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COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

October 29, 2009

PARTICIPANTS:

CAMPHILL VILLAGE Richard Neal, Director of Development

Joseph Smeele

Camphill was started on Sept. 29, 1961. The first residents were from Great Britain, seeking a dignified life for their families. Today there are about 240 people, 103 with developmental disorders, about 15 elderly residents, and other workers. There are about 40 long-term co-workers. There are also about 40 young people who come from all over the world to spend one to three years fulfilling their community service work. There are 22 households; a typical house consists of co-workers and disabled residents. There is an emphasis on agriculture; the residential area covers about 100 acres; there is forest, which yields sap for maple syrup; a 2-acre vegetable garden; and a large herb garden. Fountain Hall is a community performance hall. Camphill is part of a large community; there are 12 in the U.S, 106 in the world. Mr. Smeele added that there are 26 employees: administrators, maintenance workers, therapists, a nurse and a doctor.

WEST COPAKE REFORMED CHURCH Rev. Robert Charnin

Last year the Reformed Church celebrated its 250th anniversary. The present building is from 1891. These days, churches are struggling and last Sunday they had 69 adults and 15 children in attendance. The congregation is from Dutchess County, Ancram, Copake, and Hudson. Last year they sent a mission team to Haiti to work with handicapped children and set up a veterinary clinic. They also began a community garden for the Hillsdale community food pantry. Last year they had a community Thanksgiving dinner for 35 people; this year they will host 75. This year they have sent the team back to Haiti and expanded the garden. Mr. Charnin said he was concerned about the culture, the spirituality, morality and humanity of this community. He said there are many people with addictions and very difficult home situations. He sees the church as a light for people in this area.

ROELIFF JANSEN COMMUNITY LIBRARY Ned Schneier, Board of Trustees, Pres.

The library is 90 years old and has been in the current Hillsdale location for 70 years. It is 1,500 sq. ft., has 3,000 card holders and is in the top 10 highest circulating libraries in the Mid-Hudson system. It has 19,000 volumes and 200,000 visitors a year. The tax rate is very low - \$6.50 per \$100,000. They receive \$65,000 a year from Copake, Hillsdale and Ancram (which contributes a very tiny amount), as well as a very small amount from the state. 55% of the budget comes from public funds, 45% from donations and bequests. The library runs on volunteers and there is a very active Friends group. They have outgrown the current space, it is not wheelchair accessible, the fire exit is not great and there is no public bathroom. The new library is currently under construction. They still need to raise funds.

COPAKE METHODIST CHURCH Flora Berquist

The Methodist Church is 155 years old and is comprised of the church, church house, bargain shop and the parsonage. Their mission is to provide a place of worship. They also procure funds to maintain a neat and pleasing presence on the street. They open their doors to the community through the bargain shop with low prices and free items, as well as the newly launched soup kitchen on the first and third Tues. of every month, with soup, bread, cookies and punch. They had 18 people last week and would like to expand.

ISSUES WHICH A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MIGHT ADDRESS

- Consolidation of the three towns
- A town administrator who might work on behalf of the three towns. Such a professional would have the expertise to deal with the many issues which confront the town but which are outside of the know-how of the Town Board.
- Grants. A town administrator would also be able to make applications for grants; grants are difficult to obtain and an administrator would help the town be more competitive in it applications for funding.
- Revitalization of the town center

- Town access to Copake Lake
- Protection of the landscape, ecology and agriculture
- Speed limits on roads
- Promote green energy
- Communications (Internet access is expensive, and slow)
- Breakdown of families (disintegration of families, and rampant drug use)

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

Communications is an issue in the town; internet access and cell phone coverage is a problem. But in a more basic sense, the town is lacking a sense of **community**. There is a lack of “connectedness”. There is some sense that people do not care. While the participating organizations were adamant that in an emergency, such agencies as the police and rescue squad are wonderful, they still think that people feel isolated from each other.

Indeed, the organizations conceded that they could better accomplish their own missions, if there was better communication among them. Camphill, for instance, was eager to bring soup to the lunches provided by the Methodist Church.

The revitalization of the “downtown” of Copake is critical, and is related to the need for community. A thriving “downtown” would bring people together, and give young people a place to gather.