

**Town of Ancram
Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting
July 14, 2008**

Present: Art Bassin, Barry Chase, Jim Bryant, Bonnie Hundt, Kyle Lougheed, Don MacLean, Leah Wilcox; **Absent:** None

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

Minutes of the 7/7 Committee Meeting were reviewed and approved with several corrections of typos and the following changes of substance: Mr. MacLean noted that we should state in the minutes that all conclusions at this point were tentative and preliminary. Mr. MacLean and Ms. Wilcox both noted that we had discussed that average density calculations should be the same in the Rural Residential and proposed Ag Zones, not land use laws. Land use laws in the Ag Zones will be more flexible to permit farmers to use land in the Ag Zones for ag business related operations which will not be permitted in the Rural Residential zones.

1. Town Garage – Citrin Email about Mathews Site: The Committee welcomed Mr. Mike Citrin who had come to the meeting to discuss his email to the Comp Plan Committee, which requested the Comp Plan Committee’s opinion on the proposed relocation of the Town garage to the Mathews site on Roche Lane. Mr. Citrin’s concerns related to the apparent inconsistency between the importance to town residents, expressed in the workshops and survey, of preserving rural character in Ancram, and the proposed site, which was at the end of a narrow dirt road in a rural residential area. Mr. Citrin’s email to the Committee and the Committee’s response, based on the discussion of the matter during the Committee meeting, are presented in full below.

A. Mr. Citrin’s Email to the Comp Plan Committee:

-----Original Message-----

From: Michael S. Citrin <citrin@fairpoint.net>

To: art bassin <ABassin@aol.com>

Cc: Tom Diaz <prevail@fairpoint.net>; Jim Bryant <jbryant@fairpoint.net>; Bob Podris <bpodris@fairpoint.net>; John MacArthur <jmacarthur@fairpoint.net>; Jerry Roberts <jrob@fairpoint.net>

Sent: Thu, 10 Jul 2008 7:25 am

Subject: Comp. Plan Meeting Agenda

It seems to me that the number one conclusion of the recently conducted town-wide survey (questions 12 and 37) as well as the draft vision statement and list of goals is to maintain and protect the rural nature of Ancram.

The town of Ancram is now considering as its first major capital project, after the people have spoken, the siting of the town garage in a rural environment.

Roche Lane, Roche Drive, Wiltsie Bridge Road and Snyder Road are quiet and beautiful areas of family homes and farms.

Long stretches of these roads remain unpaved and bordered by old stone roads. There is no commercial development at all and little traffic.

I feel that the siting of a town garage with its multi-ton trucks and chemicals storage is entirely inappropriate and inconsistent at the proposed Mathews site, because it will dramatically and unnecessarily alter the rural character of that area of town.

I would appreciate your bringing this matter to the Comprehensive Planning Committee at your next meeting and letting me know what the Comprehensive Planning Committee's point of view on this town garage proposal is.

Thanks,
Mike Citrin

B. Comp Plan Committee Email to Mr. Citrin:

-----Original Message-----

From: abassin@aol.com

To: citrin@fairpoint.net

Cc: jbryant@taconic.net; lyonschase@taconic.net; leah_wilcox@hotmail.com; klougheed@fairpoint.net; dmaclean@taconic.net; bonniebleu54@aol.com; prevail@taconic.net; jrob@fairpoint.net; bpodris@taconic.net; jmacarthur@fairpoint.net; abassin@aol.com

Sent: Thu, 17 Jul 2008 11:23 am

Subject: Town Garage -- Mike Citrin Email

Mike,

Thanks for your July 10 email to the Comp Plan Committee (with copies to the Town Board) and for your participation at Monday night's Comp Plan Committee meeting to discuss your email.

