

**Ancram Comprehensive Plan
Public Hearing
April 25, 2009**

Persons Present: Comprehensive Plan Committee Members Arthur Bassin, Vice Chair Barry Chase, Suzanne Bressler, Hugh Clark, Kyle Lougheed, Jim Miller, Don McLean, and Leah Wilcox; Ancram Town Supervisor Thomas Dias; Ancram Town Council Members Donna Hoyt and Robert Mayhew; and citizens of Ancram. For the complete list, see enclosed sign-in sheet which follow the minutes.

9: 34 a.m.—Call to Order: Art Bassin, Chairman of the Comprehensive Plan Committee, welcomed all participants to this public hearing of the proposed Ancram Comprehensive Plan, noted that the hearing was required by NYS law, that the hearing’s purpose was to solicit public comment about the proposed comprehensive plan, and read verbatim the public hearing notice as it appeared four times in the Register Star. Supervisor Dias also welcomed participants and opined about having a second public hearing during the workweek. Mr. Bassin stated the procedures to be followed during the hearing, to include: signing in, written comments, comments from the floor, and other rules. See detailed procedures at enclosure.

Mr. Bassin then called upon citizens who had stated on the sign-up sheet that they desired to make comments. Citizens were recognized in sequence as they had signed on the sheet. Following is a summary of individual comments:

Mike Citrin, 58 Snyder Road, Ancramdale: Had looked at a bunch of comp plans. Conveyed his compliments to the committee. The plan mirrors “the wants, needs, and desires of the town.”

Paul Spencer, 105 Simons Road, Ancramdale: Echoed Mr. Citrin’s comments. Thanked the committee members and Mr. Bassin as Chair for giving up their time. Noted that the previous 1972 Plan needed updating and that anyone who has heard misinformation about the plan should read the plan, especially pages 40-46. Concluded that “there is very little here to complain about.” Plan serves as a useful blueprint for the future and urged the Town Board to adopt the plan as it is written.

Jane Shannon, 13 New Jersey Avenue, Ancramdale: Noted that the planning process was thoroughly inclusive—many different people involved, but all united by wanting to protect Ancram’s rural landscape. Need new zoning in accordance with the plan to be accurate and right for today. Applauded the committee’s work and the plan itself.

Madeleine Israel, 10 Pennsylvania Avenue, Ancramdale: Complimented the committee for “a fabulous job” and the inclusive process it had used.

Bob Murphy, Doodletown Road: Commented that he had “never seen anything as inclusive.” Commended the “broad outreach” of the process and noted that “it’s all in there.”

Jack Lindsey, Doodletown Road: Noted his experience as a former member of the Town Board and that all, weekenders and locals, “need to get along.” Stated that the committee had done “an exemplary job in answering concerns. If people didn’t get involved, it was their own fault.”

Jamie Purinton, Route 7: Noted that the current plan done in 1972 promotes suburban development. This proposed plan balances peoples’ concerns well and “shows amazing initiative” for affordable housing, protecting the environment, and protecting against development pressure. It allows the zoning regulations to make sense. “An awesome job.”

Coral Eddy, Long Lake: Grew up on a 150 acre farm in Michigan, which has now been developed. Has seen what can happen. In terms of conserving land for future needs, this plan is well thought out and well done. Hats off for keeping Ancram’s rural character.

Jennifer Nickerson, Stated she is “impressed” that the proposed plan is “so thorough” and reflects the “time, energy, and intelligence” that went into it. In initial meetings, overall individual visions were similar. Now the shared vision is true to the early vision; any differences are small. The plan is in a form to go forward—protecting water, open space, and agriculture.

Keith Bendis, Route 7: Expressed his “thanks for all the work.” Stated he is “blown away by the time and effort that’s been put in.”

Ellen Langdon, Lower Rhoda: Noted that she has spent every summer of her life here in Ancram and is now retired here. Thanked Committee Chair Art Bassin for coming to the Lower Rhoda community meeting last year and stated that her “entire [Lower Rhoda] community is behind this [plan].”

B. Docktor, Doodletown Rd, Ancram: Stated her appreciation for the “incredible time and effort, intelligence and diligence” of the committee and for the “incredible reach-out to the community.” The plan keeps Ancram with a shared vision that retains our rural character.

