

Minutes of the Comprehensive Planning Committee
Jan. 11, 2010 7:30 pm
Copake Town Hall

Members Present: Jeanne Mettler, George Beneke, Frank Peteroy, Bill Kiernan, Rus Davis, Dan Haas, Roberta Roll, Marcia Becker

Members Absent: Harvey Weber

The minutes of Dec. 16 were approved with the following changes and additions:

Delete line 8 on p. 2 regarding acreage in Hillsdale and Ancram. At the bottom of p. 2, add -"Mr. Peteroy said that a building is not an impervious surface. The paragraph [232-26, 9d of the zoning code] as written is absurd." On the first page, regarding the cell tower letter, we amended as follows: "Since she had received no reply to our first letter, Ms. Mettler sent an e-mail assuring the Board that we would be willing to attend a meeting on this issue if the Board wanted such a meeting. Supervisor Crowley responded that he was tied up with other County matters, but would get back to us. Ms. Mettler has not heard anymore with regard to scheduling a meeting. It appears that the Board has taken our advice that nothing should be done at this time."

Since there were some misunderstandings and questions by town board members about the minutes regarding this matter, we decided that the minutes will not be distributed to the Town Board members until they are approved in final form by us.

Mr. Dodson gave an overview of a report comparing demographic data from Hillsdale, Ancram and Copake. The data was obtained from Col. County budgets, the Census Bureau, NYS Dept. of Transportation, and each town's budget. Table I includes basic demographic data, e.g. pop., surface water, land, budget totals. Table II includes parcels, e.g. residential, park. Table III charts acreage per parcel. Table IV charts residential parcel types. Table V concerns tax bills. Three graphs are presented which chart # of residential properties and assessed values in the three towns. The last chart summarizes all the information. We will each study this report and discuss it next time. Mention was made of land with tax exemptions and the fact that Copake has only one partial exemption for a business. Exemptions are not based solely on land; for example, there are exemptions for firemen and veterans. Some exemptions are dictated by state law and non-negotiable; others are subject to the town's right to vote on whether to follow state law.

Ms. Mettler then addressed the issue of the grant that had been applied for by the EAB and recently turned down (for rezoning and to study the Housing Resources land). [We had originally wanted to apply for that grant]. With the idea of our applying again for the grant, she has approached stakeholders in town. She spoke with Leslie Wood of the EAB, who said they would not reapply. Ms. Mettler will speak with Supervisor Crowley. She asked Mr. Dodson if he would spearhead the application process. We all agreed we should pursue this. The deadline is sometime this spring.

Mr. Dodson reported that he had heard that there is a committee at the County level which is going to study county governance. Ned Schneier is on this committee and we discussed the possibility of inviting him to a meeting to talk to us about what they are doing. Mr. Dodson also reported that the county is interested in establishing and

maintaining a graphic information system for the County. He also reported that the County is beginning to work on an ag. protection plan. Ellen Jouret-Epstein of the CLC has been sending us information on this.

Dr. Beneke asked if we had heard the State of the State address this week, in which Governor Cuomo talked about consolidation. Mr. Davis asked if state law supercedes town law, referring to the ag. protection plan. There was mixed opinion on this. Ms. Roll commented that the county is in the very beginning stages on this; there are five information gathering sessions scheduled - Feb. 19 will be in Copake.

Ms. Mettler then turned our attention to a handout which is a summary of our thoughts thus far on future commercial development in Copake. As to the basic concept of where development should happen, we agreed that certain areas along Rt. 22 and 23 would be suitable. There were questions about how specific we should be regarding boundaries. At our last meeting, Ms. Irwin had cautioned us against getting too specific, e.g. identifying areas by street boundaries. We agreed that, except for environmentally sensitive areas, the town should encourage growth in areas that already have development of a similar nature, e.g. from the north entrance of Copake up Rt. 22 to the north end of Rt. 344 and from Yonderview Rd. north toward the Hillsdale line. We discussed uses, both specific types of businesses, as well as the list of uses identified in the zoning code. Ms. Becker read the list of uses in the code. Mr. Davis questioned whether certain businesses we might propose would go against the uses in the table. We agreed that the table of uses would probably have to be expanded; this has been recommended by Ms. Irwin as well. Mr. Dodson wondered whether businesses we might propose for Rt. 22 would tend to be larger. Ms. Mettler asked what kinds of business they might be, e.g. retail? Mr. Haas mentioned that the owner of Shagbark Tree Farm had wanted to start a business related to the farm, but that it was complicated by our zoning regulations. After some discussion we decided that the businesses we would want to encourage along Rt. 22 would be an ice skating rink and other recreational businesses, research labs, light manufacturing, assembly and warehousing, and other businesses which requires highway access. The area of the old school should probably be rezoned to accommodate business. Rt. 23 would be an area to encourage retail as well as light industry.

