

Comprehensive Planning Committee

Regular Meeting

July 3, 2007

Members Present: Bassin, Chase, Broe, Bryant, MacLean, Wilcox; Not present: Lougheed.

The meeting was called to order at 7:03pm. Nan Stolzenburg and Don Meltz of Community Planning and Environmental Associates (CPEA) addressed the Committee. The firm was formed in 1992. They specialize in rural and small town planning. They try to understand the unique qualities of each town they work with. They seek a long term relationship with their clients. They try to develop a strong working relationship with the Comp Plan Committee and Town officials.

They feel that Planning is a multi-functional, collaborative process.

Their Philosophy: “To help find balance and consensus, to understand Ancram so that the plan addresses your issues and needs and offers realistic and attainable solutions.”

Public Participation: _Essential to the process. You cannot do just one thing. You must do multiple public participation activities like a survey, workshops, focus groups, interviews, community image surveys, public meetings, mailings and use of the web. They recommend doing anything to get the word out to the community.

Ms. Stolzenburg outlined a three phase planning process: phase one will consider what the current conditions and issues facing the town are; phase two will determine where Ancram wants to be in the future; phase three is determining what Ancram needs to do to reach the desired “future”.

Ms Stolzenburg outlined two activities in phase:

Data Collection: The firm will look at historical and cultural resources, demographic trends, current land use patterns, physical and natural resources, characteristics of the economy, agriculture and open space. They will develop a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

GIS Mapping: All mapping work will be done through this NY State data base. CPEA will use the GIS mapping data to help analyze the Town and will present the data based on the current zoning codes and possible alternatives to the current zoning to show the possible future of the town.

In Phase Two the firm will assist the Committee to articulate a vision and will help develop goals and strategies to implement the vision based on public input. The firm will help the Committee write a vision statement and a set of goals.

The Consultant will not review zoning and subdivision codes until this phase.

Phase three is to develop an implementation plan and schedule to support the vision, goals and strategies. They will develop a matrix chart showing what will be happening and when.

CPEA says adopting the Comprehensive Plan falls to Town Board. The Consultants will continue work with the Town Board after the Committee done with the Planning Process and has produced a Plan document. The Town Board should be kept abreast of the plan during the entire process.

Why select Community Planning? They are knowledgeable of upstate New York. They have experience in farming and rural life and small town politics. They are involved in many different kinds of planning and will give Ancram an individual, customized plan. Both planners (Strolzenburg and Meltz) have environmental backgrounds and understand the area's ecology. They will give personal involvement throughout.

Mapping: GIS data and computerized mapping is crucial to the planning process. They suggested Ancram become part of the NYS data storage cooperative. Mapping will identify areas suitable or not suitable for major development.

Questions:

Member Wilcox

Q. What has been the most difficult project you have worked on, the pitfalls, and how you dealt with them?

A. There are two issues. When there is no zoning in place, people are afraid of how this will impact them. The biggest issue is the density that is appropriate for the community. It is important to educate people and provide factual information.

Q. How can the committee get the "naysayer's" out before the public hearing?

A. They will always come out at the last meeting. Advertising is crucial. The committee must understand that they cannot force people to come.

Member Chase

Q. The costs are listed as \$50,000.00. Are there additional costs?

A. No, unless there is a change in the scope of the work.

Q. SEQR, is this included in the costs?

A. Yes, they will follow the SEQR process.

Q. Do you have time for Ancram?

A. We are at the tail end of half a dozen projects and are available to take on something new.

Q. The Town has numerous problems including bad intersections in the hamlets, water and sewer problems, etc. How would you handle this?

A. For the intersection, DOT would be involved as well as an engineer. For the water, it will be a balancing process, knowing where the water is and is not, and guiding development patterns to fit the water table.

Member Broe

Q. Have the plans you've drawn up for other towns been effective?

A. All of them have been adopted and many of the towns have gone on to amend their zoning and subdivision regulations.

Q. What trends do you see for Ancram in ten years?

A. Continuation of second home developments and agricultural lands being subdivided, while agriculture continues to be very influential to the character of the community.

Member Bryant

Q. If the committee were to ask other towns that CPEA has worked with in the past their opinion of CPEA, what would they say? Would they have a positive or negative reaction?

