

**Town of Ancram
Comprehensive Plan Committee
Special Town Meeting
Saturday, April 26, 2008**

Present: Art Bassin, Barry Chase, Gene Aleinikoff, Don MacLean, Kyle Lougheed, Leah Wilcox, Nan Stolzenburg

Absent: Jim Bryant, Bonnie Hundt, Chris Sommerhoff

The Special Town meeting was called to order at 9.40 AM by Comp Plan Committee Chair Art Bassin. Mr. Bassin welcomed the 70 people who had come to the meeting and introduced the Comp Plan Committee members and the Town's planning advisor, Nan Stolzenburg. Mr. Bassin provided a brief overview of what the Comprehensive Planning Committee had done over the past year, and stated the purpose of the meeting today was to review that progress with the Community and to review, discuss and confirm that the Vision Statement and Goals that had been mailed to everyone were "on the right track". Mr. Bassin indicated that after about 45 minutes of presentations, the meeting would be opened up for comments and questions.

Mr. Bassin then introduced Nan Stolzenburg of Community Planning & Environmental Associates, the Town's Planning advisor. Ms. Stolzenburg presented a "progress report" on the Comprehensive Planning process, commenting on what a comprehensive plan is, why Town's do them, what we have done and learned in the past year, and how we will use the information we have compiled. Ms. Stolzenburg then went into some detail on the results of the community workshops, the survey, the groundwater protection plan, the build out analysis, the maps that had been developed for the Town and the "Profile and Inventory" document of current conditions. (Note: Documents detailing all materials covered during the meeting on 4/26, and a variety of other items, are available at the Ancram web site, www.townofancram.org. In addition, for convenience, Ms. Stolzenburg's progress report presentation and the Survey Presentation are attached to the email along with these minutes).

Mr. Bassin then opened the meeting up for comments and questions, reminding everyone that the most important thing on the agenda for today was getting the Community's reactions to the 2030 Vision Statement and the Goals which had been mailed to everyone with the invitation to the special meeting. Questions and comments included:

1. Survey Results – Q. How many questionnaires were sent out, how many were returned, and how does that compare to other surveys of this type? A. 1550 surveys were mailed out, and 434 (28%) were returned, which is typical for surveys of this type. The survey results were "statistically valid" with a 95% confidence level and a 4% margin of error.
2. Water Situation in Ancram - A suggestion was made to include dealing with the Ancram water/septic issue in the goals.
3. Plan Implementation – Q. How will the Comprehensive Plan be implemented after it is adopted? A. It is likely the Town Board will form a series of committees to deal with

specific Comp Plan recommendations. We will probably have implementation committees to deal with changes to the zoning laws, economic development, affordable housing, the town centers, protecting the environment and encouraging agriculture and farmland protection. This “committee” process has already started, with the formation by the Town Board of the Mill Expansion Committee, the Cell Service Committee and the Town Garage Committee. In addition, Ancram has recently been awarded a \$21,000 grant to help with economic development, affordable housing and town center improvement issues, and has applied for a \$25,000 farmland protection grant which could be awarded by the end of May. Both these grants will help support the implementation of the Comp Plan.

4. Mill Expansion Proposal – Q. Where are we with the Mill’s proposal to expand into Blass Memorial Park, and how do we deal with the risk of additional “bad smells” if the proposed pulp process were brought to Ancram? A. As previously mentioned, a Town Board committee is dealing with this issue, and talks with the Mill management are in the very early stages. Mr. Bassin indicated the Comprehensive Planning Committee would review and discuss the Mill’s proposal from the perspective of the Comprehensive Plan, and would develop a point of view on the matter.

5. Full time vs. Part time Residents – Q. Does the fact that there are not very many “full time” residents here today cause a challenge for the Comp Plan? A. Mr. Bassin commented that the survey, the workshops and the small group meetings the Comp plan Committee has been holding have made it very clear that everyone seemed to be in agreement on what was important: keeping Ancram the way it is, protecting the environment and agriculture, supporting affordable housing, not too much development, fixing the center of Ancram, etc. Whether people have lived here for 1 year, 10 years, 30 years or for their entire lives, and whether people are here full time or just part time on weekends, what is important to all of us is pretty much the same, so the “we-they” thing is not really that important to the Comprehensive Planning effort, and may be an issue that has outlived its relevance. Mr. Bassin then asked for show for hands on who was “full time”. Two thirds of the room raised their hands.

