

**Town of Ancram  
Zoning Revisions Committee  
March 8, 2010**

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

**Members Absent:** Bonnie Hundt, Kyle Lougheed

**Others Present:** Samantha Langton (Recorder), Donna Hoyt

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The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and introduced Samantha Langton, who will serve as recorder for March meetings. Unfortunately, Ms. Langton cannot participate after March and members will attempt to identify a permanent recorder.

The committee approved minutes of the March 1 meeting.

Jane Shannon summarized highlights of the Cary Institute land use seminar she attended on March 6, including new housing designed to look like long-established traditional structures, ecosystem analysis, wetland buffers, and determining whether a specific wetland is sustainable. Jane had previously sent members info about additional training available at Mount St Mary's in Newburgh. Don MacLean also sent to members two links to online training dealing with comprehensive planning, zoning, subdivision regulation, and other useful topics. Most programs required approximately two hours. For NYS programs, email the cited contact at NYS Dept of State, who will then send a password.

Because consultant Nan Stolzenburg recommended that the ZRC ensure, as a first step, that zoning code purpose statement(s) capture all that the zoning code is supposed to do, discussion focused initially on points of similarity and difference between the purpose statement of the current zoning ordinance and the vision and goals of the proposed Comprehensive Plan.

The committee accepted Jane Shannon's offer to draft a revised zoning purpose statement, which the ZRC will review at the next meeting. To ease Jane's task, members sought to identify key elements that should appear in the revised purpose statement.

Going back and forth to compare the current ordinance and the Comp Plan quickly became laborious and confusing, so members selected Comp Plan goals concerning land use that clearly are the essential components of a new purpose statement. These are: Goal 1 (Ag & Open Space), Goal 2 (Environment), Goal 6 (Town Centers), Goal 7 (Economic Development), and Goal 8 (Housing). In addition, members identified parts of other Comp Plan goals that may warrant inclusion in a revised purpose statement. These are: parts of Goal 3 (Community Character) dealing with historic places and parts of Goal 4 (Community Services) dealing with pathway/trail system and emergency vehicle access to sites.

Other brief threads of discussion included light pollution, special use permits, what's not working with current zoning, floating zones, and a cross-border regional approach to zoning.

The committee agreed that a zoning code purpose statement is an “umbrella” that essentially says “this zoning ordinance was adopted to accomplish these things,” and a new purpose statement containing the goals should be drafted and then compared to the purpose statement in the current ordinance to determine if the ordinance contains any worthy features that do not appear in Comp Plan goals and which should be included in the purpose statement.

Noting that consultant Nan Stolzenburg will meet with the ZRC for the first time on March 29, the committee discussed issues to be addressed in that session.

A key question is whether to use the current ordinance or the Comp Plan as the base for action. Don MacLean noted the benefits of using specific pieces of the current code as the base and reviewing those pieces in light of Comp Plan features that would apply to them. Although there may still be some “back and forth” between the documents, such an approach would be most coherent. Mr. Sigler concurred, noting that “we are supposed to be making new zoning, not a new Comp Plan.”

Mr. MacLean also noted that the ZRC needs to address how the revised zoning code will be organized. The current ordinance is confusing, making it hard to find the right section. He reflected that, when drafting the Comp Plan, the consultant provided various organizational models for the committee’s consideration, so that all could examine the pros and cons of various layouts. Ensuing discussion considered who are the principal users/readers of a zoning code, and the varied needs of property owners, developers, architects, contractors, lawyers, and the Planning Board. Committee members will think further about specific gripes concerning code organization and will seek various formats and information from Nan.

Mr. Mayhew noted the value of having clear, color-coded maps as part of the code’s organizational structure and contents, and the virtues of posting such documents on the town’s website. It is expected that whatever form the revised code takes, it will be created digitally and readily incorporated into electronic delivery systems.

Ms. Shannon inquired about studies of wetland and vernal pool sustainability, whereupon the Chair noted that the Conservation Advisory Council has offered to prepare educational information about environmental topics for use by the ZRC. The committee agreed that 1-page papers conveying factual information about biodiversity, habitat, and other environmental issues could be helpful, especially if they cited the source(s) of the factual information.

As Nan has urged the committee to examine use tables early in its deliberations, Mr. MacLean reminded all that members should look for what’s missing from current use tables, because most zoning law states that any use not listed in the use table is prohibited. Mr. Miller then opened a review of the floating zone concept, during which it was noted that all requirements and parameters for floating zones are defined in advance except where the business will be located.

The next meeting will convene on March 22.

This meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.