A. The former CPEA clients would state that the firm was good at engaging the public, making them a part of the plan. They really took into consideration what the community wanted.

Q. If the committee decided to hire CPEA, would Ancram be a primary client?

A. They have several projects at different points of completion, but Ancram would be the only plan beginning at this point and would have their full attention.

Q. Listed as part of Phase 2 is \$4,000.00 for attorney fees. Is it more effective to use the town attorney or a land use attorney?

A. It depends on whether or not the Town Attorney feels comfortable with land use issues.

Member MacLean

Q. Looking at the Pine Plains project and the Gallatin project, what were the different approaches to solving problems?

A. In Gallatin the philosophy was different; broad and flexible. They left the hard decisions to the zoning process. The Pine Plains plan wanted to include more direction. Every community is different and has different approaches.

Q. You (Nan) have reviewed our zoning changes. Does phase two have to be done along side the Comp Plan or can it be done sequentially...one after the other?

A. If the Town Board and the Committee would like to, they can be done together. If the existing zoning is not that out of line with the Comp Plan, it doesn't need to be done at the same time. If there is a major gap between the Comp Plan and existing zoning and zoning revisions need to be done, the Town can pass the plan and then get the zoning in line.

Q. Is the town vulnerable if it has a new Comp plan but old zoning regulations?

A. Most towns do one and then the other. We can update them both at the same time and adopt them together. It can be bad if they are inconsistent. Another possibility is putting in place moratorium if necessary.

Q. Is a build out analysis a helpful tool for the Comp Plan to show how Ancram might look in the future ?

A. Yes, it will be useful..

Q. What are your impressions of our Hamlets; their strengths and weaknesses.

A. There are problems: there is development without infrastructure. A need for water and sewage. Strengths: They have a unique character. They have beautiful views and historic buildings.

Member Bassin

Q. Is an analysis of the economic base of the Town, taxes and budgets, part of the build out analysis?

A. It is separate from the build out analysis. The plan will characterize the economy through looking at the Town budgets and the property tax base.

Q. What would you feel would be an effective way to work towards preserving the Agricultural base of the town?

A. You cannot rely on one thing. The town needs to create a new environment that allows farms to exist and set up opportunities for continued farming. The community must support the farming. The Planning Board must follow through with Ag and Markets standards.

Q. What is your advice for making the Comp Planning process we are going through over the next year as good a process as it can be?

A. Have a strong framework for the Committee, organized meetings, members committed to attending meetings and making decisions, and to communicating well and often to the community.

Q. How many of the 1600 residents do you feel will be involved by year end?

A. We may receive as much as a 35% return on the surveys and could see on average 70 people at the workshops.

Audience

Q. Who would attend the meetings from the firm?

A. It depends on the situation. The public meetings and workshops will be attended by Nan.

Q. How will the plan balance all of the opinions of the different members of the community?

A. The plan will get strength from the feedback. The workshops are very helpful and a common vision can come from this.

10 Minute Break

Comments

Member Broe stated that she liked CPEA very much.

Member Bryant stated that they are “in the running”. He liked that they had worked with local towns, small communities, and he felt that comments from the other towns they had worked with will show that they are committed to their work.

Member McLean was impressed. He felt that they spoke our language and Ms. Stolzenburg has a positive credible personal style. He was happy with the answers they gave.

Member Wilcox stated that they were at the top of her list. They communicated well and were easy to understand.

Member Chase felt that they were even better “live” than their proposal, which was first in his ranking, and liked that they gave each Community an individualized plan.

A ranking was done and Community Planning came out on the top of the list and was ranked first by all Committee Members.

Member Bassin suggested hiring Community Planning due to the fact that they were the number one pick by all Committee members based on the previous evaluation of the written proposals and the current evaluation of the presentations. The Committee unanimously agreed.

Member Bassin then suggested asking the Town Board for around \$65,000.00 to cover all costs, and indicated he would draft up a proposed budget.

Member Bryant stated that he felt the Town Board will support the committee in whatever choice they make.

Member Bassin stated that he would call and check references. He will present the Committee recommendation to retain CPEA to the Town Board Thursday July, 12, 2007. He asked all available members to also attend the meeting.

A motion was made by member Chase and seconded by Member Bryant to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.