We talked about the difference between businesses located along Rt. 22 versus businesses in the hamlet of Copake., which might include a bakery, bookstore and theatre. Ms. Roll said she had been thinking about what started Millerton's rise - the bookstore and the movie theatre - and what we could bring in that would be somewhat unique. Dr. Beneke commented that the other factor helping Millerton was that the zoning in adjacent Connecticut towns was/is much more restrictive, thereby encouraging business to come over the border. He also mentioned a Sony movie he saw which reviews demographic changes and concludes that none of us knows what's going to happen in 20 years. We have to try to craft a plan that creates fewer problems for people. Twenty years ago, Millerton was a dying town. Mr. Dodson pointed out that Copake has 10 empty buildings, which is about what Millerton had before its revival. We discussed infill versus expanding the hamlet, whether the hamlet was "built out" yet. Land could be bought, buildings reused or torn down and rebuilt. We reminded ourselves that water and sewer will probably be necessary for future growth. We

thought it was important to recommend the modernization of utilities in the comp. plan and to note that it should occur in conjunction with the DOT's impending overhaul of the roads (7 and 7A) and hamlet area. Mr. Dodson wondered how far out we want to put the water and sewer.

Ms. Roll mentioned that agritourism would be a good fit for Copake, either in the hamlet or along Rt. 22. Mr. Kiernan mentioned the farm products use in the zoning code, saying that the requirement that farm products sold be grown principally on the same lot is neither practical nor in keeping with Ag. & Markets law, which says only that products must be grown locally. Ms. Becker said that a good highway use for Rt. 22 would be an inn. We agreed that hospitality/tourism should be encouraged.

We turned again to the question of infill or expansion in Copake Hamlet. Dr. Beneke said there is probably room for infill around the old King's Steakhouse (JJ's). He asked about the garage (old Taconic Telephone garage). Mr. Davis said that a car club, of which he is the president meets at the building. We went on to look at the written portion of the summary concerning lakes and agreed it was good, striking the word "growing" in the description of the business area around Upper Rhoda Pond. We also discussed the industrial zone. We wondered if we need to have an industrial zone and recognized that the current one will never be industrial. Dr. Beneke pointed out that there is a mountain, stream and viewshed there that the DEC would never allow to be disturbed. It is not a suitable area. Ms. Roll questioned whether, as we abolish that zone, we need to indicate another industrial area. Mr. Kiernan responded that it would be good for potential commercial business owners to see that there is a zone that would serve their purposes. We decided to say that we will encourage light industry and manufacturing and that zoning changes should be made in the business districts along Rt. 23 and 22. Ms. Mettler said we could still maintain the floating zone. Dr. Beneke asked about the designation of Copake North - whether it really qualified as a hamlet. Ms. Mettler filled him in on the previous conversation about this and the input of Leslie Wood. Ms. Becker said the development of a hamlet character is already taking place there. Regarding Copake Lake, we recommend reducing the density in order to lessen the strain and damage to the environment. We again were confronted with the dilemma of how much to say in terms of recommending zoning changes to serve the principles of the plan. We decided to say that the Town should consider reducing the R-2 zone in order to accomplish the reduced density around the Lake. Mr. Dodson asked if Taconic Shores owns Robinson Pond, as it is the only body of water that is zoned. There was some discussion of why this is so, with no definite conclusion.

We finished the editing of the summary and Ms. Mettler said she would get the revised version out to us soon, but essentially we approved of the edited document pending final reading. She asked Mr. Dodson if he would speak to Mr. Schneier about talking with us regarding the County governance discussions. We will give him 20 minutes or so next meeting - Jan 20.

Mr. Davis made a motion to adjourn, Mr. Kiernan seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Roberta Roll