

Minutes: Comp Planning 1/12/10

Present: Art Bassin, Bonnie Hundt, Leah Wilcox, Barry Chase, Hugh Clark, (all from Ancram) Harvey Weber, George Beneke, Dan Haas, Jeanne Mettler, Charles Dodson, Marcia Becker, Russ Davis, Frank Peteroy, Bill Kiernan

Jeanne opened by inviting input on the Comp Planning Experience of Ancram, and asked for an overview of the process.

Art explained that Ancram had hired a consultant, held two town wide meetings, asking what people wanted changed/preserved. 130 attended. A questionnaire was designed and 27% responded. Following survey results there was a second round of town meetings in spring '08. The most difficult part was translating public input into specific ideas. The draft developed in Spring '09 was deemed too complex, so the next draft was a summary of components: a summary, then a "top 10 things to know" about the plan, then a list of 30-40 actions to be taken. An action plan detailed what should happen first, second and so on. In April '09 a Public hearing showed mostly support. There were some concerns NOT articulated at the other meetings, such as "I haven't had time to understand it." The Committee met with "dissidents" and made changes. A final public hearing was held in 7/09. A new petition circulated in town expressed more concerns, but Art hoped the plan would be adopted in 2/09. An implementation committee includes 9 people.

Lean mentioned that a water study was done; Hugh stressed that any plan should be "pinned on facts."

Jeanne asked about grants, and Art responded by saying Ancram got an Ag and Market grant in fall '07 relating to two main topics: how to revitalize hamlets, and how to preserve agriculture. They also got a Community Development Block Grant for \$21,000 and created a strategic plan.

Jeanne mentioned that focus groups often give opinions based on false info – how to deal with this? Art replied that it must be dealt with as it comes up, and correct info must be given over and over.

Jeanne asked how to deal with opponents of the plan, and Art responded that he saw 90% support in Ancram. The nay-sayers were met with in small groups multiple times. Zoning is the issue that sparks most dissent.

Barry stated that there would always be some opposition. Leah suggested that dissidents be invited to be on the committee. Hugh said it was important to have committee consensus.

Jeanne asked about other committees and Barry said there were individuals from other town committees on comp planning.

The topic of large development came up. Art said under the Ancram plan every new development must be clustered. 40% can be built on.

Hugh said the committee must begin with a vision and that this pulls the town together. Jeanne stated that Copake was hoping the town would provide the vision. George thought that when the focus groups finish Copake could begin to provide a vision.

Charles asked about shared municipal services. Can a task force explore this? How many services can be shared? Art said that the general populace likes shared services, but not Committee heads. There's a need to spell out where money will be saved. Harvey asked whether we were talking about merging towns. Art asked if there was town support for consolidation or is this a committee priority? Jeanne replied that the community can say, "Here is a problem" and the committee can say "Here is a solution." Art thought that the best use of a survey is to ask what are the things that have 90% support.

There was some discussion of job creation strategies: expand community zones? Create a "floating zone"? Add new agriculture? Art said that the Ancram plan did not target specific preservation priorities. Charles wanted to know whether FAQs on the website were helpful, and Art said that many copies were made and distributed.

A short business meeting followed, which concerned the process for applying for an agricultural grant. Even though there is no money available currently, the committee agreed to go ahead with the process.

Submitted by: Dan Haas