

**Town of Ancram**  
**Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting**  
**November 17, 2008**

**Comp Plan Members Present:** Art Bassin, Suzanne Bressler, Barry Chase, Hugh Clark, Kyle Lougheed, Don MacLean, Leah Wilcox

**Housing Resources of Columbia County:** Kevin O'Neil

**Others Present:** Sheila Clark, Madeleine Israel, Jim Miller, Jane Shannon

---

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

**1. Affordable Housing** -- Ms. Hundt introduced Kevin O'Neil of the Housing Resources Corporation of Columbia County, Inc. (HRCC), a private not-for-profit organization that has been assisting low-to-moderate income residents of Columbia County with their housing needs since 1984. Mr. O'Neil spoke to the Committee on the affordable housing efforts his organization has undertaken, and outlined how his organization could help communities like Ancram. Mr. O'Neil mentioned that his firm was currently engaged in projects in Copake and Millerton, among others.

Housing Resources of Columbia County was first organized as Hudson Housing Services Corp. by a group of concerned residents and the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corp. in 1983-84 to serve the City of Hudson. The agency expanded to a county wide service area in 1995, and Housing Resources of Columbia County, Inc. was chartered as a Neighbor Works Organization in 1996. HRCC is also affiliated with the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal's (DHCR) Rural Preservation Program. As the Rural Preservation Company for Columbia County, Housing Resources contracts with DHCR to address the housing needs of the county's low-income populations. The agency is also certified as a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) with DHCR. Housing Resources joined the Neighbor Works Campaign for Home Ownership in February 1997 and was certified as a Neighbor Works Full-Cycle Lender in May 1998. In April 2000, Housing Resources received its most recent certification as a "Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) with the U.S. Department of Treasury.

HRCC offers a variety of housing related services including home ownership assistance, affordable apartment rentals, home improvement grant and loan programs, and residential and mixed-use commercial real estate development. In recent years, the agency's main focus has been the promotion of home ownership opportunities for low and moderate income residents of Columbia County. Housing Resources of Columbia County, Inc. is committed to improving housing conditions and increasing housing choice throughout Columbia County.

During his presentation Mr. O'Neil stressed the importance of making the best use of existing structures, promoting rehabilitation, increasing density within structures and reuse of underutilized or deteriorating buildings. Mr. O'Neil suggested making accessory apartments a right, subject to site plan review to insure high quality, and emphasized the importance of requiring high quality in all low-to-moderate income housing.

**2. Minutes of Prior Meeting** – The minutes of the 11/10 meeting were approved.

**3. Synthesis Town Center Design Proposal** – Mr. Bassin asked the Committee for any additional comments and thoughts related to the Synthesis initial design concepts for Ancram and Ancramdale presented at the last meeting.

Mr. MacLean commented that he agreed that we did not need to do a 3-D model of the initial design, and thought that we needed to figure out how to implement reasonably quickly the part of the design that improved the northern side of the 82/7 intersection by carving back the retaining walls on both the northern corners. Mr. MacLean also noted that the Fire District would have to become interested and involved in the project and be willing consider moving the fire house for the redesign concept to be implemented.

Mr. Miller commented that he thought the Tavern was going to be rented out for 5 or so years, and then the fire district planned to build an extension to the fire house. Mr. Bassin noted that Synthesis had been asked to revise the design to leave the fire house where it was, but said if funds could be found to move the fire house to a place agreeable to the fire district at no cost to the fire district or town, and if the resulting new fire house met the needs of the fire district, there could be a chance down the road that the Synthesis proposal could be implemented, assuming the town was interested in pursuing it.

Mr. Chase commented that while the Synthesis design concept could be seen as “pie in the sky”, it was a vision for the future, and was useful as an example of what could happen.

Ms. Bressler noted that the Committee seemed to be sending out mixed messages - both excited about the initial Synthesis design concept, but at the same time, cautious about embracing it. She suggested it was time now to be bold and talk about it and get everyone excited about it. Ms. Bressler noted that this kind of town center revitalization might be important to stimulate long term economic development and bring new people, homes, businesses and jobs to the town.

Mr. MacLean observed that we had to be careful not to assume a hamlet center design concept like the one proposed by Synthesis was the only economic activity worth pursuing, because the shops that could be attracted to a revitalized Ancram town center may not have the kinds of things full time Ancram residents wanted or could afford. Mr. MacLean also noted we needed to attract jobs to the town, not just service businesses like construction and home maintenance, or self-employed people. Mr. MacLean suggested attracting light industry (like Harney’s) could be very attractive, and should be accommodated in the revised zoning. Ms. Wilcox mentioned attracting assisted living facilities. Mr. Bassin noted that the floating zone provision was designed to accommodate these kinds of ideas.

Ms. Hundt commented that we needed to provide for enough flexibility in the floating zone concept to accommodate these kinds of job creating businesses, but we also needed to be very careful about how we constructed the floating zone so we avoid “spot zoning”,

protect the rural character of the town and prevent any “unintended consequences” of a floating zone. Ms. Clark commented that we needed to develop a plan for town that met the needs of the people who live here now. Ms. Hundt commented that we should make sure zoning did not preclude economic activities that may make sense in the future, but should make them possible.

The Committee concluded it would be useful to establish the flexibility in zoning to not preclude any job creating activities which could be accommodated without damaging the rural character of the Community and also to not do anything which could preclude the possible implementation of the Synthesis Ancram town center concept in the future.

Mr. Lougheed commented that we should make it clear that the Synthesis proposed concept for the center of Ancram was just one example of what the center of Ancram could look like, and was not the only or even the recommended solution – that much more work would have to be done to finalize a concept for Ancram, and this work was outside the scope of the Comp Plan.

**4. FAQs** – Mr. Bassin asked for the suggested questions and answers which could help communicate what was actually in the Comp Plan and help dispel the rumors which were circulating in the Community. The Committee discussed 10-12 possible FAQs, and Mr. Bassin asked each Committee member to email to him their suggested Q&A before next Monday’s meeting so he could consolidate them for the Committee’s review.

**5. Finalize Documents:** Mr. Bassin reminded everyone to review and mark up the Profile Document, Strategy Summary and Draft 8F of the Recommended Strategies, Programs and Policies so we can finalize them in time to mail them to the Community in early December. Instead of using Committee time to talk through spelling, grammar and clarity edits, Mr. Bassin suggested everyone mark up the actual documents and give them to him so he could incorporate the changes. Any issues of substance regarding what should be included in the strategies, and what the Committee’s point of views are will, or course, be discussed by the Committee before any changes are made.

**6. Community Communications:** Mr. Bassin outlined a proposed communications program which would involve community meetings in mid-December and mid-January, followed by a Public Hearing in mid-February. Mr. Bassin will circulate a proposed timetable. The Committee will set specific dates for the communications plan at the next meeting. Mr. Miller suggested that the Comp Plan Committee plan to brief the town board members individually and in small groups. Mr. MacLean suggested we review the Community Infrastructure strategies with Highway Superintendent Jim MacArthur. Mr. Bassin suggested doing that after the Committee was finished with its edits. Mr. MacLean also noted that we should make sure we have enough time built into the process to incorporate the community feedback we receive on the strategies.

**Next Meetings:** Mr. Bassin indicated the Committee would meet next on 11/24 and 12/1 (with Ms. Stolzenburg and the Columbia Land Conservancy).

The meeting adjourned at 9.15 PM.