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BUSINESS COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP

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PARTICIPANTS: Lewis Johnson, Jacob Johnson, Diana Jamieson (kitchen and bath design), Diane Shadic (carwash), Marcia Peteroy (Sunrise/Sunset B+B), Nancy Rutter (Key Bank), Mac Simms, Gina Hosier (pet boarding), Joe Flood (Eastern Well Drillers), Bob Rosegarten (artist), Doreen Rappaport (author), Leslie Wood (Leslie Wood Research), Lindsay LeBrecht (Copake Lake Realty)

DIFFICULTIES FACING THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY:

- Taxes are too high
- Internet access (too slow and too expensive)
- Cell phone coverage
- Copake is “not a destination”
- Copake needs an “anchor business”
- Difficult for small businesses to compete with large chains
- Copake is not at an intersection
- Housing Resource signs
- Copake appears to be depressed
- Route 7 and 7A make it difficult to give directions and makes it hard for people to find.
- Downtown (is run down, etc.) and has eyesores. People do not even want to go into the downtown of Copake
- The southern entrance to Copake is shabby
- Copake has a lack of vision
- Job creation
- Scenic overlay (restrictions on business)
- There are too many delays in building; getting permission from the Town “takes too long”
- Zoning – current zoning is too restrictive; need zoning for businesses
- There is no “spokesperson for business” to represent the concerns of business to the town
- Young people leave because there is no social infrastructure

PROPOSALS FOR ADDRESSING THESE ISSUES IN THE FUTURE:

- Tax incentives for growth
- Revolving loan program with community reinvestment
- Recruit new businesses
- “Anchor” store
- Art festivals in the town
- Mentoring for businesspeople
- Streamline the process for approval of building
- Use agriculture to make Copake a “destination”
- Use Art to make Copake a “destination”
- Town must support business
- Build sewers to support business
- Create a new road parallel to the current main road, to avoid the southern entrance
- Get in clean industry
- Get in businesses such as small business, professional offices, a bakery
- Develop a sense of community

CONSENSUS POINTS (the recurring themes about which most seemed to agree)

Businesses would have a better shot at surviving if we could build a sense of community. We want to see small businesses in Copake, not big industry.

The Town is not seen as supporting business. Our needs are overlooked by the town—we need a spokesperson, a voice in government.

We need to revitalize “downtown” Copake—we need to make it a destination. Maybe the arts could be a draw. Maybe we could develop history as a draw, or agriculture.

The Town has made it too difficult and slow to get permission to build in town. The process should be streamlined.

There should be tax incentives for building in town. What about a sliding scale where taxes would be decreased for 10 years?