Scott Newman, Poole Hill Rd, Ancram: Stated this is “an excellent plan.” “Really impressive is the committee reflects the vision and goals of the community rather than imposing their own.” Noted that the committee sought and brought in technical experts so the plan is based on fact, experience, and a shared vision. “Quite an achievement; everybody should support.”

Andrea Barnet, Poole Hill Rd, Ancram: Commended the “incredibly hard work” done by the committee.

Kit White: Noted that he grew up in West Virginia, where he urged development of a comprehensive plan such as this. Unfortunately, the local farmers rejected it. Now, 35 years later, it's too late to save that land. Here in Ancram, we need to protect our town, and this plan does it.

Marsha Wagner, 7 Sheppard Rd, Ancram: Stated that she had participated in various comp plan committee meetings and was impressed by the research, consensus-building, give and take—"a very inclusive and transparent process." She is surprised to hear in the last few days about apparent discomfort with the plan. Now she is further confused because all previous speakers clearly feel that the process was so inclusive. Wants to hear if anyone here present has another view. If so, speak up.

This concluded the list of all who had signed the sheet stating that they wished to make comments. Mr. Bassin then recognized individuals whose desire to make comments was noted on cards handed to the Chair.

George Wiggers: The plan is a "great job. Well done." The Town Board and Supervisor should not speak now. They should remain open and wait until the plan is presented to them as the ultimate decision-makers.

Moise Blechman,: Reiterated that work by the committee and by Art is "amazing—completely open and unprejudiced." Noted that New York is a home-rule state, so communities can determine what kind of town they want to be. New York wants to remain wonderful, beautiful, an Empire State, and encourages comprehensive plans and updates. Decision on the comp plan must be made in a regular, planned way lest chaos occur.

Marilyn Olson, Long Lake: Noted that one aspect of the committee's work had not been touched on. Congratulated the committee "on the consultants you've brought in"—superb technical expertise.

At 10:05 a.m., Mr. Bassin announced a short break. The hearing resumed at 10:20 a.m.

Donna Hoyt, Town Council: Stated that she is comfortable with everything in the plan, but "playing Devil's Advocate," noted that the plan is "an agricultural document." However, Ancram is not just an agricultural area; the "majority of us are business people." Whenever business is mentioned in the plan, it's not protection, it's restriction. She tallied references and found agriculture mentioned 117 times in the plan, scenic mentioned 63 times, and business mentioned 60 times. "Protecting farmland doesn't put meat and potatoes on the table." This is a major concern. Think about the vast majority of people who live here.

Doug Brenner, Finkle Road: Noted that "the past is not the future." Energy is the important issue of the future. Think about what could happen here. Wind. Solar. Biodiesel in this community is the perfect match.

Jack Lindsey: Referred to Donna Hoyt's comments and noted that promoting business was an overreaching concern. Cited personal decision that he would previously have invested in two businesses if he had been assured that there was an up-to-date comprehensive plan. He sought support for septic and water. He concludes that the proposed comp plan does support business and promotes wider business opportunities.

Gregory Long: Concludes that the "plan is great," especially in its treatment of hamlet development. Noted that the Preservation League of New York State sees damage happening to small, rural communities. This plan would make Ancram more prosperous.

Paul Spencer: Commented that supporting agriculture doesn't mean being against business and development. Reminded all that "a lot can't be done in the present zoning." The plan expands commercial zones and the floating zone provides flexibility. The plan provides for affordable housing with its provisions for accessory apartments and garden apartments. Leaves mining alone and goes to a 100 foot buffer. Looks to improve intersections. When going through the plan, the document is pro-business and pro-community. "It's for everybody."

Tom Dias, Town Supervisor: Seeks to clarify a "sticking point" about the Route 7/82 intersection mentioned in the plan. Underscores that the Town Board has no authority over that intersection and, without a fatality, there's no basis for pushing state to fix it.

Donna Hoyt: Pronounced the plan to be "a fantastic document." Loves the protection for small residences, but for large majority of people this town is lacking if you want to make a living. While plan promotes business/commercial area, she cites signage restrictions in the plan for low and high impact businesses, and restrictions against parking equipment where it's visible to passers-by.

Rich McCoy, 7 Sheppard Road, Ancram: Thanks Donna Hoyt for raising concerns in a public forum, because hearing's purpose is to voice pros and cons, and it's good to air, discuss, and resolve issues. He needs people who are presenting a negative petition to bring their views forward. He worries that a handful of people can sabotage a multi-year effort, and he doesn't know their influence on the Town Board.