During our discussion of your email you made four main points:

1. The Town Board should make the decision about what to do to meet the facility needs of the Highway Department based on the importance of preserving the Town's rural character as expressed during the workshops and the survey and captured by the 2030 Vision and supporting Goals
2. It has not yet been established that the Town needs a new garage site -- it is still possible the Town could expand and renovate the current site, and you believe the Town should explore this option as the preferred solution in that it has the least negative impact on the rural character of the Community at large and would be the most cost effective option.
3. If it turns out the current site cannot be expanded and used for the town garage, the Town should look next at sharing facilities with neighboring towns and the county as encouraged by the State, or at sites already in commercial zones or along major roads, or sites on land the Town already owns, like the 28 acres around the Town Hall or the Ball field. You believe all of these options would be less disruptive to the Town's rural character than the proposed site at the end of Roche Lane.
4. You believe the town only needs approximately 3-4 acres for a garage site, not over 10 acres. You assume the town garage needs a 10,000 sf building and a 6000 sf salt shed, totaling 16,000 sf, which in total would cover less than a half acre. A 3-4 acre site would easily accommodate these facilities and provide plenty of room for moving vehicles and equipment around.

The Comp Plan Committee's discussion led to the following conclusions:

Technically, since the Comp Plan has not yet been adopted, Town officials do not have to be guided by it for this issue. However, if they do not take into account the Comp Plan's "intent", as expressed by the Community through the workshops, the survey, the 2030 Vision and the Goals, the Town Board will be missing an opportunity to set a new standard for approaching decisions like this one that is open, includes analysis of a broad range of options and specifically incorporates the long term wishes of the townspeople. The Comp Plan Committee believes such a decision process is consistent with the wishes of the Community, and would be well received by the people of Ancram.

The Comp Plan Committee believes the challenge for the Town Board will be to come up with a solution to meet the needs of the highway department for adequate facilities, while minimizing the negative effect on the environment and rural character of the Town. How this decision gets made, and whether the Town's priority of protecting the environment and preserving the rural character of the town plays a significant role in determining the outcome, will be an important precedent. The purpose of a Comp Plan, in the end, is to make sure decisions like this one are made in the context of what the residents of a Town want their community to be like long term. In addition, the Comprehensive Planning Committee's discussion of your email noted:

1. The proposed Mathews site is at the end of a very small rural road (Roche Lane) which is linked to Rte 82 and 3 by Roche Road, another rural town road. These roads are not currently suitable to handle heavy trucks and equipment. Roche Lane is a mile or more away from 82. There would be a need to expand and strengthen Roche Lane and Roche Road to support highway department traffic which could cause substantial disruption to the residents who live on those roads. The ongoing maintenance of these secondary town roads could be an expensive ongoing cost.
2. Siting a new own garage anywhere in a rural residential area would be disruptive to the residents of that area, and since over 90% of the town is zoned rural residential, if the Town Board ultimately has to find a new site for the garage in Ancram, the Town may have to accept some deterioration of rural character.
3. The Mathews site is located back in the woods, and would not have a major negative impact on open space or agriculture, but there might be water and environmental issues. (Note: Maps which are part of The New York Rural Water Association Groundwater Study, done as part of the Comprehensive Planning process, indicate that the Mathews property may be in a "hydrogeologically sensitive area", meaning there is a substantial risk of groundwater pollution from surface activities at that site. A detailed review of this groundwater pollution risk should be done as part of the analysis of this site).
4. The Town Board does not yet appear to have all the information it needs to make a decision about what to do to meet the facility needs of the highway department, and needs to continue to study the options until it's comfortable it has the information it needs to make a decision.
5. Even though the Comp Plan has not yet been completed and adopted, there is already a consensus (the 2030 Vision and supporting Goals) about how the Community wants the Town to look and feel in 20 years.
6. If the Town Board uses the Community's priorities outlined in the 2030 Vision and supporting Goals as the context for making the town garage decision, it will be acting with the best interests of the Community in mind.

Please let me know if you have any further questions or comments about this issue.

Art Bassin, Chair, Ancram Comp Plan Committee

2. Review of Strategies: The Committee continued to review and discuss the proposed Strategies to support the Vision and Goals. The intent of this review at this point is to be sure each Committee member understands what each Strategy means and how each works. Once the Committee works its way through the Strategies for understanding, the Committee will rank each strategy for importance and identify high priority strategies to recommend as part of the Comp Plan. Mr. MacLean noted that many of the “strategies” in fact were zoning related items which were both easy and appropriate to include in our zoning laws, and should be included in that context even if they were not “important” or “high priority”. The Committee agreed.

