is 2065.

Challenges & Opportunities

- County has expressed strong support for these companies and their initiatives. Wants to have an ongoing dialogue regarding what they can do to support these companies and what additional investments could be considered.
- Great opportunities for more renewable and sustainable energy initiatives, but for those feeding energy to the grid (wind, hydro), there are major capacity issues. More transmission lines (more capacity) is needed to support these initiatives
- Lewis County can't utilize the energy they create locally (wind and hydro) b/c it all gets fed into the grid. Need a solution for generating and transmitting energy independent of the grid.
- TMT is an example of this solution, but its application is limited to motor vehicle fuel at the moment.
- In order to expand Kraft, need to expand cow density in the county. In order to do that, need to have a solution for disposing of the waste. Community digester facility at Kraft may accomplish this.
- County should explore possibility of selling low-cost power to industries that collocate at power sources.
- Need to explore smaller scale (residential and commercial) applications of renewable/ sustainable energy, such as green buildings (LEED), solar, geothermal, wind, etc. [this scale of design not represented at group]
- Need to create a comprehensive list of companies/initiatives in the County and promote it to potential investors, start-ups and existing businesses looking to expand. Can also be promoted to a general target audience in order to highlight the County's unusually high number of companies/initiatives.

Focus Group Meeting: WEEKEND & SEASONAL RESIDENTS September 17, 2008

Attendants:

Don Hunt, Pratt Northam Foundation
Roger Abbey, Good Morning Realty
Donna Loucks, D'laux Properties
Sarah Bullock, Lewis County Department of Economic Development & Planning
Kevin Kelley, Bergmann Associates

MEETING NOTES (*notes in italics* should be considered when developing objectives and actions in the Comprehensive Plan)

General Comments

- County's biggest asset – peace, quiet and green space.
- About 10-15% of Chases Lake is permanent residents.

Positive Impacts

- Positive impacts of weekend/seasonal residents – economic, create communities, develop recreational trails.
- Asset to churches, service organizations.
- Many artists.
- Somewhat involved in community, maybe a need for more opportunities to get them involved.
- Increasing turnover in ownership of seasonal properties.

Negative Impacts

- Negative impacts may not be known, but largely positive. Brantingham as an example.
- Too many reduces the peace and quiet.
- Affects delivery of local services – need for more sheriff patrols.
- Entitlement to have seasonal roads open.
- Increasing property sale prices (\$500K) impacting long-term permanent residents.
- Disparity in pressure on assessors to reach 100% equalization rate.
- West Turin can skate by with their assessments as pressure is applied to Greig to reach 100% equalization.

Opportunities

- Need to develop a master plan for seasonal roads.
- Plan for which roads will open and which will stay seasonal.
- Plan for water activities, ATV trails (including maintenance), snowmobiles.
- Need to address and promote quality of life to attract more seasonal / permanent residents.
- Need to utilize wind and local energy sources to fund (thru wind) infrastructure.
- Potential for start-up businesses (by seasonal residents).
- Need for high speed internet.
- Need more infill development in Village, specifically the vacant lot at the 4 corners in Lowville, which is a major gateway and has an impact on visitors.



VISIONING EXERCISE RESULTS

LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Developing Vision and Policy for the County

Results from Visioning Exercises

Steering Committee Meeting

CCE Meeting Room – August 4, 2008

Community Meetings

Lowville Fire Hall – August 5, 2008

Croghan Fire Hall – August 5, 2008

Lyons Falls Fire Hall – August 6, 2008



Steering Committee Workshop Summary

Facilitated by Kevin Kelley & Andy Raus

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Economy	Revitalize downtowns in villages	3
	Better paying jobs for county residents so they do not have to leave the county for work	2
	Encourage industry that adds value to farm and forest products	2
	Increased professional level job opportunities (less brain drain)	2
	Increase living wage employment opportunities for young families	1
	Jobs for all education levels; Good jobs for educated	1
	Keep Lewis county communities from becoming bedroom communities	1
	Attracting of related manufacturing facilities and retail establishments	
	Diverse economy - retail, industry, etc	
	Enough job opportunities for college kids to return to the community	
	Focus on 10 or less employees	
	Hire talent from within	
	Lower unemployment	
	More hi-tech job opportunities for our youth	
	Retention of existing manufacturing plants and jobs	
	Retire at age of retirement	
	Young adult opportunities	