Kathy Valdon, 85 Blodgett Road: Commented that she's "not rich," but enjoys Ancram as it is, wants to live here, and retire here. She believes the plan's proposals for hamlet development are excellent and "this plan is excellent."

Kit White: Commented that we have no infrastructure (sewer, water, intersections) that promotes business. Contends that "if you build it (infrastructure), they will come." To take care of business, take care of infrastructure. Noted that revitalization of hamlets and taking care of water in the plan is good. However, consultants examining sewer and water in the hamlets should have dug deeper and identified other options.

Marsha Wagner, 7 Sheppard Rd, Ancram: Thanked Donna for input and noted that this exchange is a wonderful start. For example, she learned about the importance to some local businesses of having lawn care equipment visible.

Jack Lindsey: Echoed Marsha's thanks to Donna and noted value when "Donna let's people know what's on her mind." Noted that those with apprehensions about the plan who don't publicly voice those concerns are doing themselves and community a disservice.

Scott Newman: Citing previous comments about water treatment options, he called attention to page 36 of the plan, which is explicit about exploring alternative water treatment options to reduce costs.

Jennifer Nickerson, Westfall Road: Emphasized that the plan is a beginning, not an end. These issues will be taken up as the plan moves forward. The plan is a living document, a tool, to be fine-tuned for years and years.

Donna Hoyt: Noted that she feared originally that the plan would be a prohibitive document. She sees it now as a positive document. Also believes that big box and small industry should be reviewed before ruling them out.

Jim Miller, Town Council & Comp Plan Committee Member: Remember; this plan is not a law. It's a roadmap to creating a law.

Bob Mayhew, Town Council: Stated that 200 people allegedly signed a petition against the plan, and that now's the time to bring out your points. Please speak up. If the committee doesn't know what you want, they can't adjust the plan.

Jim Stickle, County Route 7: Comments on behalf of 10-12 people. Has read the plan. Has concerns about zoning affecting individual property rights; perceives that plan tells people where they can put their house. People he speaks for didn't come to committee meetings because they look to the Town Board to take care of them. Felt the plan was being rushed and pushed through too quickly. People work 2-3 jobs and can't come to meetings; once the plan is printed is when they react.

Chair Art Bassin: Offered to meet with Mr. Stickle and others at a time convenient to them to listen to their concerns and clarify as needed.

Bob Mayhew: Urged Mr. Stickle and others to write exactly what in the plan bothers them.

Tom Dias: Noted that he is neutral, approachable, and obligated to be open to all views. He doesn't want to put a chilling effect on any group so all will talk to him or to town board members.

Robin McDonald, Doodletown Rd: Commented that she loves that people in the community are open, allowing Donna and others to speak knowing that the committee and town board will listen. That openness is a strength of the town.

? , 146 Dam Road: Commented that the nature of his property has changed due to construction on the hillside above. There is more water on his property now. Implied support for provisions that protect neighbors from consequences of nearby development.

Paul Spencer, Simons Rd, Ancramdale: Addressed Mr. Stickle and noted that Mr. Bassin offered to meet with petitioners to answer inaccuracies and explore solutions. Urged such a sit-down to clarify misunderstandings.

Donna Hoyt, Carson Rd Ancramdale: Observed that for many years, no involvement in town government was the way it's done in Ancram. So, it's appropriate to allow petitioners who feel uncomfortable with an open forum to use this way of speaking out. This is their way of speaking out.

Terry Boyles, Route 82, Ancram: Stated that he signed the petition. He is nervous about speaking in public. He opened his business 21 years ago and has worked hard to get what he's got. Years ago, the Zoning Board helped him when his neighbors didn't want him and his business. When planning and zoning [based on this comp plan] take effect, he doesn't want others to tell him what and where he can put stuff and mobile homes. He can't digest in 90 days what the committee has done in two years.

Hank Rothvoss, Route 3: Stated that people in the past raised hell because they could see equipment on his property. Meeting codes cost him an excessive amount to get a permit, build a \$20K berm, and plant pine trees. "People are scared because of things like that. We need common sense."

Lynn Perella, Jennifer Lane: Commented that "we're getting somewhere because these gentlemen contributed to the dialogue." Noted that the petition represented a bunch of stories and that there's "food for compromise." Believes that "by speaking, they've brought the meeting to a very real place."

