

Minutes of the Town Meeting for the Comprehensive Plan
June 4, 2011 9:30 am
Copake Town Hall

Ms. Mettler made introductory remarks and asked the CPC members to be recognized. Margaret Irwin of River Street Planning then gave a power point presentation on the Plan, which included elements of the vision for Copake, future land use patterns, goals, catalysts, actions and next steps.

Comments by the audience on the conclusion of the presentation are summarized below.

Linda Alexander - weekender. Writes about real estate and retail (?), also serves on a community board where she lives full-time. She commented about the gateway to Copake. Three eyesores make a bad first impression. She suggested planting bushes in front of Jim's Autobody. J.J's has several code violations and is probably a fire hazard. The Inn is an eyesore as well.

Leslie Wood, CEAB. She commented on the enthusiasm for the Plan and the fact that the CEAB has been working on downtown revitalization. She welcomed anyone to join in helping with projects. There are many catalysts in the Plan that need people to champion them. The CEAB thinks it's a great plan.

Pete Evans - summer home, was born here, is a county historian where he lives full-time near Lake Ontario. Commented on historic and other buildings in the general area that have been neglected and then demolished - this is the worst "green" outcome - a building that goes into the landfill. Eventually, even buildings that deteriorate through benign neglect will, by law, have to be demolished. One can delay this process through building demolition permits. Copake had a WW II spotting tower. He thinks we need a preservation committee that knows what they are doing. Tourism is built on the little things, things that unique - we've got that in Copake.

Mel Salberg - newcomers - since 1987. He finds the reference to 2nd homeowners disturbing. "We are homeowners." All homeowners are a vital part of the economy. What difference does it make if it's full-time or 2nd home? Ms. Irwin commented that 2nd home owners contribute \$.54 on the tax dollar, and that amount is increasing.

Marcia Peteroy commented that 2nd homeowners often settle here permanently eventually.

Kathy Friedman asked for clarification on the 7A road project. Supervisor Crowley said that RFP's for the design engineers had been approved by the Town Board. Work will begin sometime in 2012, as currently scheduled. Ms. Wood said there is a committee to work with DOT on design elements, sidewalks, bikepaths, benches and lighting. Shagbark Farms has pledged to donate trees. Other ideas include burial of electric lines, which may be cost prohibitive. Ms. Irwin said that until DOT gets a sense of what citizens want, they will not know exactly how much money is involved. Ms. Friedman said she was concerned about widening the roads. Dan Tompkins said that Linda Gabaccia and Walt Kiernan are the Town Board liasons to the County. Ms. Gabaccia said that a representative from DOT would be at the Town Board meeting this Thursday to give a presentation on the GreenLITES program at 7 pm. Ms. Friedman asked for