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
AG, Forestry, and Environmental	Greater focus on 'other' ag products (produce). Add value forestry opportunities	3
	Become a producer of finished goods rather than raw materials, industry and agriculture	2
	"Brand" Lewis County Ag products (Idaho potatoes)	1
	"Smart" growth so that houses don't gobble up good farmland	1
	Alternative energy sources that make use of local resources	1
	More local ag production for local consumption	1
	More locally grown products and increased markets for these products	1
	Keeping the forest industry sustainable. Encourage land owners and loggers to work together	
	Better use of state lands available	
	Education between farm families and public	
	Education of forestry	
	Forestry processing facility for forest products	
	Improve marketing and use of maple products	
	Local recycling project; Food waste for energy	
	More opportunities for local farmers; Tax breaks	
	New value added processing facilities, ex: dairy, ethanol	
	Preserve farm land and forest land	
Promote local farms and farm products		



Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Tourism and Recreation	Year round marketing of year round activities	5
	Coordinated hiking, biking, 4-wheeler, snowmobile trail system, connecting communities	2
	Strive for a mix of motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities	2
	County wide recreation trail system	1
	Improve existing trail networks and increase advertising	1
	Increase in cultural tourism/attractions	1
	This is a "Sleeping Giant" and has tremendous opportunity to expand the snowmobiling and ATV trade	1
	Variety of activities that will entice visitors 12 months of the year	1
	12 months tourism and recreation base - not dependent on snow	
	Rail to trail from Carthage to Lowville	
	Build on wind farm - a tourist destination	
	Build strong tourism and recreational business working with towns, villages in county	
	Community shared goal (consensus on what is acceptable noise, trails, etc)	
	Get the support of the legislature to expand tourism and recreational opportunities	
	Limited dependence on tourism so that the county's economy isn't based on unpredictable income	
	More advertising for tourism and recreation	

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Regional Coordination	Consolidation of municipalities that provide public services in a more coordinated cost effective manner	4
	Consolidation of all services by geography	2
	Consolidation of services between county, town and villages	1
	Public transportation	1
	Be more of a part of regional efforts	
	Best practice approach; reduced tax burden	
	Better coordination between school districts	
	Consolidate services between governments	
	Consolidate Village of Lowville and Town of Lowville would be an example	
	Consolidation of some of the town; More inter-municipal service agreements	
	Improve water and septic systems with consolidation	
	Less duplication of services between town and villages	
	Study and implement the combining of services by towns, villages and counties	
Towns and villages and schools work to trim costs		
Water to be shared throughout county		

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Infrastructure and Community Resources	Dial-a-ride; Improved commutable travel options	2
	Municipal power	2
	Strive to recreate railroad line	2
	Adult education offerings locally	1
	County wide water authority - non-political	1
	Housing for all income levels - quality and quantity	1
	Industrial park	1
	Low cost power to industry from County's municipal power corporation	1
	Protect key development from over development	1
	Public transportation that will in a cost effective manner, allow citizens access to services, cultural events, healthcare, etc	
	Better drinking water options for residents (could be connected to economy/unemployment income)	
	Better roads and rail system	
	Coordinate road repairs, snow removal, etc at county level	
	Develop at least one major source of potable water	
	Higher education opportunities (two and/or four year college campus)	
	Infrastructure upgraded to allow companies to do turn key operations	
	More community play/areas - recreation	
	Provide high education opportunities locally for graduates and trades	
	Something to attract industry - an example would be cheap energy	
	Updated housing opportunities for low income families	