6. Experience of Other Towns -- Q. What had we learned from other Towns that have gone through the comprehensive planning process? A. Mr. Bassin referred this to Ms. Stolzenburg, who indicated she has worked on more than 50 of these plans for other towns. Ms. Stolzenburg said her experiences over the years with other towns had given her a very good feel for what works and what does not work, and allowed her to help her clients to avoid the obvious pitfalls and problems.

7. Use of Services from Neighboring Towns -- A suggestion was made to make explicit in the Plan that Ancram intended to rely on neighboring towns for certain kinds of shopping services (like the Grand Union and Price Chopper), and did not intend to try to duplicate what was available in nearby towns. Mr. Bassin commented that the kind of economic development that the residents of Ancram had expressed interest in – restaurants, small retail stores etc – are and will be permitted in the zoning law, but it

may not be possible for the Town to attract or keep these kinds of businesses because the population density and demand needed to support them just was not here.

8. Route 7/82 Intersection -- Comments were made about the 7/82 intersection and the need to do something to fix that problem. Mr. Bassin said there have been efforts over the years to correct this problem, but the State Department of Transportation has apparently told the Town that the intersection was not dangerous enough to warrant action because no one had yet been killed. Mr. Bassin also commented that highlighting the 82/7 intersection in the Comp Plan might get the attention of the DOT.

9. Gravel Mining -- Comments were made about the importance of local gravel mining to support the need for construction and development. These comments led to a discussion of the regulation of gravel mines and the need for the Town to have a clear point of view on how and where gravel mining can take place. Mr. Bassin indicated the Comprehensive Planning Committee had met with representatives of the gravel mining industry, planned to meet with DEC gravel mining regulators, and would develop point of view on gravel mining as part of the Comprehensive Planning Process.

10. Deteriorating Buildings in Downtown Ancram – Comments were made about the need to do something to fix or remove the deteriorating buildings in the center of Ancram. Mr. Bassin commented that the Ancram preservation group had been working for a considerable period of time to take care of this situation, but it was largely a matter of money, which was not easily or immediately available. Mr. Bassin also commented that the \$21,000 economic development grant might be used to help further analyze the situation in the center of Ancram and determine what to do.

11. Working with Neighboring Towns -- A question was asked about the opportunities for working with and cooperating with neighboring towns in the comprehensive planning process. Mr. Bassin commented that the Ancram Comp Plan Committee had recently been asked to share its experiences with the Copake Comp Plan Committee, which was just starting the process. Mr. Bassin also indicated that as we moved into the implementation of the Plan there would probably be opportunities to share ideas and resources with neighboring towns, in that we all seem to have similar opportunities, problems and share a vision for how we want our towns to evolve.

12. Surprises – Q: What, if anything, in the Survey results “surprised” the Committee? Mr. Bassin asked each Committee member to respond. Mr. Chase commented that he was surprised by how “water quality” was so important to so many people. Mr. MacLean Commented that he had been surprised by how much support there was for preserving historic places. Mr. Bassin commented he was surprised by how unanimous the opinions on protecting the environment, agriculture and open spaces were.

13. Community Center – A comment was made suggesting Ancram should consider a Community Center similar to the one in Great Barrington.

14. A question was asked about who was on the Comprehensive Planning Committee. Mr. Bassin introduced the members present: Kyle Lougheed, Leah Wilcox (ZBA Chair), Don MacLean (former Planning Board Chair and current Planning Board member), Gene aleinikoff, Barry Chase, Vice Chair of the Comp Plan Committee, and members not present: Bonnie Hundt, Chris Sommerhoff and Jim Bryant (Town Board member).

At the end of the questions and comments period, Mr. Bassin asked if the Vision and Goals were on the right track. Everyone indicated agreement that they were on the right track, and gave the Committee a round of applause. Mr. Bassin then asked if anyone disagreed. There was no disagreement.

Mr. Bassin thanked everyone, and indicated that exhibits covering the various aspects of the presentation were on display around the Town Hall. The water study and the build out analysis were in the conference room. The maps were in the hallway, and the survey results, the workshop results and the profile document were on display in the area between the town clerks' office and the tax assessor clerk's office. (Note: The exhibits will be on display in the Town Hall and are available if anyone wants to come over and browse through them.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.30. Anyone with additional questions or comments was invited to talk to any Committee member, or to contact Committee Chair Art Bassin at abassin@aol.com or at 329-0921.