Sue Bassin, Snyder Road: Stated that one problem Ancram has with development is "chicken or egg." To move forward, the town must do a lot of things together at one time in unison. We've learned that if our town has a comprehensive plan and zoning to back it up, we can go with ammunition to the state to fix the 7/82 intersection, water, septic, and other problems. Similarly so for obtaining grants. Having the comp plan allows for more power to be exerted on the state because it shows we can deal with complexity and move forward. However, it requires transparency and trust to solve problems. All must keep an open mind and focus on the greater good.

Linda Bowen, Tim's Road: Noted that she was born and raised here in Ancram. Her family were builders. Cautioned that old [long-established] people in town feel like they're being pushed out.

Stephanie Bernheim, Finkle Road: Commented that she's "very hopeful about real participation" and hopes it continues.

Kit White: Stated that "guidelines are in place to protect people, not to punish them" and that "guidelines are inert; they give equal protection." It's the people who implement them that can be the problem.

Donna Hoyt: Commented that there are "horror stories in town about zoning" and cited an example from 19 years ago when her family's business venture was held up because the town said there was not enough parking. Noted that citizens shouldn't have to be afraid of zoning—e.g. lighting and signs. "People are afraid zoning can be used against them."

Paul Spencer: Observed that it's not so much the law as the people in official positions who need reform. Citing Mr. Boyles' earlier comments about difficulties with changing mobile homes/trailers, Mr. Spencer noted that it's not the comp plan or zoning that affects Mr. Boyles in those instances. Rather, it's the state building code; such regulation is at the state level.

Terry Boyles: Commented briefly that rules affecting trailers should be made easier.

Mr. Bassin: Reminded all that zoning will be done by a committee separately appointed by the town board.

Jack Lindsay: Reiterated that building codes come from higher levels of government (e.g. state) and that the comp plan committee should not be blamed for such requirements.

Sonny Wills, Five Roses Road: Commented that the plan has only one sentence about mobile homes and that mobile homes needs to be looked at more. Also commented that there should be restrictions on trailer parks and on mobile homes to require at least two exits.

At 11:25 a.m. Mr. Bassin thanked all for their participation and asked for closing comments from committee members.

At 11:30 a.m. Mr. Bassin adjourned the public hearing.

Here is the list of the attendees of the public hearing in order that they signed in. Please contact Art Bassin (abassin@aol.com) with name misspellings, or if you were at the meeting and did not sign in but want to be counted as being there.

Sheila Clark
Mike Citrin
Adrienne Citrin
Bob Mayhew
Donna Hoyt
Linda Bowen
Tom Dias
Stanley Blindman
Madeleine Israel
Jane Shannon
Tad Higgins
Gary Delemeester
Jamie Purinton
Bob Murphy
Jack Lindsay
Bryce Birdsall
Malcolm Kirk
Choral Eddie
Ellen Jouvett-Epstein
George Wiggers
Keith Bendis
PMS Stulk
Lynne Perrella
Kathy Valden
Jim Evers
John Langton
Doug Brenner
Jim Stickle
Ron Rader
Ann Rader
Ron Brandt
Marilyn Oser
Elizabeth Gilmore
Irene Dietter
Avery Dietter
Eric Wiener
Lorraine Wiener
Maureen Nielti
Herb Morris
David Dembo
Moishe Blechman
Bob Sparan

Nancy Sparan
Jan hanvik
Mark Debarmo
Kit White
Andrea Barnet
Stephanie Bernheim
Ralph Wharton
Rich McCoy
Marsha Wagner
Jennifer Nickerson
Nick Nickerson
Roger Mooney
Steven Roberts
Ellen Langton
B Docktor
R. Wheeler
Alice Storm
Sally Brody
Melvin Herzberg
Terry Boyles
Perry Miller
Barbara Gaba
Richard Gaba
Rosemary Werrett
Greg Long
Scott Newman
Larry Campbell
Lucy Eldridge
Steven Mazur
Bob Blechman
Robin McDonald
Judi Francis
Roy Sloane
Jay Corcoran
Michael Rolews
Art Bassin
Hugh Clark
Kyle Lougheed
Leah Wilcox
Suzanne Bressler
Don MacLean
Barry Chase
Jim Miller
Joan Roberts

Total Attendees: 96