Specific items discussed included:

a) Average Lot Size/Density Averaging: Mr. Chase commented he could see moving to something like a 5, 6 or 7 acre average lot size from 3 acres in order to provide incentives to developers to use clustering and conservation development tactics. The larger issue faced by the Committee is whether to require conservation and cluster development with a lower average target acres per lot (say 3), or to make cluster and conservation developments an option with higher average acres per lot (say 7) with incentives that get the average lot size back to 3 or 4 or whatever. Mr. Chase said he thought he could persuade landowners that a 7 acre average density target lot size would not have a negative financial effect on their ability to monetize their land when the time came to do that. Mr. Loughheed noted that the average acreage per we zeroed in on was not as important as the financial calculation of the value of the larger average lot verses the smaller average lot. Ms. Wilcox commented that this approach might be valuable in that excluding environmental constraints in the average lot size calculation protected environmentally sensitive areas like wetlands, steep slopes and stream sides, but did not help protect farmland or open space. M. Wilcox also asked why 15% was the steep slope number. The Committee believed this was a DEC guideline based on erosion prevention but decided to ask Ms. Stolzenburg about this.

b) Managing Average Density Over Time – Mr. Bryant asked how we would be able to keep track in 20 years of parcels which were split up under a density averaging concept which ended up with, for example, ten 1 acre lots and one 30 acre lot. How would the town deal with the owner of the 30 acre lot in 20 years when he/she came in and wanted to subdivide again? Mr. MacLean noted that we would need a much better recordkeeping system than we have today to support an average density solution.

c) Conservation Zones to Protect Drowned Lands and other Sensitive Areas – The Committee discussed whether it would be appropriate to create a conservation zone to protect the “drowned lands” area of Town. Mr. MacLean noted that a lot of the land surrounding the drowned lands area was already protected by private conservation easements so it may not be necessary to take any special additional steps to protect this area. The Committee will ask Ms. Stolzenburg and Mr. Meltz to overlay and compare the drowned lands and other environmentally and hydrogeologically sensitive areas with already protected areas to determine if additional protection is needed or not.

d) Streamside Vegetation Protection – The Committee discussed the need to protect stream side vegetation in the 150 foot buffer area along streams. The Committee will review adopting DEC guidelines used by the State for DEC controlled streams for streams in Ancram that are not DEC controlled. There was some discussion about whether a 50 foot stream side vegetation buffer would be incremental to the 150 foot building buffer from streams now in town law. The Committee concluded it was not necessarily incremental, but will verify this with Ms. Stolzenburg.

e) Scenic Corridor Overlay Zone – The Committee discussed and tentatively agreed it would be a good idea to extend the boundaries of the scenic corridor overlay zone to the natural topographical boundaries of the area, and to modify the language of the law to permit keeping open spaces open and vegetation buffers intact over time. The Committee also reviewed the idea of permitting limited mix commercial/residential uses in the overlay zone subject to specific design guidelines which would not change the character of that area. The Committee also discussed the desirability of using the Town’s existing Scenic Resource Protection Plan to designate additional roads as scenic corridors. Ms. Wilcox noted the Scenic Resource Protection Plan was a “mini-comp plan” for the Scenic Corridor Overlay Zone.

f) Visual and Environmental Impact Reviews – The Committee discussed the importance of incorporating a formal review of visual and environmental impacts during the site plan review process. The committee tentatively agreed that projects undergoing a site plan review should be required to conduct both environmental and aesthetic resource inventories, determine the extent of negative visual and environmental impacts, and develop ways to mitigate these impacts, including screening, relocation, low profiles, changing size of structures, camouflage, placing structures along edges of fields and not in the center, protection of mature trees and stone walls, and building design consistent with traditional development patterns and the architecture of the area.

g) Definitions – The Committee noted that we should avoid words like “avoid” and determine if “avoid” should be “prohibit” or “permit with defined conditions”. Similarly, the Committee determined that it needed to settle on what a “large” development meant – was it a major subdivision as currently defined of more than four lots, or was it something else?

h) Flag Lots – Mr. MacLean said there was a draft of a flag lot law that the town had drafted but never passed which we should find, review and give to Ms. Stolzenburg.