specifics on zoning changes that are mentioned in the Plan, and in particular, the floating industrial district. Ms. Irwin replied that the rezoning committee will be figuring that out when they review the land use codes. She explained the floating zone and said that one question would be whether to continue to allow it to float or to set it. Ms. Friedman asked about the uses mentioned in the business area. Ms. Irwin replied that zoning focuses on the size of area lots as well as uses, all of which will have to be reviewed to make sure the uses are tight or broad enough for a particular area. Karen di Peri asked what grants can become available with a comp. plan. Ms. Irwin said there are many, and there will be an inventory to match funds to projects and needs. We need to recruit volunteers to write the grants, but there is plenty of money. When funders see a comp. plan they know that a community is “ready to go.” We need to develop a list of priorities and be aggressive. Ms. di Peri asked if the [comp. plan committee] ceases when the Plan is adopted, and if there was an idea to have someone oversee the implementation. Ms. Irwin said yes, the committee’s work is done when the Plan is adopted; it then becomes the Town’s. The Plan’s implementation will involve a lot of people and committees that are already in existence, but some projects will need new committees. We will also need to coordinate with County officials. Donna Peck asked about the modernization of water and sewer, saying water is a most important issue. She also asked if changing the zoning along Rt. 22 would make the SCOZ ineffective. Ms. Irwin explained that the SCOZ is just that, an overlay that lies on top of underlying zoning. It would remain the same. The underlying zoning would concern uses. The SCOZ is an addition, not the “pure” zoning. Another option would be to create a “conservation district.” She said rezoning is often more controversial than a plan, and she didn’t want to guess at what the rezoning would be here. She asked people to remember that while opportunities for growth are presented in the Plan, it also incorporates the phrase “as long as it is consistent with community character.” Also, we should remember that we are talking about modest growth, not an enormous return on the tax dollar for commercial growth. As far as water and sewer, Ms. Irwin said the risk to water quality is great. Dependence on public w/s is a risk, but the ability to provide w/s is important from an industry view and the environment. Lack of public w/s has protective influence as well, as it means certain types of industry will not be possible. With residential use, individual private wells and septic mean that a larger parcel of land is needed, which affects the affordability gap. Ms. Peck said there are health issue with small lots and septic. Ms. Irwin said under today’s standards, one couldn’t have the small downtown lots with private septic that exist now. An audience member commented that there would be a potential revenue stream in charging for public water. Richard Resnick (wife, Elsa) - a weekender. He said there is always a tension between preservation and growth. He also commented that it was puzzling to see a recommendation for a Town Administrator, but no commitment; he asked what is the hesitation. He also commented on the need for revitalization regarding retail/food stores, such as the old Landonhurst and Random Harvest. He also said that in Manhattan and Hudson, the arts were a catalyst for development. His last comment was about the old Roe Jan school and what would happen to it. Ms. Irwin replied that someone owns it. Ned Schneier said that the library looked at it as a possibility for its new location. The school is 75,000 sq. ft. It has been considered for a horse farm and a senior citizens home. The building has limited uses, considerable water and other

damage, and asbestos. Supervisor Crowley replied that a Town administrator would cost about \$60,000 plus benefits. The Columbia County supervisors have discussed the possibility of sharing an administrator. Councilman Bob Sacks said it is a question of how to implement it.

Chris Grant asked about the Community Preservation Fund. He said a NYS property tax cap seems likely, and that many of the recommendations in the Plan will have to be funded by the Town. Ms. Irwin said the Pres. Fund is an idea; it has been done successfully in communities in Long Island and in the Hudson Valley. It allows local govt. to generate a revenue stream. It is a real estate local one-time fee and does not affect middle or lower income value properties. It is a fee on larger transfers or properties. A property tax cap will probably affect the feasibility, but it is a tool to enable people to take care of the land. If a resources bank (funded privately by citizens) is a better idea, then we could do that.

An audience member commented that there seems to be a lot of money going out for projects in the Plan, and all seem to be centered on the "central" part of Copake. She said many citizens do not have to access to Rt. 22 - bridges are out, etc. No one is fixing up "what's behind us." Ms. Irwin said that the money issue can get complicated. Some things have to wait, but the Plan implementation is not linear - it's like "plate spinning." We are a residential community, so roads are important.

An audience member said he thought the Plan was wonderful and asked how it gets enforced. Ms. Irwin replied that comp. plans have the power of law, these are the Town's marching orders. The Town is expected to consider and/or enact the actions. Mr. Sacks said that when people ask, things get done; the Board members are their representatives. The enforcement of the Plan will be in the zoning. The audience member asked how can we be sure zoning will be enforced. Ms. Irwin said we elect our officials, we have to both trust them and hold their feet to the fire. It requires long-term involvement. The audience member who lives on Lake Ontario said his (far more rural) town just adopted a new plan; prior to that, no one on their town or zoning boards had ever read the comp. plan. It is the action of the townspeople that will ensure the Town Board makes it a priority. Ms. Peteroy said that every board has a rep. on the CPC, and that alone will make it happen. Ms. Irwin replied that boards change; if new people are appointed, they are responsible for implementation.

An audience member asked for contact info. for the boards and committees. It is posted on the website. Ms. di Peri said people could sign up for the CEAB and Around-the-Clock.

Jeff Nayer asked for another round of applause as a thank you to the CPC members. Ms. Irwin remarked that in all her years of doing planning work, that she has never worked with a more thoughtful and careful group of people.

The meeting ended at approximately 11:30 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta Roll