

Ancram Selects Consultant for Comprehensive Plan

At the July 12 Ancram Town Board meeting, Comprehensive Planning Committee Chair Art Bassin reported the Committee has selected Community Planning and Environmental Associates (CPEA) as the consultant to assist Ancram in developing a Comprehensive Plan. CPEA, owned by Nan Stolzenburg of Berne, NY, is widely recognized as an expert in the development of comprehensive plans for small rural communities.

Following Chair Bassin's announcement of the selection of CPEA, Comprehensive Planning Committee member Jim Bryant, who also sits on the Ancram Town Board, reviewed the 60 day selection process which led to the selection of CPEA.

Bryant reported the committee had received eight proposals, interviewed six firms, and unanimously selected Community Planning and Environmental Associates. The Committee first ranked the consultants based on the strength of the written proposals, then on the strength of a one hour personal interview with the firm's principals who would be working with the Town. CPEA was first in both categories, based on a standard set of 16 evaluation criterion, which included overall value for money, relevant previous experience, potential for imaginative and creative solutions, knowledge of and facility with agricultural, financial and tax issues and the personal style, experience and credibility of the team which would be working on the Ancram project.

Following Bryant's presentation, committee Chair Bassin presented and discussed the proposed budget for the Comprehensive Plan, which totaled \$59,800. This money will be spent over the next 12 months, at approximately \$5000 a month.

The major items in the budget were \$33,000 for consulting fees, \$8,400 for the community communications program, \$3500 for grant applications, \$3000 for legal reviews and \$3500 for printing the Plan documents, printing and mailing surveys and refreshments for community meetings. In addition, the budget included an \$8000 contingency to cover "unknowns" down the road.

Excluded from this budget is any money for a the update of the Town's Zoning Regulations, which is likely to be undertaken in the second half of 2008, after the direction of the Comprehensive Plan is more clear. The Committee had secured estimates for this effort, and reported it could cost between \$30,000 and \$40,000 in 2008 and 2009 to bring the Town's zoning into alignment with the revised Comprehensive Plan.

Also excluded from this budget is the cost of a "Fiscal Impact Analysis" of the potential development implications of the Comprehensive Plan. Chair Bassin reported that the Committee had been advised that this effort could be very expensive, and indicated the committee would wait until it was better able to define its needs in this area, after the Committee had made more progress on the Comprehensive Plan . Bassin reported the Committee had asked for a separate proposal for this activity.

Bassin distributed copies of the CPEA proposal for the Board's information and future reference. The timeline, activities and deliverables for the planning process are included in the proposal, including the information which will be collected to support the Plan. The extent and frequency of community input and participation is also outlined in the CPEA proposal, along with information on the credentials and previous experience of the consulting firm and the firm's principals.

Following several questions from board members, the Town Board voted to approve the proposed \$60,000 budget, and gave the Comprehensive Planning Committee the authority to retain Ms. Stolzenburg and her firm to assist Ancram in the development of the Comprehensive Plan.

Anyone interested in receiving email updates on the progress of the Ancram Comprehensive Plan should contact Bassin at abassin@aol.com. For anyone without access to email, call Bassin at 329-0921 to arrange mail delivery of the updates.