Community Workshop Summary - Lowville
Facilitated by Kevin Kelley

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Economy	Spend to attract new business vs 4-wheel traffic	4
	Expand tax base - grow population	2
	Sales tax specials such as back to school buying. Have a unique hospital, better care	1
	Acceptable level of unemployment	
	Grant to offer tax break to new industry	
	Lower taxes	
	Maintain what we have Amish can market milk or craft or Great Lakes cheese to save on transportation	
	Stable expanded exporting	
	traffic	

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Regional Coordination	Keep away from bigger government	3
	Lower sales tax; County wide health plan; Combine town/village/county services	3
	Combination of local and county govt for major services	2
	Town and villages maintain their autonomy	2
	Coordination in reforming village directiveness	1

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
AG, Forestry, and Environment	More small farms, growing energy producing products	3
	Smart growth - so that people can live comfortably, industry can keep producing, ag and forestry have room to keep producing	3
	Hiking, camping, cycling, musical concerts	2
	Produce higher value finished products instead of shipping out raw products	2
	More farming - market 1/week	
	Clean Air - no whey spread on fields	
	Maintain and ideally grow the ag and forestry infrastructure	
Sustainable diversified agriculture		

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Tourism and Recreation	Recreation that does not compromise the natural resources of Lewis County	4
	Communicate with Amish families to develop a shop/restaurant to combine with wind towers	1
	Other unique small restaurants and shops	1
	Paint ball, skate board places, help to build up Maple Ridge Park area, etc	1
	Common source for information; Lewis County tourist pass \$	1
	Trail system maintained by fee	1
	Make sure it is providing good jobs and is profitable	

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Community Resources	Higher education opportunities	3
	Sidewalks, rec trails, very few standardized signs underground power / phone / principal internet / municipal power	3
	Education - Use BOCES Center for SUNY or JCC Classes Building up BOCES. Need high Tec software opportunities. Outreach classes with video from JCC or other colleges	2
	County politicians need more background at lower level, so they make better decisions. Some nay have suggested going back to Boards and supervisors	1
	Better roads	
	Better work ethic and teach respect for others and property	
	Community College	
	Continue to capitalize on our unique environment-like kite-skiing, etc	



Community Workshop Summary - Croghan

Facilitated by Andy Raus

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Economy	Good paying jobs so County residents do not have to leave the County to go to work	4
	Attract small high tech businesses	1
	Good local shopping opportunities. Quality jobs for people	1
	Increase and expand job base and opportunities	
	Jobs for all the young people who want to stay in the County	
	More local jobs available	

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Ag, Forestry and Environment	Variety of farms offering more products. Well managed woodlands	4
	Expansion of Ag industry	2
	Plan to maintain open space and farming opp for our people	
	Redevelop existing farms	
	Sustainable agriculture with timber and forestry industries that protect the environment	
	Use of forestry resources to the maximum extent and protection of the environment	

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Tourism and Recreation	Development of County wide tourism plan	3
	Year round activities with year round marketing efforts	3
	Better promotion of our tourism and recreation activities	
	More variety of activities for youth in the County	
	Recreation activities for 12 months of the year	
	Tourism and recreation that "pay for themselves" to protect the land	

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Infrastructure and Community Resources	Improved with room to provide for newcomers (business)	4
	Affordable (decent) housing for the low income families	1
	Improve transportation infrastructure	1
	Create more public transportation options	
	Excellent communication network	
	Maintain and improve the quality and availability of wealth coming into County	
	Water/wastewater system upgrade and maintain and possible consolidation	

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Regional Coordination	Combine services to decreased duplication cost Consolidation of boards and committees across Town and Village lines	4
	Coordination in local municipalities to cut cost of services	2
	Everybody on the same page	
	Little duplication of effort on the part of Village, Town government	

Community Workshop Summary - Lyons Falls

Facilitated by Nan Stolzenburg

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Economy	Continue a well balanced economy with no boom/bust developments	5
	Grocery store in Lyons Falls and jobs	3
	High tech industries like Silicon Valley	3
	Lots of jobs	3
	Financially secure Village and Town and County	2
	Jobs for all levels of education that provide income people can live on	2
	More better paying jobs and lower costs for fuel	2
	Businesses in place of the mill for jobs	1
	Cooperative municipalities	1
	Everyone wanting a job would have one without hurting the community and environment	1
	Industries and lower tax base	
	Lewis County Community College	
	More jobs or industries	
	More well paying jobs to keep people here	
	Utilize state land for wind towers	
	Welcome the military	

