

**COPAKE PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES OF May 18, 2006**

A special meeting of the Copake Planning Board was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Edgar M. Masters, Chairman. Also present were Marcia Becker, Chris Grant, Morris Ordover and Terry Robbins. Deborah Cohen served as secretary of the meeting in order to record the minutes. The purpose of the meeting was to review the response of Housing Resources of Columbia County to the issues raised by the Planning Board at its April 20th meeting related to the review of preliminary submission requirements for conceptual sketch plan approval.

2005-18 Housing Resources, Inc. - Site Plan Review and Major Subdivision of Approximately 112 +/- Acres on Land Bounded by Mountain View Road and County Route 7A.

Mr. Masters opened the meeting by reading the May 15, 2006, letter (copy attached) from the Columbia County Department of Health (CCDH), signed by Dale E. Rowe, Environmental Health Director, in response to questions raised at the April 20th meeting. The letter advises that CCDH will be the agency responsible for review and approval of plans for the public water supply and perhaps review of subdivision plans. It also advises and that the request of Edward Coons, Board President of Housing Resources of Columbia County, Inc. (HRCC), and employee of CCDH, to recuse himself from the County's review process has been granted.

Mr. Masters informed the group of about 50 in attendance that the Board had received quite a bit of correspondence from Copake citizens about the project. Marcia Becker was asked to serve as the Board member responsible for seeing that all questions raised in the correspondence that come within the purview of the Planning Board are answered, most probably at a later date depending on when information is available in the lengthy review process to come. He also clarified the Board's approach to the review process in relation to its responsibilities: first that of site plan review and second, subdivision of the land. Terry Robbins pointed out that the project is clearly a major subdivision and that review as such will be under major subdivision regulations, that is, Chapter 197 of the "green book".

Mr. Masters then explained to the audience that the Planning Board is currently considering "acceptance of sketch plan and classification as a major subdivision" but that such acceptance does not in any way, shape or manner, constitute approval of the site plan.

Instead, it was explained and subsequently emphasized that approval of the *sketch plan* allows the applicant to move forward and begin the lengthy review process of the key elements of the project, including but not limited to: water quality and quantity; site drainage and design; sewer treatment; draft EIS; SEQRA information and review;

preliminary subdivision plan and plat; underground utility rerouting and roadways; home design. These more extensive studies are required to respond to the Board's concerns.

In attendance were the following representatives from HRCC who gave the following report:

Kevin O'Neill, Executive Director of HRCC, distributed a document entitled, "Copake Commons, Frequently Asked Questions," and summarized some background information on HRCC and the history of the development to date, that HRCC:

- is a 22-year old private non-profit serving Columbia County and adjacent communities,
- has been working quietly in Copake for the last ten years on home ownership purchase and improvement projects,
- wishes to meet housing and related community development needs, specifically to help senior citizens stay in the community, a significant focus of the project,
- wishes to assist young families who cannot afford to participate in the regional home market where the average purchase price is \$300,000. He pointed out that a two income family earning \$50,000 to \$60,000 or a single earning \$30,000 could only afford a home purchase of approximately \$180,000.
- was invited into the community by the Town's Economic Development Committee and began working on this project in 2003,
- has made available for resident review a binder describing the project at Town Hall as well as the Hillsdale Library,
- met with the Copake Parks Commissioner last week concerning the approximately ten acre park to be located on the northern side of the property, near the wetlands. He advised that the Town is agreeable to accept the additional space, that the use is up to the Commissioner, and that rest room facilities were requested.

Eric Bernardin, Fuss & O'Neill Engineers, project engineer, reviewed some changes made in the sketch plans since the April 20th meeting based on comments made at that time:

- The entire development was moved to the west to put a forty foot landscaped strip on the east side to create a buffer for that neighborhood.

- The loop road on the perimeter that went along the east property line and the lots to the interior were changed to a cull de sac; the land formerly used for the road was used for the landscape buffer.
- Three wetlands were identified as A, B and C. C is off plan and will not be developed. The eastern border includes a previously unidentified wetland (D), which enhances the neighborhood buffer since it cannot be developed.

