

**Town of Ancram
Zoning Revisions Committee
1 November 2010**

Members Present: Hugh Clark, Barry Chase, Barbara Gaba, Don MacLean, Bob Mayhew, Jim Miller, Bob Roche, Jane Shannon, Dennis Sigler

Members Absent: Terry Boyles, Bonnie Hundt, Kyle Lougheed

Others Present: Nan Stolzenburg, Donna Hoyt

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Nan Stolzenburg summarized community goals about land use stated in the Comprehensive Plan, including protecting farmland, preserving open space and important scenic views, and protecting water and watersheds. She then asked, “What does the town need to pay attention to in order to accomplish these goals?” and reminded the committee that zoning is not an end in itself; rather it is a tool to accomplish something—i.e. the goals stated in the Comp Plan. She also cautioned that, in its quest for simple procedures, the committee should not “throw out the baby with the bath water,” i.e. forget that attaining the goals is the reason for the procedures and standards.

Keeping in mind everything from large-scale subdivisions to individual lots, she pushed the committee to identify criteria/standards that the Planning Board could use to determine whether a proposal was compatible with those land use goals. She especially focused on identifying such criteria or standards for individual lots—how to ensure they contribute to town goals—because individual lots are the prevalent form of residential development in the town.

The committee affirmed Mr. Chase’s observation that one criterion for maintaining rural character is how the building envelope fits within the site—whether the “scale” of the structure and its placement are compatible with the landscape. Also noted was that using “prime soils” and “soils of statewide importance” as a criterion was insufficient to protect farmland because much of Ancram’s farmland does not meet those designations.

Mr. MacLean identified which elements of paragraph H, Criteria for Abbreviated Site Plan Review, on pages 23-25, he thought could adequately be judged by the ZEO/BI and which elements were better suited for PB review. For example, H 1,3,5,6,7, and 9 are suitable for ZEO/BI review, whereas H 2,4, and 10 are better suited to the broad judgment of the PB.

Also discussed was the idea of whittling criteria to a few, specific standards (such as slopes, wetlands, designated farmland and ridgelines) identified on maps/overlays. If a parcel does not have the designated features, the ZEO/BI could approve the proposal. If the parcel has the designated features, the ZEO/BI would pass the application to the Planning Board for its review and decision.

It was agreed that Planning Board Site Plan Review will be used to site major and minor subdivisions and that the ZEO/PB concept sketched above will be used for individual parcels. Whether the ZEO/BI or the Planning Board decides, the fundamental point remains: The ZRC must identify some criteria by which the ZEO/BI or PB will decide whether the proposal helps meet the town’s land use goals.

Ms. Stolzenburg will revise the abbreviated site plan review provisions in accordance with the concepts agreed upon. The ZRC will identify specific criteria for assessing whether applications meet town goals.

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.