

**Minutes of Comprehensive Planning Committee**  
**June 9, 2009 7:30 pm**  
**Copake Town Hall**

Members Present: Jeanne Mettler, Roberta Roll, Harvey Weber, Frank Peteroy, Bill Kiernan, Fiona Hutchinson, George Beneke, Russ Davis, Dan Haas.

River Street Planning: Margaret Irwin

Members Absent: Marcia Becker, Skip Pilch

The minutes from the May 12 meeting were approved.

Mr. Dodson reported that the survey is in the mail. The fee is \$200 more than expected because of postal costs. (As a follow-up to our questions of whether we could use a non-profit umbrella for our committee or whether the town would be deemed a non-profit by the post office, the answer is no to each). The Taconic Hills students will not do the input of data; however, students from Columbia Greene will help with this. A \$750 grant from stimulus money will help pay for it. The demographics information on Copake will go on our website, and the survey is open on survey monkey.

We discussed how to ensure that we get a good return response. Dr. Beneke said that since we spent a lot of time and care creating this survey, we should set a response rate goal and implement ways to achieve it. We thought that a 50% return rate would be achievable. We discussed ideas for a flyer to post around town and at various venues. We decided to have information at the Conservation Resources table at Copake Community Day; Mr. Haas will coordinate this. Mr. Weber will ask about putting the information on the old Roe Jan school sign and at Taconic Hills. Ms. Mettler will put a notice in the Columbia Paper and the Copake Chronicle. Dr. Beneke will get the information to the church bulletins and the Little League. We will make an announcement at the next Town Board meeting.

We discussed ideas for the flyer - make it brief and catchy. Something like, "What's next Copake?" Ms. Mettler will make a flyer for distribution. Perhaps we will have a few different ones.

Ms. Irwin said that we will need a minimum of three weeks to analyze the data, especially with a 50% return rate and a significant number of paper surveys.

She outlined the structure of the vision workshop - When people enter, they will get a colored dot to place on the map of Copake, to indicate where they live. We will present the results of the survey, then have small or large table discussions. There are essentially three questions: 1. What do you love about Copake? 2. What would you like to change? 3. What words describe your vision for Copake in 15 years - how will it look, sound, feel, smell, etc. There will be one or two CPC members for each discussion group - one to mediate and one to write down what people say. Then we all convene and merge the results of the discussion.

An alternate exercise is to give everyone 3 or 4 post-it notes on which people write down their vision for Copake. One person comes up to the board and puts her notes up. Then another comes and puts up his notes; if any match the previous notes, they are put next to the similar ones. People begin to see the commonalities of vision.

We discussed the pros and cons of a Saturday morning meeting versus a weeknight. Dr. Beneke asked what is the motivation for the meeting. Ms. Irwin replied that it is to get people thinking and to see the agreement around issues. The vision workshop is only the start. As we keep compiling information and presenting results, people will see at the follow-up meetings that we have listened to them. After considerable discussion around how to include the greatest number and diversity of people, Ms. Mettler asked for a vote on a Saturday morning meeting. There were 8 votes for and 2 against. We decided on Aug. 1 at 9 am, and agreed that we need to serve some kind of food. We discussed venues other than Town Hall, and the idea of having a benefit breakfast at the firehouse; finally, it was decided to hold the meeting at Town Hall, since people are used to attending special meetings there.

The meeting was turned over to Ms. Irwin to discuss the Demographics and Housing information on Copake (please refer to the attached for details). This is based on the 1999 Census. Any information from 2000-2009 is based on projections from Claritas, which uses marriage certificates, records of property tax, births and deaths and other trends, and is usually quite accurate. From 1990-2000 the population grew at the rapid pace of 5%, but it fell off between 2000-2009. There was an increase in the number of households, which could be a result of population influx or of divorce.

The racial makeup is hard to interpret, as the way it is reported changed - it is now self-reported. There has been a reduction in the number of students attending the public schools. This will affect employment. Either we have smaller families, or young families are not moving here. We have a large group of people in their peak earning years.

If we had the ability to check all mailing addresses, we could get an accurate count of the weekenders. The census figures don't capture the weekend population data per se.

Mr. Weber stated that young couples were leaving the area. Ms. Hutchinson said that after 9/11, young couples and families moved up from New York City, and then after a few years, moved back to work. The education data shows that more people are earning a high school diploma. We should talk to the school and find out what % get a Regents or a GED.

Housing - occupied means year-round. Camps may be listed as individual lots but they are not year-round. The same goes for the Taconic State Park cabin rentals. The assessor rolls can show which houses have no heat.

Housing cost - if we see a 30% rise in the next census, then we should be concerned. This is one thing that makes people complain about taxes. Ms. Irwin said the foreclosure rate will not be high in Columbia County. Ms. Hutchinson said that the housing market had a boost in early spring, but now it is flat again. Copake's median home value increased by 18%, based on the census.

We looked at the median income and the ability to rent. (see p. 7 ). 30% of Copake residents are "cost burdened" in terms of paying rent. There is a need to balance jobs and housing. The affordability gap for housing is easier to close than the gap for jobs (creating jobs). Copake's affordability ratio in home ownership is 3:1. Our tax burden needs to be shifted and distributed somewhere else.

Ms. Irwin said it looks like we need to deal with the following issues:

The number of households and the population has leveled off. We will want to talk to young families.

The senior population has been in flux. We should talk to them about their needs.

The distribution of occupations is average for upstate NY. If there are large state or county cutbacks, we will be hit hard.

Education is improving.

We need to address housing affordability. Housing is becoming less affordable, taxes are high and there are fewer services than in other areas. How do people live? What do they want? How do we keep what we have? - We may need to focus on this rather than immediate growth. We should discuss housing affordability at our next meeting. Affordable means the gap between income and housing cost. The type of housing that has been proposed for Copake was for people earning 80% of median income (\$42,671). How will we make housing in Copake affordable? Dr. Beneke mentioned a green housing project in Philmont. Mr. Weber stated that there would be a problem in providing water to new developments. It was brought up that we have an abundance of water compared to other areas of the country. Ms. Irwin said that we have a certain set of issues; if we were starting from scratch, we could create industry and jobs, but we have to deal with our current infrastructure. We may have to create bonds. We should probably not think about creating industry and jobs in the short term.

We discussed our resources of water, wind, air quality, the need to take stock of what we have in terms of business, infrastructure, labor and resources, and then to ask what do we do with it?

Ms. Irwin will send out the information we discussed tonight via email.

Mr. Dodson reported on the GIS system - we now have the capacity to read DVD's, as we have installed a DVD writer and reader. He will go through the procedures to get access to the NYS GIS clearing house. There are already people in town calling who want to use it.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, June 18 at 7:30 pm.

Ms. Mettler made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Haas seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta Roll