

MINUTES
Comprehensive Plan Review Committee
Copake Town Hall
Monday, November 11, 2024 – 4:30 pm

Present: Brian Boom, Brendan Cranna, Julie Cohen, Peter Doty, Erin Dougherty, Benedict Gedaminski, Jeanne Mettler, Catherine Mikic, Stephanie Rabin, Terry Sullivan Alden Warner

Present via Video-Conference: Tom Goldsworthy, Todd Proper

Town Board Liaison: Supervisor Richard Wolf

1. **Call to Order-** The meeting was called to order by Chair Jeanne Mettler.
2. **Welcome-** Supervisor Richard Wolf welcomed the members of the committee and thanked them for being willing to serve. He told them that the previous committee had worked for three years but this time the Town Board would like a more compact schedule and would like this done in a year and a half. He praised the committee and said the Board was looking forward to what they would come up with.
3. **Introduction of Members of Committee-** Jeanne invited members to say a few words about their background. Jeanne started by saying that she was raised in Copake Falls and after College and Law School she relocated to Westchester where she practiced law for 34 years. She returned to the area when she and her wife purchased a home in Copake in 2006. The first involvement she had in the Town of Copake was chairing the first comprehensive plan committee in 2008-2011. She joined the Town Board in 2012 and was Town Supervisor 2020-23. She said that she was pleased to be appointed to this committee since the work of this committee is integral to the future of this Town.

Brendan Cranna lives on Snyder Pond Road in Copake. He said he was “a fairly new resident”, having moved to Copake 3 years ago. He grew up in Columbia County but lived elsewhere for several decades and then returned home in 2020. He is a practicing attorney with an office in Hudson and looks forward to assisting Copake in moving forward.

Julie Cohen has lived in Copake full-time since 1999. She has raised her son here for the last 12 years. Julie has been on the planning board for 12 years and now she is the Chair of that board. Julie and her husband have a real estate company and a building firm. They live on Cambridge Road over near the Rheinstrom Hill Audubon Society.

Stephanie Rabin has been in Copake since 2020. She is on the CEDAC committee. She works upstate full-time and lives here full-time, but she still has ties to

the city. She just bought the old Peck insurance building. Stephanie is an actuary and an organizational psychologist. She works in the insurance industry.

Terry Sullivan is a speech pathologist and audiologist, and she also teaches Zumba in town. She has been living in Copake since 2002. She works in healthcare and is employed by Fairview Hospital. She also consults at Camphill Village. She has served on both the Copake Town Board and the Taconic Hills School Board. She is currently a member of the Copake Park Commission.

Brian Boom has had a home in Copake Falls since 1995. He lives on Valley View Road. He is a retired botanist having worked with the New York Botanical Garden for 35 years. He has been on the Copake Conservation Advisory Committee for about 10 years and serves as secretary. He is very interested in serving the community in any way he can.

Peter Doty was born and raised in Rhinebeck and Clinton Corners. His four kids are born and raised here in Columbia County. He lived in Copake for 20 years and for the last 10 years he has been in Hillsdale. He has been with the Community Rescue Squad for 30 years; he has been Operations Supervisor for the last 10 years. This is the first Town committee on which Peter has served, but he is very happy to have been asked to join; he would like to see the Town left in a beautiful way for his kids and everybody else's kids.

Erin Dougherty lives in the bird streets section at Copake Lake- she moved here in 2020. She is a costume designer for television and movies. She and her partner Aaron started a pizza business in Craryville. It is called Tommy B's Slice Shop. Erin is excited to join the community.

Catherine Mikic has been in Columbia County since 2018. She lives in Hudson and came to Copake in 2020 when she purchased a historic farm property on Center Hill Road. Since then, she has been working and focusing on the farm property. In 2021 she was invited to join the Copake Historic Preservation Committee. The committee has done a lot of work in kind of inventorying and raising awareness about the historic landscape. Catherine is excited to be a part of the Comp Plan committee is because she feels very passionately about the vernacular landscape and heritage. She sees vernacular heritage and landscape as completely inseparable. She is very much in favor of land conservation and historic preservation.

Benedict Gedaminski says he is a "displaced Bostonian". He was born and bred and lived there for 40 something years and then moved to New York City in 2009 when his wife got a job at Columbia University. Benedict's career was in financial software development, and he retired in 2010. He got involved in a number of different organizations in the city including the Blue Hill Troupe. He was head of construction for the Blue Hill Troupe. He has also been president of the New England Society which is

214-year-old social organization in the city which awards scholarships of up to \$25,000 for four years. When Covid hit, Benedict's wife was studying to be a psychotherapist and seeing patients online. They were living in a two-bedroom apartment on the upper West Side. They decided they wanted to get out of the city, and they knew Columbia County. They started house hunting every weekend and ended up buying a home in Roeliff Meadows. Benedict joined the Copake Fire Department in 2021, he is on the Board of Friends of Taconic State Park, he helped Edgar Masters build the Pomeroy Railroad and he is involved with the Copake Grange.

Alden Warner loves the landscape and the natural setting of Copake, which is one reason he was interested in joining this committee. Alden and his husband Peter are New Yorkers. They bought a house in Copake in 1999. This is their 26th year in the same house; it is just off High Meadow Road. Alden and his husband are active hikers and cyclists and do a lot of outdoor stuff all through the Taconic Mountains. They bike down to Millerton and beyond. Alden spent 44 years in finance at JP Morgan retired a year ago. His husband retired from the Museum of Modern Art four years ago. As of 2024, Alden is a member of the Copake Board of Assessment Review. His husband is on the board at the Columbia Land Conservancy. They are trying to get more involved in the town and the county.

