

June 25, 2026 Meeting Minutes Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC)

CPC Chair Chris Foss led this monthly meeting at Caroga Town Hall from 6:00 to 7:45 PM. Members present were: Chris Foss, Rachel Simonds, Anita Long, Doug Purcell, Jeremy Manning, Jim Hale, Dave Cummings, Chase Steenburgh, and Al Kozakiewicz. Chairman Foss noted that Art Wadsworth resigned. Nicole Dettenrieder was unable to attend. Also present was Department of State Project Manager (DOS PM) Cassandra (Cass) Leopold. Chairman Foss greeted and welcomed the committee and PM Leopold.

1. Prior Meeting Minutes

- With the date corrected, minutes from the May 28, 2026 meeting were approved without objection (see <https://carogacomprehensiveplan.wordpress.com/meeting-minutes/> or see link from <https://caroga.town>)

2. NYS DOS Smart Growth Community Planning (SGCP) Grant Contract

- As Project Manager, Cass Leopold's main role is managing contract compliance and being a resource.
- Jim Hale questioned the DOS request for a final Comprehensive Plan Committee list — including brief background summaries or bio sketches — noting that he perceives this step as “micromanagement.”
- Discussion noted the program emphasizes a “*locally-led, state-sponsored*” Smart Growth process.
- PM Leopold does not direct local decision making. “I manage your contract; the Town is in charge.”
- She will observe consultant interviews if invited; she will not influence the consultant selection.
- Caroga's preliminary paperwork has been completed, including the Work Plan and Budget review.
- PM Leopold submitted Caroga's contract request, and it is expected to be active in about 6 weeks.

3. Consultant Proposal Review and Selection Process

- Chair Foss noted that the Committee previously narrowed consulting firms to three finalists: LaBella, EDR, and Highland. He sent all applicants letters to communicate and give updates about the process.
- Chair Foss invited discussion of the consultant proposals. All three are strong but in different ways.
- Discussion started with budgets, emphasizing that Caroga seeks a \$134,000 not-to-exceed contract. Where negotiations are needed, how will cost adjustments alter proposed processes & deliverables?
- Discussion reviewed planning experience in the Mohawk Valley (with MVREDC) and Adirondack Park (with APA regulations) of each of the Project Managers from Highland, LaBella, and EDR. For each, who will facilitate community participation and workshops, and who will do most of the writing?
- Some proposals were long with evidence of cutting and pasting from other proposals. Who edits?
- Significant attention was given to practical and workable aspects of the process and plan, such as:
 - How will multiple concurrent projects impact capacities to deliver a plan that fits Caroga's needs?
 - How will Caroga's community profile be developed, organized, and delivered in custom ways?
 - How will education materials & public communication translate jargon into clear plain language?
 - How will the plan articulate actionable ways to implement the vision and strategies, so officials and others have clear direction on how to execute recommendations to achieve the vision?
 - How explicitly will the plan's recommendations translate into zoning and policy changes?
- PM Leopold shared resources and examples (Mechanicville & Corning SGCP, Schoharie DRI & Gateway Zoning Update) to help clarify distinctive approaches, experience, and deliverables.

THE CAROGA PROCESS

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

TOWN OF CAROGA
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- CPC members emphasized wanting to work with a consultant team who:
 - Understands Caroga, with people who have visited the Town & know about recent developments.
 - Have experience with the Adirondack Park Agency and Agency-Approved Land Use Plans.
 - Provide realistic, actionable implementation plans.
 - Can educate the public about Smart Growth concepts, principles, and strategies.
 - Have capacity and time to give Caroga adequate attention.
 - Avoid boilerplate language and tailor work to the Town of Caroga.
- CPC members discussed creating a special panel to lead the interview process and check references.
- The goal is for this panel to interview the three project teams and report to the entire CPC on July 30.
- A hybrid in-person/remote format is acceptable, with at least one representative attending in person. Firms will be asked to facilitate remote access, and to record the interview and share the file.
- The CPC voted unanimously to form an interview panel of four key people: CPC Chair Chris Foss, CPC Vice-Chair Rachel Simonds, Planning Board Chair Al Kozakiewicz, and Town Supervisor Jack Glenn.

4. Smart Growth Community Assessment

- This is a required component of the Work Plan Contract, and CPC members can begin preparing to discuss and draft it now while awaiting contract activation. Having a draft will speed up the timeline.

5. Action Items

- **References:** Chair Chris Foss will coordinate contacting references for each firm.
- **Interviews:** Chair Chris Foss will coordinate interview scheduling and facilitate meetings with firms.
- **DOS:** Project Manager Cass Leopold will share documents with the CPC via email.
- **CPC:** Members can email about questions & review the Smart Growth Community Assessment. The Committee will reconvene at the end of July to review interview outcomes and recommendations.

6. Next Meeting:

The next CPC monthly meeting will be 6:00 PM Thursday, July 30, 2026 at Caroga Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Anita McMartin Long
CPC Member and Secretary