i) Community Character: Town Communications, Town Activities and Town Information – The Committee tentatively concluded that the Comp Plan should be reviewed every five years or so. Mr. Loughed suggested and the Committee agreed the first review should be after the results of the 2010 census were available, which would be in 2012 or 2013. The Committee also felt that given the activities sponsored by the Fire Company, the Youth Commission, the Churches, Neighbors Helping Neighbors, the Ancram Angels and the Ancram Preservation Group, there was no need for any additional committees to stimulate or coordinate community activities, but tentatively

concluded it would be very useful to have all town activities regardless of who originated them put on a community bulletin board section of the Town Web site, and perhaps sent around as a hard copy Quarterly Community Calendar. The Committee also discussed the possibility of using the web site to communicate, promote and link to activities like the Rail Trail and the Ancram Opera House (note: web site could also include links to local contractors and at home businesses, local restaurants, local farms selling at retail, etc). The Committee also discussed and tentatively supported the idea of adding substantially to the Town Government sections of the web site, to include annual budgets, monthly financial statements, property tax valuation data etc. There was discussion about the need for or appeal of an annual “Town Meeting” at which the Town Supervisor and the Town Board could give the community as Mr. Bryant put it, a “State of the Town” presentation, dealing with broader issues and ideas than were usually covered in the monthly town meetings. Mr. Bryant speculated that the January Board meeting might be the right time for a “State of the Town” presentation. The Committee commented about how well received the Town Supervisor’s periodic emails have been received by the Community, and how important that was to continue and expand.

j) Community Character: Historic Preservation: -- The Committee discussed the role of the Ancram Preservation Group related to Simons General Store and the deteriorated buildings in the center of Ancram. The Committee noted the APG did not seem to have a broad town wide focus, or a broad mission to help identify and preserve all the historic resources of the Town. The committee discussed if the Town could try to participate in the APG effort, or if the Town should try to stimulate the development of a separate “Historic Preservation Committee” (with APG participation) which could include the Town historian and other citizens interested in historic preservation in a broader sense than primarily the building in the center of Ancram. This Committee could be chartered to do a thorough inventory of the Town’s historic places and identify preservation priorities across all three hamlets. No conclusions were reached. It was noted that the APG hopes to continue its work to help rehabilitate the center of Ancram by selling the Simons general store and investing the proceeds of that sale in repairing one of the other buildings in the center of Ancram. The major obstacle preventing a sale of Simons General Store is apparently there is no obvious way to create an adequate septic solution unless there was access to the Blass Memorial Field for a leach field.

3. Next Steps – Mr. Bassin suggested the Committee continue the review of Strategies next week and try to work through strategies 4-8 next time. At the 7/28 Committee meeting Mr. Bassin indicated he would like each Committee Member to be prepared to rank in order of importance each strategy under each goal. Following that priority setting exercise, the Committee will review with Ms. Stolzenburg on 8/4 where we are and get whatever questions we have answered.

a. Community Development Block Grant Project: Mr. Bassin reported there were now six people on the CDBG Project Team—Donna Hoyt, Trish MacArthur, Suzanne Bressler, Libby McKee, Kit White of the Ancram Preservation Group and Mary Watkins. (Note: a seventh member, Lucy Eldridge, joined subsequent to the 7/14 meeting). Mr. Chase suggested talking to Prope Dietter from Ancramdale, and Mr. Bassin said he

would do that. In addition, at the suggestion of Mr. Kit White, Mr. Bassin was attempting to get a member from the Ancram Fire Company to join the project team, and in that context had reached out to Will and Colleen Lutz and David and Jen Boice, but had yet not heard back from them. Mr. Bassin indicated he had received the next version of the CDBG project plan and budget, and that we were getting close to a viable Plan and budget which he hoped we could review and approve at the next meeting.

b. Farmland Protection Grant -- Mr. Bassin reported he heard last week from John Brennan, the Farmland Protection Grant Program Manager, that the grant announcements were being finalized and should be made before the end of July.

5. Next Meetings: July 21; July 28; 8/4 (with Nan Stolzenburg); 8/11; 8/18; 8/25. DOT and DEC have still not been scheduled.

The meeting adjourned at 9.10 PM.