

**Town of Ancram**  
**Community Development Block Grant Project Team Meeting**  
**October 15, 2008**

**Members Present:** Art Bassin, Suzanne Bressler, Lucy Eldridge, Donna Hoyt, Will Lutz, Libby Mckee, Mary Ann Roche **Absent:** Mary Watkins, Clara Van Tassel, Kit White;

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The CDBG Project Team met on 10/15 to discuss the role of an economic development committee with Mr. Charles Dodson, Chair of the Copake Economic Advisory Board, and to review the status of the Laberge Group efforts to analyze the 82/7 intersection, the structural soundness of the three deteriorating buildings in the center of Ancram and the septic options for the buildings in the center of Town.

**Economic Development in Copake** – Mr. Dodson reported that the Copake Town Board created the Economic Advisory Board in 2000 to promote economic welfare, recreational activities and economically sound commerce and industry. The Committee currently consists of 9 members – four local business people, a lawyer, an accountant, two local residents and the Chair. The responsibilities of the Copake Economic Advisory Board include:

1. Collecting and compiling data about the economic situation in Copake, including a report on the Economics of Copake (which is on the Copake web site), an inventory of Copake businesses, and a Copake business directory.
2. Maintaining the Copake Web Site.
3. Creating the Fall Foliage Tour map.
4. Managing the Copake Community Days.
5. Managing the annual Copake Clean Up Day, which resulted in 25 tons of metal being collected, worth over \$10,000.
6. Establishing a three-town grant oversight and monitoring office to help identify grant opportunities for Copake, Hillsdale and Ancram.
7. Creating a Copake brochure, which is in the planning stage.
8. Establishing an internship program which places Taconic High School student interns in local businesses. So far 5 businesses participate, with a goal of having over 60 of Copake's 182 businesses to participate long term.
9. Assisting with the revitalization of Copake. Plans are under development to establish a Local Development Corporation, a 501c-3 not-for profit, which would be independent of Town government and eligible for grants as a not-for profit corporation that are not

available to municipalities. The Local Development Corporation would have corporate powers, a board and officers, and be responsible for stimulating local economic development activities.

Mr. Dodson noted that the Taconic Hills High School was the largest employer in the Town, followed by tourism (the Catamount Ski Resort and bed and breakfast businesses) and building and maintenance activities. Mr. Dodson said that “economic development” in Copake was defined as new money coming into the Community that was not there previously. Under this definition, attracting new businesses and new customers to the community was the goal of an economic development program.

Mr. Dodson then reported on a study he had done of 75 towns in NY to determine which ones were successful at “economic development” and what they did to be successful. His conclusions were that towns with fewer than 100 existing businesses were not able to attract new businesses and did not show any signs of economic development, while towns with over 100 businesses tended to attract new businesses and were able to grow economically. Mr. Dodson’s conclusion was that the critical mass of existing businesses and the size of communities which could support over 100 businesses seemed to make a difference in achieving economic growth. Mr. Dodson noted there were six exceptions to the finding that there was no growth in communities with under 100 businesses, and all seemed to relate to the availability of a large number of employees in the community businesses could draw on.

During the Q&A period, Mr. Dodson was asked what the two or three things Ancram should be working on to stimulate economic development and attract businesses and jobs. During the discussion that followed the following ideas and issues were identified:

1. Conduct a series of economic roundtables of Ancram business people, farmers and residents to talk about economic development.
2. Decide what kind of businesses and revitalization we wanted, and then make sure zoning supported these activities.
3. Look for something to draw people to town, like a movie theater, which could also stimulate other economic activities.
4. Consider working cooperatively with neighboring towns and the county on regional economic development opportunities to bring jobs and businesses closer to Ancram, even if they are not actually “in” Ancram.
5. Explore education and senior service opportunities.
6. Attracting retail and restaurant businesses and jobs to Ancram could be challenging because there was considerable competition from established businesses in Copake, Millerton, Pine Plains, Hudson, Hillsdale and Great Barrington.

7. Ancram needs to develop something that is a “destination” likely to attract people to the area, like Catamount does for Copake. Ancram’s historical places and heritage could serve to do this, as could agricultural economic development (agri-tourism, farmers markets, flea markets, etc).

Ms. Hoyt commented that it would be good for the Community to have a well balanced economy which served the entire community all week long, all year long, and serve not just seasonal needs or weekend visitors and residents.

The CDBG Project Team thanked Mr. Dodson for his presentation, and decided to invite representatives from Millerton and Pine Plains to come talk to us about how they were thinking about economic development issues, and what they were doing in this area. Ms. Bressler indicated she knew Michael Crowley, the former Mayor of Millerton and Marty Reynolds, a member of the Millerton-Salisbury-Lakeville chamber of commerce, and would ask them to come to a CDBG meeting to talk to us. (Note: Both Mr. Crowley and Ms. Reynolds are scheduled to attend the next CDBG Project meeting on 11/19).

**2008 CDBG Project** -- Mr. Bassin commented that the Laberge Group engineering consultants had been in Ancram on 10/14 to review the structural soundness of the three deteriorating buildings in the Center of Ancram, the dangerous intersections in Ancram and Ancramdale, and the alternative solutions to the septic problem in the center of Ancram. The consultants expect to have their preliminary conclusions and recommendations done by the end of the year, and should be able to give us a progress report by the end of November.

**2009 CDBG Grant Opportunity** – Mr. Bassin noted that applications for the 2009 round of CDBG Technical Assistance funding for community and economic development projects were due on 11/21. Mr. Bassin will check with the Town Board to see if the Town wanted to pursue this opportunity. If the Town were to apply and win the grant, it would require a \$15,000 town match for a \$25,000 grant. (Note: The Town Board has decided not to pursue the 2009 CDBG opportunity for budget reasons).

**Next Meeting** -- The next CDBG Project meeting will be on 11/19 at 7 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 9 PM.