Donald Pulfer, Architectural Bureau, architects for the project, clarified information based on the comments and letters received:

- The development was concentrated near the village to encourage walking and create additional economic activity in the Village; less than a quarter mile is considered walking distance.
- The plan is to leave as much open space, agricultural and park area as possible; open space would be protected from development in perpetuity.
- The Green, the most concentrated on village scale, includes all the senior housing except two family lots open to the Green.
- All motor traffic has limited access to the 24 senior units in the Green.
- Fuss & O'Neill did a detailed traffic study and determined that (1) the intersection delay will be unchanged and (2) the number of trips on Taconic Street will remain very small since the Green loop is designed to limit traffic on the Green and Taconic Street.
- Traffic - Addressing the Board's request that HRCC consider moving traffic away from Taconic Street, Mr. Pulfer advised that there would be minimal traffic impact on Taconic Street from the Green and that they chose not to cut off access to Taconic Street due to the "community impact." He added that to do so would increase traffic and would mean "turning our back on the village" (the existing downtown area of Copake). Mr. Pulfer stated that HRCC will "continue to work with community -- we want your feedback."
- Concerning side yard setbacks in the Green area, Terry Robbins wants to limit 20' distances to senior areas. The project allows for two 25' side yards on all other lots. Mr. Pulfer advised that 20' distances are typical in Columbia County.
- Concerning the three duplex senior units on both sides of the Green, instead of 24 one-bedroom senior units, the mix will be changed to 10 one-bedroom duplexes and 14 two-bedrooms, which will allow for increased distances between buildings, possibly up to 20'.

- The community center would be used mainly for seniors but would also be available to the larger community. It will be run by the HOA; it is not intended to supplant the existing Copake community building; some space could be dedicated for routine medical services; it would include a kitchen and some indoor/outdoor activities.
- Phasing is vague now and the use of 50 dwelling units per phase was general. **Phase 1 rental units on the Green** will be:

Senior Apartments

one bedroom	10	
two bedroom	<u>14</u>	
		24

All senior units would be single story and handicap accessible.

Family Townhouses

two bedroom	4	
three bedroom	<u>8</u>	
		<u>12</u>
Phase 1 Total		36

- Roads and infrastructures will be built in phases for approximately 50 dwelling units to be followed by home construction. The maximum units to be built will be 138. Thirty-five of the for-sale homes and 24 of the rental homes will be reserved for seniors over 55.
- The water and sewer systems are being designed to meet the project's needs and are being constructed in a modular fashion. They can be expanded to meet the Village's need. This is a Village choice, but the project will provide experience to make it possible.
- The team is environmentally conscious and cannot and will not build on wetlands, affect the aquifer or discharge inadequately treated sewage. Once the sketch plan is accepted, the compilation of requisite items (listed on page one) will begin.
- The maintenance facilities would be located at the community center.

Following these reports, the following requests/clarifications were made by the Board:

- that the revised ortho photo further include the main entry roads on Mountain Road and 7A, the Taconic Street entry and the Green, the park, the sewage treatment location, and Wetland D, which was just recently mapped – requested by Edgar Masters.
- that the revised ortho photo further include the two walkways (likely to be gravel) beginning at the Green and going through the northeastern section of the property

leading to Mountain View Road and the medical clinic – requested by Chris Grant. Access through the farm field would be a problem for the farmer. Mr. Grant also requested a plan revision to include a western walkway access.

- The flow of drainage and septic water out of the property into the surrounding farmlands on the ortho map was again requested by Marsha Becker.

It was noted that Green area has comparable density to Taconic Shores. It was also noted that the wetlands on the property are not NYSDEC regulated but regulated by the Army Corps of Engineers (determined by soil hydraulics, inundation of water during a 14-day period in a lifetime, and support of plant life). Therefore a government biologist is required to map the site. The wetlands on the property do not meet Army Corps definitions, but there are enough species on the site to be treated as a wetland.

Clarification of unit count was requested by Chris Grant: The 122 previous planned lots were reduced to 120 in order to reconfigure and avoid wetlands. The senior units would remain at 24; however, what were previously all two bedrooms was changed to 10 one-bedrooms and 14 two-bedrooms.