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Ag, Forestry and Environment	Protect natural resources for future use	9
	Return of the small farms and protected farmland for our children	4
	It ain't broke don't fix it	3
	Control and limit rules and regulations and don't over-do it	2
	Managed working forest lands	2
	Farmers staying in business	1
	State forest managed to current forestry standards	1
	Clean and safe for all people to enjoy	
	Keep ag with an emphasis on being a retirement community	
	Sustain the base for natural resource lands and landowner base	



Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Tourism and Recreation	Hiking and biking trails	7
	County wide and village wide safe recreation of all kinds	3
	Coordinated non-motorized tourism and recreation and hiking	2
	Open Trails or walking and biking	2
	Town and County working closely on ATV and snowmobile trails	2
	Be a recreational area without motorization Clean environment	1
	Camping sites on Moose and Black River	1
	Full access to Black River for boating, canoeing, fishing; Emphasize Black River canal history	1
	Maintain recreation trail system	1
	More snow for snowmobiling	1
	Sports complex	1
	72 degrees and sunny all summer with rain only Monday and Thursday	
	Camping sites on Black River	
	Coordinated county wide snowmobile trail system	
	County wide network of walking and biking trails	
	More state support for motorized recreation	
	Separate motorized recreational trails	
	Snowmobile and ATV trails	
	Tourism and recreation that the locals don't feel overwhelmed by all the traffic that will come	

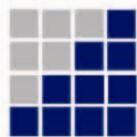
Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Regional Coordination	Our elected officials would represent their people versus their personal interests and work together	8
	Better cooperation between communities	6
	Coordination of overlapping and duplicative units and their budgets	6
	Reduce # of governments; merge town of Montague, Harrisburg and Pinckney, merge Town and Village of Lowville, merge Greig and Lyonsdale; reduce special districts	1
	Active County Youth Bureau	
	Coordinate historical and recreational opportunities	
	County wide real property tax assessment	
	Have county and towns and villages coordinate better	
	Redraw school district boundaries to reduce transportation and town costs	

Policy Area	Hope, Vision, or Idea	Priority Votes
Infrastructure and Community Resources	More stores	5
	County college	3
	Good roads in all towns and villages	3
	Auxiliary MVCC or JCC Campus	2
	Community center for all age groups in a central location	2
	New sidewalks and roads	2
	Remove old buildings	2
	Funding for repairs of roads and sidewalks	1
	Good sidewalks in all villages	1
	Moose River Road should be a county road	1
	Year round ability to play tennis in Lyons Falls for retirees and youth	1
	500 windmills generating electricity for all municipal operations	
	Everyone's house is looking good	
	Fairs and festivals dispersed throughout county all year long	
	Family counseling and support services	
	Funding toward village infrastructure	
	Have county work on this with towns and villages	
	Many levels of retirement living	
	Mass transportation system for everyone so that cars would not be necessary or be kept at a minimum	
	No need to drive 12 miles to buy groceries	
	South Lewis campus centralized in Turin	
	There is no need for financial assistance	



Business Interviews Summary
Lewis County Comprehensive Plan
September 2008

Prepared By



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INTRODUCTION

Camoin Associates conducted in-person interviews, telephone interviews and a focus group session with a select group of Lewis County businesses in August of 2008. The goal was to identify priority issues facing the business community in Lewis County. Interview questions were aimed at building on the work of previous planning documents, including the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). This allowed interviews to focus on key issues in Lewis County including tourism, alternative energy, workforce development and infrastructure improvements. These interviews were also used to check in with businesses to see if new issues had developed since the CEDS was finalized in 2006.

