

**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**LEWIS COUNTY PLANNING BOARD**  
**September 18, 2025**

- (1) **Call to Order:** Mr. Petersen called the regular meeting of the Lewis County Planning Board to order at 2:30 PM in the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor conference room at the Lewis County Courthouse, Lowville, New York. Mr. Petersen requested roll call.
- (2) **Roll Call:**  
**Board Members Present:** Timothy Petersen, John Lehman, Don Cook, Sarah Metott, and Larry Dolhof.  
**Staff Present:** Megan Krokowski, Community Development Specialist.
- (3) **Reading and Approval of Minutes:** The draft minutes from the August 21, 2025 meeting were provided and reviewed in advance. Mr. Lehman made a motion to approve the minutes; Mr. Cook seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
- (4) **Correspondence and Communication:** None
- (5) **Report of Special Committees:**

Ms. Krokowski read the only review:

**TOWN OF MARTINSBURG TOWN BOARD**

Proposed Comprehensive Plan revision for the Town of Martinsburg.  
*Town of Martinsburg – Applicant*

The applicant provided the following Project Documentation: 1) General Municipal Referral Form with Agricultural Data Statement; 2) Proposed Comprehensive Plan, and 3) Full Environmental Assessment Form.

The Town of Martinsburg, as applicant, submitted the proposed Comprehensive Plan intended to replace the 2008 multi-jurisdictional plan (Martinsburg, Harrisburg, Montague, and Pinckney).

The proposed document includes some inconsistencies in grammar, formatting, and font styles. We recommend addressing these items to ensure the Comprehensive Plan is polished and consistent prior to adoption.

The plan does a great job of highlighting Martinsburg's rich history. To make the document more concise and original, the Town may want to summarize the History section rather than using the full text from the website.

Based on the Population Characteristics section, Martinsburg experienced a steady population decline until the 2010 census, which indicated a 15% increase (184 people), followed by an 8% decrease in the 2020 census. The

Town should consider providing potential explanations for this fluctuation and document them within the Plan. For example, the increase may have been influenced by large-scale projects such as wind energy development or expansions at regional employers like Kraft. Including this context would help clarify demographic trends and improve the usefulness of the Comprehensive Plan for future planning decisions.

To strengthen the connection between the Comprehensive Plan narrative and its supporting graphics, each diagram and table could be assigned a clear label (e.g., Diagram 1) for easy reference within the text. It may also be helpful to include statements that draw conclusions from the data, with clear references back to the corresponding figures. In addition, titles for diagrams, graphs, and charts can be made more specific so readers immediately understand the context (e.g., specifying 'Town Expenditures' rather than just 'Expenditures'). Finally, adding data source information to the expenditures and revenues diagrams would enhance clarity and credibility before adoption.

On Page 5, the diagram titled *Industry of Employment* appears to be missing a percentage for the category 'Other services, except public administration,' which results in the pie chart totaling 92% rather than 100%. This missing portion may relate to the 'Other services' category and could be clarified for accuracy. It may also be helpful to consider updating the title to something more descriptive, such as *Town of Martinsburg Employment Sectors*, to provide additional clarity for readers.

The figures under *Land Use Characteristics* present road mileage ownership as percentages. Adding some narrative could help provide context and stronger connections to the information in the road mileage table. It may also be helpful to adjust the section title formatting so that **CHARACTERISTICS** is shown in uppercase, bold, and underlined for consistency.

Since historic preservation is highlighted as a priority throughout the Plan, the Town Board may wish to consider including Hough Cave in the Community Asset section, or in another location the Town feels is most appropriate.

The Public Lands section appears to include some information that may not be accurate. The Town Board may want to review this section and make the following corrections:

1. There are references to the Lesser Wilderness State Forest as being located on Jerusalem Road; however, Jerusalem Road does not appear to be a recognized road within the Town of Martinsburg.
2. Where Whitaker Park is described, the narrative indicates that it contains just one waterfall rather than the three distinct waterfalls, the Upper, Middle, and Lower, along Roaring Brook.

