

**Town of Ancram  
Zoning Revisions Committee  
29 March 2010**

**Members Present:** Hugh Clark, Barry Chase, Bonnie Hundt, Kyle Lougheed, Don MacLean, Bob Mayhew, Jim Miller, Bob Roche, Dennis Sigler

**Members Absent:** Terry Boyles, Barbara Gaba, Jane Shannon

**Others Present:** Nan Stolzenburg, Donna Hoyt

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

Members approved minutes of the March 22 meeting and approved Draft #3 of the Zoning Purpose Statement, which will be passed to Nan Stolzenburg for further review and suggestions.

The Chair introduced Nan Stolzenburg of Community Planning & Environmental Associates who discussed how the ZRC could efficiently and effectively revise the current zoning ordinance to reflect the vision, goals, and strategies of the new Comprehensive Plan. Discussion included the following points:

Ms. Stolzenburg commented that there is no right or wrong way to approach the revision task, but she strongly suggested that zoning revisions not be written from scratch by the committee. Instead, she recommended that she provide draft text for various provisions, which the ZRC could then review and alter. All agreed that Nan's role is to provide advice, options, and language and that the ZRC's role is to decide which option and language "fit"—and to tweak as necessary. She also noted that short, vague zoning laws cause more problems than they prevent, and also urged members to constantly "touch base" with the Comp Plan to ensure that zoning revisions actually reflect the intent of the Comp Plan.

Most discussion focused on the order in which features should be revised. Nan noted that her experience coincides with the ZRC's inclination to revise the ordinance in phases or chunks, rather than in toto. All agreed that revising discrete parts of the code in chunks is the way to go. Ultimately, all revisions will be incorporated into a single document as a new code.

Because working from accepted definitions is helpful, it was agreed that ZRC members would review Section XI of the current ordinance and that Nan would provide a relatively comprehensive list of "starter definitions," which the ZRC would then review quickly, adjust somewhat if necessary, but then table and continually reconsider and update throughout the revisions process.

Because the zoning purpose statement identifies all that the zoning code seeks to accomplish and thereby serves as a standard for checking subsequent work, it was agreed that perfecting the zoning purpose statement (and other parts of Section I) must be done promptly.

When determining the order of revising subsequent chunks, Mr. Mayhew stated his preference for first undertaking relatively easy features of the ordinance and then progressing to more complex features. Committee consensus favored this approach. Ms. Stolzenburg opined that elements toward the back of the current ordinance deal with procedural matters and generally are less complex than others.

She suggested that the ZRC consider dealing first with revisions of procedures, time frames, application materials, voting requirements, etc. of Section VII, Administration, and Section VIII, Zoning Board of Appeals. Within this chunk, the ZRC would also create a new section about the Planning Board. During revision, these sections would also be checked for compliance with NYS law. Section VI, Non-Conforming Buildings, Uses and Lots, could be included in this initial chunk, or could be done later as the last chunk of revisions.

Ms. Stolzenburg also suggested creating a new self-contained site plan section as a logical next step because this section contains application materials, review procedures, standards upon which the application shall be judged, and uses to be articulated. She further recommended that Section VIII E, Special Use Permits, be configured into its own section.

Next on the plate would be Sections II, Establishment of Districts; Section III, Use Regulations; and Section IV, Area and Bulk Regulations; which would be the place to incorporate flexible lot sizes, open space, etc.

Updating Section V, Supplementary Regulations, including new sub-sections on conservation subdivisions and other elements from the Comp Plan, would be a closing task.

Ms. Stolzenburg's suggestions for the sequence in which to revise zoning were well received by the committee.

To make the revised zoning code more user-friendly, Nan suggested that an index be devised, in addition to the Table of Contents. While agreeing that an index would be beneficial, committee members also cited the value of a separate users guide, telling interested persons in clear, concise form: "to do X, see or do A, B, C, etc." She also noted that illustrations, explanatory text boxes, and similar graphic and textual features could help make the zoning ordinance more understandable to users. The committee readily agreed and authorized using such devices as revisions are developed.

Mr. MacLean noted that the Planning Board would find it helpful to have each chunk (e.g. special use permits, subdivision regulations) completed and adopted before receiving the next piece to give time to phase items into planning board knowledge and processes.

Responding to Ms. Stolzenburg's query about whether there were pressing zoning issues that might need to be addressed promptly, several members mentioned wind turbines.

Responding to Nan's query about how the ZRC planned to keep the public informed, members cited several actions: All ZRC meetings are preceded by public notice, are open to the public, and the agenda and minutes are posted on the town web site; and the Chair reports in writing at least monthly to the Town Board and delivers oral reports to the public at Town Board meetings. In addition, as chunks reach final stages of revision, the ZRC plans to conduct public forums to explain revisions and elicit feedback. While noting the value of such actions, Nan alerted the committee that there will undoubtedly be persons who wait until revisions are fully developed and enroute to the Town Board before they make known their concerns and views.

Ms. Stolzenburg also noted the value of meeting weekly, rather than less frequently, as members retain more readily the threads of previous deliberations and tend to accomplish more substantive work in less time. She urged members to focus on a limited number of topics in each meeting and to prepare thoroughly for meetings by studying all materials, jotting questions to be addressed, and forming *tentative* opinions—all so that deliberations will extend more quickly into the depth and breadth of the issue at hand.

Ms. Stolzenburg also recommended that, after zoning revisions are in place, the Town Board receive an annual report from the Planning Board, ZEO, and others about what works and what doesn't, and then initiate further revisions and updates as appropriate.

To facilitate editing and revision of the current ordinance, the Chair will determine whether the Town has the current ordinance in digital format. If not, the Chair will authorize Nan to procure a digital version.

It was agreed that Ms. Stolzenburg normally will meet with the ZRC on the first Monday of each month, beginning in May, but is available for consultation by phone or email at all other times. All communication will be initiated by the Chair, and Ms. Stolzenburg's responses will be passed to the committee through the Chair.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Next meeting is 7:00 p.m., Monday, 5 April 2010.