According to interviewees, businesses are located in Lewis County because they were founded in the County many years or decades ago and have remained here, or because company founders have a familial or personal connection to the area. Historically, the easy access to natural resources in Lewis County offered many businesses a competitive advantage. As the national and international economy has shifted, this advantage has been diminished. Many of the pulp mills and saw mills that had been located in the area because of the presence of timber have closed or moved away. Manufacturing has diminished significantly, agriculture has consolidated and new industry growth has not replaced the employment lost through these transitions.

The business interviews yielded a number of positive insights about what the County can do to strengthen economic development moving forward. The information gathered in the business interviews and focus group session revealed some common themes that could be addressed in the planning process. This brief report summarizes the major findings of the interviews.

COMMON THEMES

Vision, Commitment and Cooperation

Time and again the businesses interviewed talked about the need to have a clear focus and direction at the county level that transcends the individual personalities involved in the decision making and implementation process, and endures personnel turnover and political changes. Reaching consensus on a vision for the future will be a key component for Lewis County's long term development and the comprehensive planning process should develop this vision. While there is a vision statement in the CEDS, it is broad and general in nature. The business interview process showed that there is a need for a more specific focus. Some examples that were discussed include:

- Lewis County will be the premier motorized recreation capital of the Northeast.
- Lewis County will work to preserve its agricultural economy by focusing on dairy science education; developing agricultural support activities, such as community digesters; and investing in emerging forms of agriculture, such as organic farming.



- Lewis County will be known for its innovative rural economy, featuring alternative energy production and cutting-edge manufacturing processes that keep County-based manufacturers competitive.

Businesses also articulated a desire to see more commitment and cooperation within the community. This commitment includes public and private leaders investing in infrastructure, education, outreach, community development initiatives, and other programs and practices that support economic development. This also means the need for cooperation between community members, leaders and opposing interests in an effort to achieve community goals.

Finding a clear vision is often a challenge for communities. Identifying what you want to become can be an effective way to minimize the impact of naysayers, unite opposing interests, and establish a clear set of actions that need to be taken.

High Cost of Business

A universal concern of businesses, particularly those in manufacturing, is the high cost of doing business in New York State. This issue is not exclusive to Lewis County, and has been a consistent theme throughout Upstate New York. There are three specific areas in which costs are higher in New York State than in most other states. Those are:

- Taxes (corporate income tax and property tax)
- Energy (delivery of electricity)
- Workers Compensation and Health Insurance

Most of the reform required to reduce these costs must occur at the State level. There are some actions that could potentially occur at the County level. One action that was raised by interviewees is the creation of a municipal power authority to reduce the cost of power delivery to local business. The County has already established a municipal power corporation. A feasibility study showed that it is not likely to be cost-effective to use the power corporation County-wide. However, County leadership is looking at ways to use the corporation to deliver lower-cost power to specific commercial and industrial sites to facilitate business attraction and development.

Developing shared municipal service agreements within the County could provide benefits to taxpayers by helping local governments reduce their costs and reinvest the savings in the community.



Workforce

The Lewis County workforce was characterized by interviewees as dedicated and hard-working. Due to mill closures, semi-skilled experienced manufacturing workers are easy to find and jobs paying \$15 to \$20 an hour are filled quickly. However, many businesses expressed difficulty filling other types of positions. For example, manufacturers have a hard time finding young entry-level employees because local youth no longer choose manufacturing for a career. It is even more difficult to find people to fill experienced management and professional positions. Employee searches for these positions are usually conducted in labor markets outside of the County.

Some businesses have addressed these issues by developing internal leadership and professional development programs. Some businesses will conduct tours and outreach with local schools to build awareness and interest in the opportunities available to young people locally.

Domestic manufacturing operations are different today than manufacturing of the past. To stay competitive, companies invest in new equipment and focus on automation. New equipment and production practices require specific technical knowledge on how to operate and maintain programmable logic controllers (PLC), computer numerical control (CNC) machines, and injection molding machines. A few of the manufacturers interviewed articulated a need for training courses in Lewis County in these skills, as well as training for industrial electricians and Electrical & Instrumentation (E&I) Technicians.