3. The last sentence feels incomplete to readers as it doesn't state why the feature matters. The Town should consider revising the following sentence *"Although not technically public property, another gulf holds Roaring Brook Falls (accessible from West Road)."* The following is alternative language that could be used:  
*"Although not technically public property, another gulf contains Roaring Brook Falls, a notable scenic feature visible from West Road."*

Part II, *Plan Goals and Strategies*, could be expanded in the Economic Development section, which currently includes a Vision but does not outline specific Goals and Strategies like the other sections. Additionally, providing clear numbering throughout Part II to link Goals with their corresponding Strategies would help ensure consistency and make the connections easier for readers to follow.

The Town may wish to review the *Infrastructure and Public Utilities (Essential Services)* section. The language regarding public water and sewer expansion could be adjusted to reduce references to potentially unfeasible projects. For example, the section could read:

*"Explore opportunities for expanding public water and sewer, contingent on feasibility and available funding. Proper maintenance of roads, hydrants, manholes, and storm drainage projects should continue, and upgrading water delivery lines and water meters should continue, as needed."*

The Town may wish to review whether the statement, 'The Town will continue to consider the impact of renewable energy systems on land use, the economy, and quality of life in Martinsburg,' is best placed within the Infrastructure and Public Utilities section as a sub-statement under the second goal. Alternatively, the Town could consider creating a separate section (e.g., Section 11) dedicated to renewable energy goals and strategies, which would further support the zoning law regulations on this topic.

The Town Board may wish to review Part III of the Comprehensive Plan, as some statements are currently written in a regulatory style rather than the advisory tone generally used to guide local land use decisions. A Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide policy direction and serve as a foundation for zoning and subdivision regulations, rather than function as an enforceable law. Revising the language in Part III to a more advisory style could help clarify the distinction between the Plan and the Zoning Law while still offering clear policy guidance.

The Town Board may want to revisit number 8 under Part III *Land Use Policies* to ensure the language does not unintentionally suggest that residents outside the Hamlets are less valued. Revised wording could better reflect Martinsburg's character as a rural community with both historic hamlets and scattered homes. Alternative language can be suggested, if helpful.

The Town may wish to enhance number 9 of Part III by developing it into a fully articulated housing policy section, rather than leaving it as a general or placeholder statement. Expanding this section could include specific goals, strategies, and actionable steps to address housing needs, provide guidance for future development, and support community objectives. This would help ensure the Comprehensive Plan offers clear policy direction on housing for both decision-makers and residents.

Given the current document formatting, the Town may wish to consider renaming ‘Town of Martinsburg Development Laws’ to ‘Part IV. Existing Town of Martinsburg Development Laws.’ Additionally, the detailed nature of this section could become outdated over time, and there is a risk that it might be misinterpreted as the law itself. Opponents of zoning changes could potentially cite these discrepancies to challenge proposed updates. One option could be to revise the section to maintain clarity and reduce the risk of misinterpretation:

*“The Town of Martinsburg Development Law establishes zoning districts and overlay districts that guide land use and development. These districts generally include:*

- Areas for hamlet and village-style development*
- Agricultural lands that support farming and open space*
- Rural residential areas with scattered settlement*
- Forest and natural resource areas that are less accessible and largely undeveloped.*
- Overlay districts that address special resources, such as water supply protection and renewable energy siting.*

*In addition, the Town adopted a Subdivision Law in 2005, which establishes standards for road design, lot layout, and cluster development. Both the Development Law and the Subdivision Law serve as the principal regulatory tools through which the Town implements this Comprehensive Plan.*

*The Town has also opted out of the solar and wind energy tax exemption under Real Property Tax Law §487 (Local Law No. 1 of 2018) and remains subject to state-level provisions, including Article 25-AA governing Agricultural Districts. Lands within the Tug Hill Reserve Area are additionally subject to the provisions of the Tug Hill Reserve Act (Chapter 486 of the Laws of 1992).”*

The Town of Martinsburg may want to consider adding an implementation section to strengthen the plan’s legal and procedural effectiveness, increase accountability, and support its practical use. The following language is offered as a potential starting point, which the Town can adapt as appropriate:

***“Part V. Implementation***

*The Comprehensive Plan provides policy guidance for Martinsburg’s future growth and development. To ensure the Plan is a living, actionable document, the*

following implementation priorities have been identified. These priorities reflect the Town's vision of strengthening hamlet vitality, improving housing opportunities, and balancing renewable energy with Martinsburg's rural character and natural assets.

