

Town of Ancram
Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting
January 14, 2008

Present: Art Bassin, Barry Chase, Jim Bryant, Chris Sommerhoff, Don MacLean,
Absent Gene Aleinikoff Bonnie Hundt, Kyle Lougheed, Leah Wilcox, Monica Cleveland

The Comp Plan Committee meeting was called to order by Chair Art Bassin at 7.15 AM.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the 1/7 minutes. Motion carried.

Vision Statements from Workshops

The committee reviewed and discussed the 20 vision statements which had been prepared by the 130 workshop participants during the 9/29 and 10/1 Workshops. Committee members identified the important elements of the visions statements, and discussed the challenges in achieving the visions that had been described. The Committee was in general agreement that the vision statements from all tables on both days, taken together, were remarkably similar, and described Ancram in 20 years as a community which had:

1. preserved its rural, agricultural character;
2. succeeded in attracting jobs and small businesses;
3. solved the challenge of affordable housing in an area with escalating real estate prices;
4. found a satisfactory balance between development, agriculture and open spaces;
5. made the town centers attractive and appealing places to live and work;
6. created a special sense of “community”, making everyone feel included and informed;
7. provided recreational opportunities and community activities for all ages;
8. provided for necessary technology and infrastructure (cell service, internet, cable, emergency medical care, roads, etc)

The Committee discussed the challenges inherent in maintaining a strong agricultural base in town, the difficulty of balancing development and open space, and the challenges involved in revitalizing the center of Ancram. There was extensive discussion on the difficulties facing farmers who rent land which is “restricted” to growing certain crops and not other crops and can be made “unavailable” on short notice, on the alternatives for providing more affordable housing by converting existing non-residential buildings for housing, on the options for solving the 82/7 traffic issue, and on ways to accelerate or stimulate solutions to the problem of deteriorated buildings in Ancram, which are both unattractive and dangerous, as they pose fire hazards and a possible “attractive nuisance” which could attract kids who could get hurt exploring these places.

The Committee decided to spend some time at the next meeting reviewing the “Brainstormed Solutions” to the Positives and Negatives about Ancram, also generated by the Workshops on 9/29 and 10/1.

Note: The Comp Plan web site (www.townofancram.org) has the Workshop Vision Statements and Brainstormed Solutions posted, along with other Comp Plan materials and documents.

Old Business

Mr. Bassin stated there was no new information on the Surveys, the Demographics, or the Water Study. He indicated he would have more information on these items next time.

Mr. Bassin indicated he expected to get a revised draft of the Farmland Protection Grant Application from Ms. Stolzenburg in the next week or so, and would send it around when he got it.

Other Items

Mr. Bassin suggested the Committee discuss a “community outreach” program to communicate what was going on with Comp Plan by going to meetings of other groups in Town, like the Fire Company, NHN, the APG, the Long Lake Owners Association, Church groups and other groups. Mr. Bassin proposed discussing this idea more fully at the next meeting.

Mr. Bassin mentioned again that the Farmland Trust was holding a one day conference in Saratoga Springs on 2/28 on “Growing NY Farms in the 21st Century.” You can get more information and register by going to the Farmland Trust Website, www.farmland.org, going to the NY site and clicking on the 2/28 Event at Saratoga. Or call them at 518-581-0078.

Next Meetings

The Committee decided to cancel 1/21 Meeting, and meet again on 1/28.

Mr. Bassin asked the Committee to review again all the materials from the 9/29 and 10/1 workshops (which are posted on the Comp Plan portion of the Town Website, at www.townofancram.org) so all Comp Plan members can become fully aware of what the “town” thinks about the issues, and what the range of opinions is. Brainstormed Solutions and Positives and Negatives will be the focus of the next meeting.

Mr. Bassin proposed that the Committee plan to meet several times in Saturday in February so people who could not make the Monday night meetings could participate. The February meeting schedule will be set up at the 1/28 meeting.

A motion was made by Mr. Chase and seconded by Mr. Bryant to adjourn the meeting at 8.40 PM. Motion carried.