

**Town of Ancram
Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting
August 25, 2008**

Present: Art Bassin, Bonnie Hundt, Kyle Lougheed

Absent: Barry Chase, Don MacLean, Leah Wilcox

The Comp Plan Committee meeting was called to order by Chair Art Bassin at 7 PM. In addition to Committee Members, Town residents Libby McKee and Suzanne Bressler also attended the meeting.

The minutes of the 8/18/08 meeting were reviewed and approved.

1. New Committee Member Discussion – The Committee welcomed Suzanne Bressler who indicated an interest in joining the Comp Plan Committee. Ms. Bressler presented her resume and talked to the Committee about her background in government, media and community relations. Ms. Bressler’s recently returned to Ancram and the home her family has had in Ancram since the late 1930s, after almost 20 of experience working with elected officials, the press and governmental agencies on issues ranging from economic development, zoning, community improvement, legislative and regulation action and housing research. Ms. Bressler has volunteered to serve on the Community Development Block Grant Project Team, and has been appointed the Secretary of the Ancram Planning Board and the Ancram Zoning Board of Appeals. Ms. Bressler feels the most important things facing the town are to get people to talk to each other, to fix the “brain drain” issue by finding ways to keep our young adults in the area by attracting good jobs for them and improving the process of town government. Ms. Bressler commented that local government needs to establish a “good process” to establish community trust, and said she admired the process that the Comp Plan Committee had established, and would very much like to join the Committee and participate in the planning for the future of the Town. The Committee thanked Ms. Bressler for her interest and indicated the Town Board would decide on Comp Plan appointments at the September Town Board meeting.

2. Effect on Comp Plan Process of No Town Board Quorum – Mr. Bassin commented that the resignation of Town Councilmen Bryant, Podris and Roberts last week meant that all three town board seats would be on the ballot on November 5, and Ancram would be in the middle of an unexpected local election campaign in September and October. Given that the newly elected town council members would not assume office until January 2009, Mr. Bassin suggested that the Comp Plan Committee plan to hold the public hearings on the Comp Plan during the first quarter of 2009, not in October/November 2008 as we had been discussing. Ms. Hundt and Mr. Lougheed agreed that it would be good to slow things down. Ms. Hundt noted there was no reason to rush, and slowing things down would give us the opportunity to get more work done with the Community Development Block Grant project and the Farmland Protection Plan project. Mr. Lougheed also noted that the newly elected Town Council Members who take office in January will need some time to get oriented, so we might want to give them

a month or two to deal with organizational issues and perhaps start the Comp Plan adoption process and public hearings later in 2009. The Committee agreed to discuss this matter again at the next meeting on 9/8 with the three Committee members who were not present tonight.

3. Discussion of Possible Strategies: Mr. Bassin asked Ms. Hundt and Mr. Lougheed for comments on the 8/17 draft “Background for Strategy Discussions” document which summarized the Comp Plan process so far, outlined what the people of Ancram had indicated they wanted during the workshops and in the survey and suggested strategies to meet the Town’s 2030 Vision and Goals.

4. Manage Density or Location or a Combination: Ms. Hundt said she agreed with Mr. Maclean’s comments that some combination of managing the location of new development through site plan review, and the use of cluster and conservation development techniques **and** decreasing the average density of development might be needed to achieve the Town’s goals to protect rural character, open space, farmland, agriculture and environmentally sensitive areas. Ms. Hundt indicted that Mr. Bassin’s suggestion last week that we could meet our farmland protection, open space, rural character and environmental goals without reducing density may not work.

5. Mandatory or Optional Site Plan Reviews, Clustering or Conservation Developments: Ms. Hundt also indicated she thought making cluster and conservation developments optional, not mandatory, might also work out better. Mr. Lougheed noted that it was hard to tell some one where they could and could not build, and wondered how that would work out as a practical matter. Mr. Bassin commented that the intent of mandatory site plan reviews and the use of clustering or conservation developments would be to locate new development away from areas which the Community wanted to have “protected”, like prime farmland, scenic views and environmentally sensitive areas. Mr. Bassin also commented that the town would develop site location guidelines, but developers would be free to locate new development where it made sense given these guidelines. Mr. Bassin noted again that if site plan review and either clustering or conservation development techniques were effective, it might not be necessary to reduce density over the next 20 years to meet the Towns’ goals. Mr. Lougheed suggested that as we had discussed previously, it would be very helpful to see how site plan reviews, clustering and conservation developments would look on actual parcels in Ancram. Mr. Bassin indicted he had asked Ms. Stolzenburg and Mr. Meltz to provide this kind information at the 9/8 meeting.

6. Lot Size and Property Values: Mr. Lougheed commented that he thought a 10 acre lot was probably worth the same regardless of the zoning. Ms. McKee suggested that zoning may have a less significant effect on land values than the routine cyclicity of land values. Mr. Bassin commented that if we had 10 acre zoning or 3 acre zoning may not make much difference to the aggregate value of the land, but it would make a difference to the kind of development and the kind of developers we attracted. Mr. Bassin also suggested a Comp Plan which provided guidelines to keep the Community looking

as it did today may in fact enhance values by assuring new buyers that what they see now will be preserved into the future as well as could be expected.

7. Rhinebeck Situation: Mr. Bassin mentioned he had sent around an article from the Rhinebeck paper which described the controversy in Rhinebeck resulting from a Comp Plan Committee recommendation to move to 20 acre zoning to protect agriculture, open space, rural character and environmentally sensitive areas. Opponents of the 20 acre zoning proposal argued that this would dramatically reduce the development value of farm properties, would not provide much incremental protection for farmland and open space and would create a community of “McMansions”. To support their objections, the opponents of the 20 acre zoning asked Randall Arendt, a well know landscape planner, to evaluate the Rhinebeck Comp Plan. Mr. Arendt suggested 5 acre zoning could protect 80% of the areas’ farmland and protect aggregate land values. Mr. Bassin said he would try to have Mr. Arendt and other experts on land planning come to talk to the Committee so we can understand how the “experts” think about the relationship between land values and density, the value of the optional or mandatory use of site plan reviews and conservation or cluster developments, and the proper balance between property rights and community goals. The newspaper article describing the Rhinebeck controversy is attached.

8. Affordable Housing: Ms. Hundt commented that she was still trying to contact developers of garden apartments who presented their concept to Millerton. When Ms. Hundt is able to talk to them, she will arrange for them to come in and make a presentation to the Committee. Mr. Bassin commented that the Comp Plan Committee’s tentative agreement to permit multi-family homes and to allow apartments in existing structure like garages and barns, plus the tentative decision to move to average lot size zoning, which would permit some lots as small as ¼ acre, if septic and water were adequate, could substantially increase the stock of affordable homes in the Town.

Mr. Loughheed also reminded the Committee that we had discussed and had tentatively agreed to permit anyone who currently owned a three acre or smaller lot in the hamlets to subdivide one time, assuming septic and water were adequate. This would have the effect of increasing the number of affordable building lots and density in areas where density was already most concentrated, and would add affordable lots in areas that would not negatively impact farmland, open space, scenic views or environmentally sensitive areas.

9. Next Meetings: Mr. Bassin indicated the committee would not meet Labor Day, 9/1, but would meet on 9/8 (with Mr. Meltz), 9/15, 9/22 and 9/29 (with Ms. Stolzenburg). In addition, the CDBG Project Team would meet on Wednesday 9/10 at 7 PM at the Town Hall.

10. The meeting adjourned at 9 PM.