

Town of Ancram
Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting
January 7, 2008

Present: Art Bassin, Barry Chase, Gene Aleinikoff, Jim Bryant, Chris Sommerhoff, Bonnie Hundt, Kyle Lougheed, Don MacLean, Nan Stolzenburg

Absent: Leah Wilcox, Monica Cleveland

The Comp Plan Committee meeting was called to order by Chair Art Bassin at 7 PM.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the 12/17 minutes. Motion carried.

Mr. Bassin welcomed Nan Stolzenburg and asked her to review for the Committee the next steps in the planning process and the status of the surveys.

Status of Surveys

Ms. Stolzenburg said we had received 427 surveys, which was about a 28% return rate, which for a survey sent to all individuals and businesses in Ancram was an excellent response rate. Mr. Bassin noted that the 427 survey responses represented about 70% of the people who voted in the November elections.

Ms. Stolzenburg indicated that higher return rates typically came from household surveys, and in the case of Kinderhook, the Fire Company had delivered the surveys to each home. Mr. Bassin asked if the survey respondents' demographics could be compared to the Town's demographics to insure the returns were "representative", and Ms. Stolzenburg said this would be done.

Mr. Bassin indicated that there were some "bad addresses" in the survey file which had resulted in some number of surveys not getting delivered. Mr. Bassin said he would count up the returns and let Ms. Stolzenburg know, so the number of surveys mailed out could be adjusted downward. (Note: Mr. Bassin reported an estimated 75 surveys were probably not delivered because of bad addresses).

Next Steps in the Planning Process

Ms. Stolzenburg said the surveys would be processed and tabulated by the end of January and preliminary results would be available by the Committee's first meeting in February. She said she would write up a summary of what the surveys were telling us, and anyone who wanted to work with the raw survey file was welcome to do so. Ms. Stolzenburg also said she and Don Meltz were working on finalizing the maps, the buildout analysis and the Town Profile. She indicated there were some Profile items she still needed and would email Mr. Bassin with the list of what was still required.

Ms. Stolzenburg then reported she had reviewed the surveys and was comfortable she understood enough of how the residents of Ancram felt about the issues from the workshop

results and from her preliminary review of the surveys that she was in a position to prepare draft vision and goals statements for the Committee's review, if the Committee wanted her to do that. She estimated these could be done and sent to the Committee for review in about two weeks.

Ms. Stolzenburg indicated that getting and reviewing the detailed results of the survey coupled with drafting and reviewing vision and goals statements over the next 60 days should put the Committee in a position to begin discussing strategies in March.

The Committee agreed that Ms. Stolzenburg should proceed to draft the preliminary vision and goals statements, subject to review and revision after the detailed survey results were available.

Committee Meeting Operating Process

Mr. Chase raised the issue of how the Committee was going to operate going forward as the Committee started debating possibly difficult issues. He suggested, and Ms. Hundt and others on the Committee agreed, that the Committee needed to put into place a process to allow public audience participation during the open Committee meetings while permitting the Committee to do its work and hold its discussions without inappropriate interruption.

Mr. Bassin suggested using the approach used by the Ancram Town Board, which was to ask for public comments and questions at the beginning and end of each meeting. Mr. Bassin suggested the Committee might also ask for additional public comments from the audience in the middle of a meeting as well. The Committee felt this approach had merit, and plans to operate in this matter going forward.

Ancram Mill Discussion

Mr. Bassin then reported on a meeting he had had with Ancram Mill Manager Gary Kennedy on 1/7 at which Mr. Kennedy indicated the Mill was doing well and might be interested in expanding the Mill if it were able to have access to the Town owned land now used for the pool, basketball court and baseball field. Mr. Kennedy asked that the Town take this possibility into account during the Comprehensive Planning process. If the Town is interested in exploring this possibility, it would require an extensive review by Mill management and the process would take substantial time to complete before a firm decision could be made. Mr. Kennedy indicated the Mill had had preliminary discussions about this possibility with Town officials several years ago.

Mr. Bryant indicated that there had been substantial discussions with the Mill about this possibility in the 2000 period, and the conclusion at that time was the Town preferred to maintain Bass Memorial Park as it was.

Farmland Protection Grant Application

The Committee reviewed the draft of the Farmland Protection Grant application Ms. Stolzenburg had prepared, discussed the issues impacting farming in Ancram, and identified the trends which are influencing the future of Farming in the Town. Ms. Stolzenburg will complete the application for the Farmland Protection grant, which could be as much as \$25,000. Mr. Bassin will plan to submit the grant application to the Town Board for its review and approval at the February Town Board meeting.

Demographics

The Committee reviewed the 1980-1990-2000 Ancram Town Demographic analysis Ms. Stolzenburg had prepared. Committee members asked questions regarding the number of vacant homes (over 200) and the number of agricultural employees (25 to 83). Ms. Stolzenburg said many of the “unusual” numbers were a function of the census definitions, which she would get to the Committee to help clarify the data. The Committee plans to review the demographics again next week.

Other Items

Mr. Bryant then reported on the web site, which he indicated was likely to go live in the next month or so.

Mr. Chase reported on the planning workshop for 16-22 year olds held on 12/29. Four people came to the workshop, and their conclusions were quite similar to the results of the 9/29 and 10/1 workshops. Minutes of this workshop will be posted on the Town website, www.townofancram.org, in the Comp Plan section.

Mr. Bassin mentioned that the Farmland Trust was holding a one day conference in Saratoga Springs on 2/28 on “Growing NY Farms in the 21st Century.” Mr. Bassin hopes to have more information on this meeting by next week.

Next Meetings

Mr. Bassin asked that Committee members review again all the materials from the 9/29 and 10/1 workshops (which are posted on the Comp Plan portion of the Town Website, at www.townofancram.org) so all Comp Plan members can become fully aware of what the “town” thinks about the issues, and what the range of opinions is. A discussion of the Vision Statements, Brainstormed Solutions and Positives and Negatives will be the focus of the next few meetings.

Mr. Bassin proposed that the Committee plan to meet 1/14, 1/21 and 1/28. He also suggested that at the 1/14 meeting the Committee set some Saturday meeting dates in February so people who could not make the Monday night meetings could participate.

A motion was made by Mr. MacLean and seconded by Mr. Chase to adjourn the meeting at 8.40 PM. Motion carried.