Some businesses indicated a willingness to participate in or support a training program that focuses on dairy science or a technical aspect of manufacturing. Cornell Cooperative Extension or BOCES could be possible partners.

In addition, the County Hospital acknowledged that much of its staff is aging and that targeting young professionals in the medical field is important for them in general. They also stated that finding LPNs (Licensed Practical Nurses) for nursing homes is particularly difficult, perhaps because the BOCES does not have an LPN program anymore.

Infrastructure

Access to infrastructure is often an issue in rural counties, and Lewis County is no exception. Natural gas access is generally only available on the west side of the Black River. The local gas provider is reluctant to cross the river, except for very large users.

None of the interviewees expressed concern about access to telecommunications. The Lewis County Hospital is involved in a project through the Fort Drum Regional Health Administration to build a fiber optic loop that connects a number of health care providers in the region. This will provide an important expansion to the telecommunications network in Lewis County. Once the infrastructure is in place, it may be possible for other businesses to use it.

Refurbishing railroad lines is identified in the CEDS as a priority action. There appears to be a small market for rail freight among Lewis County manufacturing industries. Some interviewees



expressed direct benefit from improved rail access, but the overall impact of such an investment is unclear.

Quality of Place

“Quality of place” refers to the desirability of a community as a place to live and a place to visit. In today’s world, a person’s decision to accept a job offer often depends as much on the characteristics of the community that the job is located in, as it does on the pay and duties of the job itself. Many interviewees felt that the quality of life Lewis County offers is one of its biggest strengths in terms of attracting new residents and businesses and that more pro-active marketing efforts targeting young families and professionals would be helpful. They also felt that increasing the number of retail establishments, restaurants, and recreational and cultural amenities would enhance local employers’ ability to attract new skilled employees, as well as add diversity to the County’s tourism offerings.

Lewis County businesses and residents have a lot of pride in their local school systems. Expressing the quality of schools to potential employees can sometimes be a challenge as businesses often do not have school performance statistics on hand to share. Some local school districts have offered tours to businesses or potential employees in the past. Working with local school officials to continue to offer this service could be important, in addition to pulling together statistics on school performance for employers to use in recruitment efforts.

Tourism

Interviewees agreed that Lewis County’s most significant tourist draw is snowmobiling, but the fact that the snowmobile season only lasts for a 12-week period in the winter leaves a significant gap for tourism-related businesses during the rest of the year. Establishing a more solidified and extensive ATV trail system and a means to allow ATVs to travel on public rights of way would provide many tourism operators with year-round business. An ATV trail system has been discussed in Lewis County for several years, and improved ATV trail access is an objective in the CEDS. Progress on this or progress on a permitting system for snowmobile and ATV use is stalled due to lack of community consensus and environmental concerns. Many interviewees felt that consensus needs to be reached on the direction of motorized sports in the County in order for tourism to grow.

There are other activities that draw limited numbers of tourists, but interviewees felt that there is no significant year round draw to speak of and that tourism promotion is presently limited. Horseback riding is a growing recreation activity in the area. Snow Ridge Ski Resort holds a large music festival in the summer, and the annual cream cheese festival is also a popular event. Other tourism assets include the Adirondack Speedway, Whetstone Gulf State Park, and other local events and festivals. However, there is no clear designation of the organization responsible for tourism development and promotion. Establishing this responsibility, developing a tourist guide, increasing promotional activities and creating additional events could bring more tourists to the area. Of particular importance is the need for increased hotel and lodging facilities. However, these activities are not likely to yield significant results until a year-round tourism industry is established.



Alternative Energy

Wind energy, solar power, biomass, hydropower, and the fuel for anaerobic digesters are all available in Lewis County. Several interviewees indicated that they utilize cogeneration facilities. Expanding on alternative energy production and identifying methods for greater utilization by local businesses could offer economic development solutions in the future. In addition, the availability of anaerobic digesters would assist dairy farmers in disposing of waste economically, which will help them stay competitive.

Alternative energy development obviously needs to be balanced with community concerns. The presence of these elements could also be leveraged as an attraction for the tourist industry since many family groups are looking for interesting educational activities while on vacation.