In response to Mr. Ordovery's concern, Mr. O'Neil advised that the housing for seniors 55 years and over is not assisted living but that linkage to medical services by other service agencies could be created.

Vehicles for ensuring continued affordability were raised: imposing deed restrictions; limitations on resale value including requiring a right of first refusal by the HOA; selling price restrictions.

Development coverage was described at 7/12 (58%) by the development team.

Continued Expression of Concerns about Density and Access:

Terry Robbins continued to raise the issue of side yards and setbacks and the desire to vary these spaces, requesting that they range from 5' to 20', possibly greater.

Edgar Masters re-iterated the concern he raised last month—the need for more open space within the single family lots and added visual breaks.

Marsha Becker confirmed that access to the lots in the eastern section of the property is through the new road, only.

Mr. Grant requested a change in density between the senior areas and the family lots suggesting putting more green space in between and more pedestrian access through the property to the park and the Village.

Edgar Masters explained to the group that because the Board has not seen any of the revisions since this evening the matter would be taken under advisement and any decision

tabled. The Board is likely to meet in one month on the third Thursday in June at which time the Board's feelings would be reviewed. He also noted the procedure for meeting in between regularly scheduled meeting--that the Board does not meet except in public and if more than two members wish to discuss the proposal, a public workshop would be scheduled with requisite public notice given.

Questions were then taken from the public: *Please correct spelling of names.*

Harvey Weber – In response to his request for a long form SEQRA, he was advised that a decision would be made by the board after the sketch plan is accepted.

Diane Moore – Raised concern about light pollution and was advised that while the planning process is still in very early stages, the project would use methods to minimize negative lighting effects.

Ed Ferratto – Disputed minimal traffic impact on Taconic Street.

Bob Statskill - Questioned the evolution of the project from 24-36 rental units into 138 dwelling units and wanted to know HRCC's track record for a project this size. Response was 24 senior rental units in Philmont, 35 senior rental units in Chatham and 39 in development; also 66 first-time homebuyers on scattered sites throughout Columbia County. Advised that HRCC hired an engineering firm to assist in this new undertaking and is using phasing to ease the development process.

Mac Simms – Expressed concerned about below market selling prices and the ability of purchasers to pay real estate taxes on full value assessments.

Doug Goodhue – Requested information online about HRCC and its financial reserves, which HRCC advised are based on value of real estate assets of \$2.5 million in 2003 and currently about \$3 million. The Planning Board is working with the Town to provide current information online about this project.

Mike Salvatore, President of Young-at-Hearters – In response to requesting information about garages available to seniors, was told that the planning process hasn't gotten that far. In response to question about preferences, was advised that Town of Copake residents would be given preference. He asked HRCC to speak at the Copake seniors meeting.

Barbara Statskill – Questioned change from 24-36 units to 138 planned today.

Sean Mclean – Questioned possibility of below market assessments and was advised that no PILOT was involved.

Nancy Bernansky – Asked about imposition on Taconic Street property owners and was advised that road will not exceed 50' right of way.

Diana Wilson – Was told that the senior apartment building would look like two story homes.

Jean Peck – When asked which other sites were under consideration by HRCC, was told the liquor store (which was too small and had a septic problem) and the property on Empire Road just past the Grange.

Harvey Weber – When he questioned whether HRCC was already advertising for residents because he thought he heard an ad on the radio, Kevin O’Neil responded that he knows nothing about that.

Bernice O’Connell– When asked about the size of the water treatment plan and chemicals used, was told that two separate systems would be used—one for water and one for waste treatment; while the design was not yet complete, a typical plant would be 20’ x 40’ and 16’-20’ tall, and would match the homes. A small amount of chemicals for treatment is stored in appropriate containers, and the system is subject to weekly inspections. The approval process for waste water systems is managed by NYSDEC.

Gray Davis – When asked if a subdivision with $\frac{3}{4}$ acre lots must again go to the Planning Board, was told yes; however, if homes had individual water and septic systems, they would not have to undergo sewage treatment review. Mr. Davis, an architect, also questioned the estimate of traffic impact.

Paulette Bonanno – When asked if this project would be financially feasible with fewer units, was told that there would have to be less rental units and higher selling prices for homes.

Edgar M. Masters, Chairman