***Top Priorities:***

***1. Support Hamlet Vitality and Infill Development***

- A. Encourage new housing and business development within existing hamlets to strengthen community centers and use infrastructure efficiently.
- B. Pursue grant opportunities to fund hamlet revitalization projects such as sidewalk improvements, façade programs, and small-scale infrastructure upgrades.
- C. Update zoning to promote infill and adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized buildings within hamlets.

***2. Improve the Amount and Quality of Housing Stock***

- A. Review and update zoning and subdivision regulations to support a variety of housing options, including accessory dwelling units, manufactured homes, and clustered rural housing.
- B. Explore programs or incentives to rehabilitate existing housing stock, particularly older or vacant structures.
- C. Partner with county and regional housing agencies to expand resources for Martinsburg residents.
- D. Encourage development patterns that balance new housing opportunities with farmland and open space conservation.

***3. Adopt Balanced Renewable Energy Regulations***

- A. Finalize and adopt zoning law updates to regulate commercial solar development in a manner consistent with Martinsburg's scenic, agricultural, and rural character.
- B. Review and update standards for wind energy facilities to address siting, decommissioning, and community character impacts.
- C. Include provisions for small-scale residential renewable energy systems that support energy independence while protecting neighborhood character.
- D. Coordinate with Lewis County and regional planning partners to ensure Martinsburg's policies are consistent with state law while safeguarding local priorities.

*The Town Board and Planning Board will use this plan as a reference point when evaluating new development proposals and when considering amendments to local laws. Periodic review, at least every five years, will ensure the plan remains relevant and responsive to changing conditions."*

The Town Board should ensure that the Table of Contents is updated to accurately reflect any title changes, reformatting, and page number adjustments once all adopted modifications are complete.

While not mandatory, filing the adopted Comprehensive Plan with the Department of State will provide greater transparency, facilitate regional planning consistency, and make the plan more accessible to state and county agencies.

Should the Town pursue the integration of these suggestions, Planning Department staff are readily available to assist.

***Recommendation: APPROVE with Conditions***

1. The proposed document includes some inconsistencies in grammar, formatting, and font styles. Before adoption, we recommend addressing these items to ensure the Comprehensive Plan is polished and consistent prior to adoption.
2. The Town Board should provide explanations for population fluctuations noted in the Population Characteristics section, including potential influences such as large-scale projects or regional employer expansions, to increase the Plan's usefulness for future planning decisions.
3. Martinsburg Town Board should assign clear labels (e.g., Diagram 1, Table 1) to all diagrams and tables for clear referencing.
  - a. Include statements that draw conclusions from the data provided within the narrative sections, with clear references to the data source.
  - b. Ensure all diagrams, graphs, and chart titles are sufficiently detailed for clarity, and add data sources for Revenues and Expenditures charts.
4. The Town of Martinsburg Board shall correct the Industry of Employment diagram:
  - a. Include the missing 8% for "Other services, except public administration."
  - b. Update the diagram title to "Town of Martinsburg Employment Sectors" or a similarly descriptive title.
5. The Town Board should consider providing additional narrative in the Land Use Characteristics section to contextualize road mileage ownership data to help readers understand the significance of the road mileage data and how it relates to land use planning and decision-making.
6. Martinsburg Town Board shall review and correct inaccuracies in the Public Lands section within Part I, including:
  - a. Verify the location of Lesser Wilderness State Forest (Jerusalem Road).
  - b. Update the description of Whitaker Park to note all three waterfalls (singularly listed).
  - c. Revise the description of Roaring Brook Falls for clarity and completeness.
7. Part II, *Plan Goals and Strategies*, should be expanded in the Economic Development section, which currently includes a Vision but does not outline specific Goals and Strategies like the other sections. Additionally,

- providing clear numbering throughout Part II to link Goals with their corresponding Strategies would help ensure consistency and make the connections easier for readers to follow.
8. Martinsburg Town Board shall adjust Part III language to maintain an advisory tone rather than a regulatory style, which could be construed as enforceable law. Comprehensive Plans are intended to provide guidance for long-term growth, land use, and development priorities and do not have the legal authority to regulate or impose penalties.
  9. The Town Board shall revise Land Use Policies (Part III) to:
    - a. Avoid unintentionally suggesting that residents outside the Hamlets are less valued.
    - b. Strengthen housing policy statements to create a meaningful housing section.
  10. The Martinsburg Town Board should rename 'Town of Martinsburg Development Laws' to 'Part IV. Existing Town of Martinsburg Development Laws' and revise content to prevent misinterpretation, ensure alignment with current zoning law, and reduce the risk of becoming outdated as policies evolve.