Support for Local Business Development

Some important issues related to business support were highlighted during the interview process.

- Many interviewees indicated that they or other small businesses are not aware of, or do not know how to utilize, public funding and support programs available to them. The Lewis County IDA has a listing on its website of all the financing and incentive programs available to Lewis County businesses. The Small Business Development Center for Jefferson and Lewis Counties provides one-on-one assistance to Lewis County businesses. However, when it comes to small business assistance, it can often be difficult to educate business owners of the resources available to them and even harder to get them to take advantage of such programs.
- The approvals process was also indicated as something that had discouraged business development. Ensuring that approvals are completed in a reasonable timeframe and without undue burden on the business is important.
- There is a need for greater access to financing for businesses in Lewis County.
- There may be a perception among many community members that business development is bad for the community. Year-round residential development often comes at a net loss to local governments, as the cost of services required by year-round residents is not fully supported by residential property taxes. This deficit is overcome though property taxes on commercial property and high-end seasonal property. Educating residents about the impact commercial development has on the tax base and the importance of investing in infrastructure may be important for future economic growth.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Lewis County, like many rural areas in the United States, is at a difficult transition in its history. Agriculture and manufacturing, historically both labor-intensive industries, are changing the way they do business. To stay competitive in the world market, these industries have looked to reduce labor costs through automation or consolidation, or moving operations overseas to lower-cost labor markets. This places a lot of pressure on the local economy as jobs are lost, people move away, and young people seek employment outside of the area.



Interviewees focused a great deal on growth in tourism and recreation when talking about Lewis County's future. There is certainly opportunity for tourism growth in Lewis County by focusing on snowmobiling, ATVing and horseback riding. Expanding recreation and tourism opportunities will also have indirect benefits by making the community more attractive to employees that are considering taking a job in the area. While there are undoubtedly benefits to investing in tourism development, it is also important to remember that this is a fickle industry that typically creates seasonal and low-paying jobs, and is the first hit in times of economic hardship.

Success in the future will also depend on expanded educational opportunities, support for small and growing businesses and development of niche industries with a global market. Based on the business interviews, review of previous planning documents, and other general knowledge, Camoin Associates makes the following initial recommendations:

1. Develop cutting-edge training programs in agricultural sciences (especially dairy); skilled manufacturing (programmable logic controllers (PLC), computer numerical control (CNC), and injection molding machines); alternative energy; and electric and instrumentation technical skills.
2. Consider launching a campaign aimed at drawing young professionals back to Lewis County. This could include a homecoming weekend festival featuring a job fair, tours of local schools, recreational outings, music/cultural events, and information sessions on purchasing a home or starting a business.
3. Establish and provide resources to a tourism department to oversee development and marketing of attractions. One suggestion from the interviews was to dedicate a portion of the County bed tax to fund these activities.
4. Come to a consensus on a specific vision for the future foundation of the County's economy (i.e. tourism, alternative energy, etc.).
5. Enhance existing small business development programming by seeking new ways to reach out one-on-one to County businesses to educate them about the programs available to assist them in growing.
6. Continue moving forward with economic development projects identified by the CEDS committee.



BUSINESSES INTERVIEWED

- Brad Horn, Snow Ridge
- Cindy Shue, Shue Brothers Logging & Excavation
- Darin Zehr, Kraft
- Dennis Gigliotti, Burrows Paper Company
- Doreen Marks, Otis Technology
- Eric Burch, Lewis County General Hospital
- Gary Kline, Interface Sealing Solutions
- Gordon Yancey, Flatrock Inn
- John Tabolt, Interface Solutions, Inc.
- John DeGuardia, Timberview
- Larry Jersko, Viking Cives
- Mark Richardson, Climax
- Scott Sauer, Plant Manager, Omnia Filtra
- Wayne White, AMF/Qubica

FOCUS GROUP ATTENDEES

- Ann Durant, Small Business Development Center
- Donna Smith, Lowville Business Association
- Tom Hanley, WPBS Watertown