

Minutes of the Comprehensive Planning Committee
Sept. 29, 2009, 7:30pm
Copake Town Hall

Members Present: Dan Haas, Charles Dodson, Russ Davis, Frank Peteroy, Harvey Weber, Bill Kiernan, George Beneke, Roberta Roll

Members Absent: Marcia Becker, Jeanne Mettler, Fiona Hutchinson

Members of the Building Trades: John Klein, Jeff Nayer, Calvin Miller, Kevin Hill, Joe LaPorta, Bill Schmolz, Chris Oswald, Fred Schneeberger

Mr. Dodson, chairing the meeting, gave an overview of comprehensive planning, and then turned the meeting over to Frank Peteroy, facilitator of the focus group on building trades. He asked the group what changes they would like to see in Copake. Mr. Miller thought zoning needed to be changed to be more business friendly; this would help give young people jobs. He was in favor of townhouses and condos and said the scenic corridor overly zone was too restrictive. Mr. LaPorta said we've lost farmers and acquired residential homes. We need a way to create money other than taxes. He also said the SCOZ should be looked at for possible revision. Perhaps we could get some light manufacturing in to create jobs. Give tax incentives - 5 to 10 years, with a penalty if the building is vacated before 10 years. He thought zoning should be changed from two acres to three acres. Mr. Klein said he knew of places where industrial parks have been created, which gave local contractors, plumbers and heating businesses work. They put up water towers with grant money. Mr. Miller noted that a self-storage business wanted to come in to Copake but was denied according to our zoning. He also commented that the Copake Inn is deteriorating and said there is no land that is zoned for commercial and industrial use. Mr. LaPorta suggested that the zoning regulations be altered with a clause that states that certain uses may be allowed even if they are not listed.

Mr. Beneke talked about Amenia's plan which mapped out areas for future growth, and said that our plan will address our needs and growth. Mr. Weber said we need senior apartments to keep seniors in their homes. Mr. Davis asked the group if they were suggesting a different way of creating zoning. Mr. Miller replied that one has to look at everything - what do we need, land for low income housing, industrial development, etc. Mr. LaPorta said that many people feel the south end of town is not attractive. He proposed a new entrance into the town at the north end which would end up by the Copake Inn, and extend the town center out to the Roe Jan Kill. He also suggested a small industrial park. Mr. Nayer asked what would entice people to come here - tax incentives. High Voltage is successful. There are water and sewage concerns with development. Mr. Weber commented that we have a well-educated pool of people to work, good roads, sports, and weather to our advantage.

Mr. Miller agreed with Mr. LaPorta's idea for a new access road to Copake. Mr. Dodson asked if we were talking about creating a new hamlet; there is Craryville, Copake Falls, West Copake - we need revitalization, which takes energy and planning. Mr. Miller said the town has a great firehouse and town hall, but we should spruce up the other buildings in town. If Housing Resources went in, we could have townhouses, shops, and a golf course. Mr. Beneke asked what do we need in downtown. Mr. Hedges stated, a grocery store; we have enough people to support one, especially with the camps and campgrounds. Mr. Klein noted that if we have seniors, they need a grocery store in close proximity. Mr. LaPorta said we need beautification. He spoke about the apparent difficulties that J.J.'s had with zoning requirements. Mr. Schmolz commented that he thought people came here for the rural quality of life, and that they do not want to see industrial areas. Ozzie suggested we talk to Seth Fallon about the antiques business and how that might help revitalize the town. Mr. Nayer agreed, saying that people come from all

over to the auction, just as they did to the former French restaurant, [Aubergine] in Hillsdale. It was noted that there are plenty of buildings in town that could be used for businesses. It could cost \$500,000 to build a new structure. Mr. Miller commented on the abandoned grocery store in Craryville. Mr. Nayer said that Hillsdale is growing and so is Great Barrington. Mr. LaPorta said that Hillsdale has a hamlet committee of eight or nine people who are working on the library, park, sewage, shops and fundraisers. Ms. Roll said the committee is made up largely of people who have moved here relatively recently; they are extremely dedicated, purposeful, and know how to raise money. Mr. Weber commented that the Mt. View Inn used to be active, and why weren't people interested in reviving it. Mr. Schneeberger said that Ancram is in the same boat. Supervisor Simons held taxes down and spent no money for years, and now everything is run down. He used to work frequently in Copake, where projects were being undertaken - he cleared the land for the Town Hall and the skating rink, among other things. He also said that the SCOZ in Ancram was specifically to stop Palumbo from mining. In his view, the SCOZ takes away the rights of landowners. Palumbo was willing to donate ten acres of land in exchange for the gravel mine. In the past, farmers used to have a gravel pit. Mr. Schneeberger has a sand and gravel mine in Copake, but you would never know it is there, and it is the main source of sand and gravel for Copake. Mr. Nayer said that second home owners give them all a lot of work, but the problem is they have a lot of money and don't want to see a gravel mine. Meanwhile, towns can't afford gravel because of scarcity pricing. Mr. Miller said you can't listen to only the few people who make noise about development. Mr. Beneke said that's why we need a plan for the good of all.