**Non-Binding Notes:**

- 1) The Town of Martinsburg Board, following the General Municipal Law process for adopting local laws, should consider filing the adopted Comprehensive Plan with the New York State Department of State to improve transparency and facilitate regional planning consistency.
- 2) The plan does a great job of highlighting Martinsburg's rich history. To make the document more concise and original, the Town may want to summarize the History section rather than using the full text from the website.
- 3) The Town of Martinsburg Board should properly format all section titles (e.g., LAND USE characteristics) so that all words are uppercase, bolded, and underlined throughout the document.
- 4) Since historic preservation is highlighted as a priority throughout the Plan, the Town Board may wish to consider including Hough Cave in the Community Asset section, or in another location the Town feels is most appropriate.
- 5) The Town Board should consider adding a dedicated section for renewable energy goals and strategies to support local zoning law regulations, ensuring policies are practical, adaptable, and reflective of Martinsburg's rural character and diverse energy options, rather than relying solely on a single energy source.
  - a. Additionally, the Board could review the placement of renewable energy statements within the Infrastructure and Public Utilities section to ensure logical alignment with goals and logical content structuring.

- 6) The Town may wish to review the *Infrastructure and Public Utilities (Essential Services)* section. The language regarding public water and sewer expansion could be adjusted to reduce references to potentially unfeasible projects.
- 7) Periodically review the Plan, at least every eight years, to maintain relevance and responsiveness to changing conditions.
- 8) Incorporate an Implementation section (Part V) to enhance plan effectiveness, accountability, and usability, with clear priorities on:
  - a. Hamlet vitality and infill development.
  - b. Housing stock improvements.
  - c. Balanced renewable energy regulations.
- 9) Update the Table of Contents to reflect title changes, reformatting, and page number adjustments after all modifications are adopted.
- 10) Although the Tug Hill Commission assisted in preparing this document, should the Town Board require further assistance in integrating any or all of the suggestions – and if the Commission is unable to provide support – Planning Department staff are readily available to assist.

It was noted that the local jurisdiction had already adopted the Comprehensive Plan. The Board questioned the purpose of conducting a review at this stage. Ms. Krokowski explained that any Town of Martinsburg land use decisions could be subject to challenge and potential invalidation since the General Municipal Law review process had not been followed. In response to Mr. Dolhof's inquiry as to whether the Town was aware of this, it was confirmed that an email outlining the issue had been provided to the Town, which prompted the current review.

The Board briefly discussed whether certain non-binding notes should be moved into the conditions, as they appeared to be matters the Town ought to address. Ms. Krokowski cautioned that doing so could be interpreted as the County Planning Board overstepping its role. As an example, she noted Non-Binding Note 8, which recommends including an implementation section in the Comprehensive Plan. While not a legal requirement, she explained that such a section is advisable to help make the plan more effective and useful.

Ultimately, the Board collectively decided to retain the proposed conditions and non-binding notes as presented.

Without further discussion, Ms. Metott motioned to approve the proposed Comprehensive Plan, including the stated conditions and non-binding notes. Mr. Cook seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

**(6) Report of County Planner:**

- No municipal responses received
- Zero referrals were reviewed by County Planning staff | deemed a Matter of Local Concern.



(7) **Unfinished Business:**

The annual Land Use Training Workshop is scheduled for Thursday, **October 9<sup>th</sup>** from **4 to 8 PM** at the **Lowville Academy LGI Room** (to accommodate the increased participation).

Mr. Lehman inquired about the Harrisville Redemption Center, and it was noted that no movement has occurred regarding this project.

(8) **New Business:** None

(9) **Adjournment:** With no further business, Mr. Cook motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Petersen seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Megan Krokowski  
Community Development Specialist

***Note: These minutes were transcribed from a recording. They are not verbatim, but reflect a summary of meeting events.***