Mr. Dodson asked if there were tools, communication, types of trades that would be useful to have. "Are there things not here that would help you in your trades?" Comments were: cell towers, people, housing needs, tax incentives for renovating buildings (as Hudson has done). Mr. Hedges said that some weekenders are here only occasionally, the home is in one spouse's name, and therefore, they can say that it is their permanent residence. Mr. Klein brought up the job shadowing program that used to be at Taconic Hills school; this gave students experience in the trades. Then it was discontinued. Mr. Weber commented that at the school where he taught, there was a job development program affiliated with the Navy and the ROTC; perhaps this could be brought into TH. Mr. Miller thought that something needed to be done to protect local contractors from out of area contractors. Mass. contractors can work in NYS, but there is no reciprocal licensing for NYS contractors. The question was asked whether the town could issue licenses, but there is an issue of liability.

Mr. Peteroy asked what they thought about sprinkler systems. There was a discussion about dry systems being a good option as they do not freeze. Some thought the cost of systems was too high to require them, but it was noted by some that the cost is actually not very high - about \$2,000. Mr. Peteroy said that the town could follow the national code for installing systems. There was further discussion of wet vs. dry systems, plastic piping and charged tanks. Mr. Miller commented that there were radon problems around Copake. Mr. Nayer said if there are certain problems, such as radon or a buried oil tank, the bank will not give a mortgage. Mr. Peteroy asked if the group thought an architectural review board was a good idea. Most were against it, citing more regulations, delays, and increased cost. Some thought that arch. boards would get involved in things in which they have no expertise. Mr. Miller voiced his desire to have the building inspector in the office five days a week with higher pay, as he finds he needs them more often than they are available. Mr. Hill said that some towns take ten percent of inspection fees. Mr. Peteroy asked if inspectors should be required to live locally, to which Mr. Schneeberger replied that qualifications should be the first priority. It was agreed by all that at present, we have great building inspectors, but they are underpaid. Mr. LaPorta thought that what we needed right now is a person to answer questions from prospective builders. Mr. Schneeberger replied that is what the planning board does. Mr. Weber said he thought we needed a zoning book that is readable. Mr. Schneeberger said that the zoning is redone after the comp. plan is passed, and should be done by "regular" people - in plain English. Mr. Dodson asked about the process of regulations, permits and paperwork. Mr. Schneeberger said the planning board should meet twice a month to expedite permits. At present, it takes two to three

months to obtain necessary permits. He then spoke about Long Lake, where there are sixty-eight units of cluster housing. He is a neighbor and says the community is so quiet, "you wouldn't know it was there." Mr. Miller said Copake police should be more friendly, and that we should not have police out on Rt. 22. Mr. Nayer said it is a part of Copake and it is used as a drug corridor.

Mr. Dodson asked about insurance. Mr. Nayer said the town should require liability insurance. Hillsdale requires proof and Copake does not. Mr. Miller agreed, saying homeowners and building inspectors should receive a copy of it and workmen's comp. Mr. Miller thought there should be stiffer fines for safety violations and that there should be construction site safety reviews - e.g. ladders left up, rerods, etc. Mr. Davis asked if there should be a written statement of liability insurance requirements in the comp plan. There was discussion about NYS not requiring workmen's comp. if one is self-employed. However, contractors might require it; if you don't have it, some will charge a percentage of the coverage cost. Mr. Dodson asked how the next generation of tradespeople is being trained. Mr. LaPorta said there will be a great shortage, as no one new is coming in. Hence, the costs will go way up. It was noted that all the high schools are pushing students to go to college and there should be more trades training opportunities. Mr. Dodson said there is an apprenticeship program at TH with about twelve students. He has also talked to Columbia Greene about getting involved, but a facility is needed in which to meet. Mr. Nayer said that vocational school is great, but students need hands-on training.

Mr. Peteroy asked if the green building movement had affected them. The general agreement was yes, many people want it. However, local suppliers don't have some of the products and sometimes the price is too high. Right now there are no caps on geothermal and solar. Mr. Klein said that Albany has money for green construction; we need to send a proposal to them. We got money from NYSERTA for solar panels in town hall. Mr. Hedges thought that solar and wind were the way of the future. The problem with wood furnaces is pollution and that they are eyesores. Green energy can give a payback. Mr. Nayer said that oil heat is dying; in the last five years he has installed only one oil burner. Most people now use LP gas.

Mr. Dodson thanked the group and said the conversation is ongoing. Mr. LaPorta asked about the timetable for the comp plan. - about a year from now. There were questions about zoning and a discussion of how that process would develop - somewhat parallel, but mostly after the comp plan is complete. Legal issues that might come up for the town would be reviewed in light of the comp plan. Mr. Davis said our questions are designed to obtain information about the structure of the town and community. Perhaps we will set up a zoning board of review.

The group members departed and the business portion of the meeting began. We approved the minutes from Sept. 17th. It was noted that Margaret Irwin will meet with us on Oct. 19 to discuss the survey and vision workshop. Supervisor Crowley asked us to meet in the park building for our Oct. 13 meeting. We decided to meet with home-based business owners on Dec. 8th. Mr. Davis will be away until Oct. 12, so cannot prepare to facilitate that meeting. Ms. Mettler said she would moderate. Mr. Davis has sent out forty-five invitations. Ms. Roll asked if people were using email, phone or post to contact focus group individuals. All three methods are being used, depending on the size of the group and availability of email addresses. Mr. Dodson said he had received nine more surveys, which brought the total to 695, a 27% return. (River Street had not begun the analysis yet). Mr. Davis moved to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded by Mr. Weber and the meeting was adjourned at 9:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta Roll