Tom Goldsworthy has lived in Copake since 2014. Previously, he lived in New York City for 35 years. Tom was a banker and then was CFO for a number of software companies. He started coming to Columbia County in 1998. First, they lived in Chatham, and then they had a house in North Hillsdale near Hawthorne Valley School. When they decided to retire full-time to Columbia County, and move out of New York City, they built a house on Center Hill Road in Copake. They moved into that house in 2014 and retired. Tom wanted to be involved in the community, and he has been. He was on the Hamlet Revitalization Task Force with Roberta Roll for a number of years. He served on the Zoning Board for five years. He chairs the Copake Economic Development Advisory Committee which is known as "CEDAC". He is chair of the volunteer committee that runs the Roe Jan Ramble; that has been very exciting. Tom is vice president of the Grange and secretary of the Roads Advisory Committee which focuses on rebuilding the roads in the center of town. He is also on the board of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association.

Todd Proper apologized for being remote, explaining that he was in transit, heading to a client meeting in Toronto. He was actually on his way to LaGuardia as he spoke to us. Todd told the Committee that he grew up in Copake and lived here until he was 18, when he moved to New York where he lived for 20 years. Then, as he always knew he would, he moved back to Copake. Todd's father was Larry Proper who was very involved in everything to do with the town. Todd said he is trying to uphold his father's legacy to the best of his ability. He is very interested in doing whatever he can.

He is on the CEDAC committee with Tom and Stephanie and is excited to be involved in this effort.

4. Overview of 2011 Comprehensive Plan; Agenda for Comp Plan Review Committee

Jeanne Mettler gave the Committee an overview of the Comprehensive Plan process as follows:

What is a comprehensive plan?

Jeanne explained that a Comprehensive Plan is often referred to as a roadmap or a blueprint- it expresses the aspirations and values of a Town, and its vision for the future. But it is more than a wish list, it legally binds the Town.

In 1993, the NY State Legislature gave Towns both the authority and responsibility to prepare and adopt a Comprehensive Plan. Pursuant to Town Law Article 16, Section 272-a:

“Among the most important powers and duties granted by the legislature to a town government is the authority and responsibility to undertake town comprehensive planning and to regulate land use for the purpose of protecting the public health, safety and general welfare of its citizens...”

(e) The participation of citizens in an open, responsible and flexible planning process is essential to the designing of the optimum town comprehensive plan.”

Jeanne stated that the importance of the Comprehensive Plan cannot be overstated. All Zoning and land use decisions must comply with the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

A comprehensive plan is far reaching- it deals with every aspect of the Town. Services, infrastructure, and capital investments. It deals with the values of the Town such as: whether open space should be preserved, whether there should be development and if so, where; whether and what the town should do to encourage and or discourage business; whether the Town should provide parks and recreation; whether and how the Town should preserve its history and whether and how the Town should support green and renewable energy.

The Town of Copake Comprehensive Plan.

In 2008 Town Board recognized that Copake would benefit from a Comprehensive Plan. The Town Board appointed a large, diverse committee. Jeanne was elected the Chair.

The 2008 committee started from scratch. They did not know what a comprehensive plan was or the first thing about how to prepare one. They brought in speakers from

other towns and the State to help. They realized that they could not do this without a consultant, and the Town hired Margaret Irwin of River Street Planning.

Jeanne believes that it is really critical that a Comp Plan committee has credibility. The first step is to appoint a large enough committee and a diverse enough membership that all the people in the Town feel that their views are represented. Then the committee has to be transparent and gather input from the people in the Town.

The original Comp Plan committee did over a dozen focus groups with various groups in Town- young people, seniors, business people, realtors, and not for profits. They did a visioning workshop, public workshops and a town survey.

The committee worked from March 2008 to May of 2011 when they presented a first draft to the Town Board for approval. By law, the Plan has to undergo a SEQR review and it has to be reviewed by the County Planning Board. The Plan must also be reviewed by the Town Planning Board. Copies of the Plan must be made available to the public and the Town Board has to conduct a public hearing before it can adopt the Plan. In July of 2011 the plan was adopted unanimously.

By law, a Comprehensive Plan is supposed to be reviewed periodically- and the Town did that. Under Supervisor Jeff Nayer, the Town Board met several times and assessed what of the Goals had been achieved and what goals or actions were outstanding.

Jeanne believes that for the most part she thinks that the goals of the Comprehensive Plan were achieved or at least addressed.

Agenda for the Comprehensive Plan Review Committee

The Comprehensive Plan Review Committee is charged with reviewing the 2011 Plan and drafting a new Comp Plan. The Committee may adopt many of the same priorities that were recognized in 2011-but there are new circumstances and realities today. (The Committee looked at the Priorities listed on page 12-15 of the 2011 Plan.)

The Support of the Town Board

The Town Board has shown its support for the committee's work by filing an application with NYS seeking funds to hire a consultant. Those awards are typically announced in December or January. The Town is seeking an award of \$81K and will put up matching funds of \$9K.

Jeanne stated that she will forward to the Committee the Town's application for the grant to fund this process. It is quite lengthy but has a wealth of information about Copake, including demographics and sets forth the tasks which we must complete and a timeline for completion.

The Town Board is asking that the Committee complete its work within 18 months. The work this month and in December will be in preparation for our work with the consultant.

The Committee will start to work our consultant in January 2025 and finish by June 2026.

5. Election of a Secretary

Jeanne stated that Catherine Mikic has said that she is willing to be secretary. Jeanne advised the Committee that Catherine is an excellent writer and she has a familiarity with a lot of the issues we will need to discuss. Jeanne nominated Catherine to serve as secretary. The nomination was seconded by Alden. There were no other nominations and upon a vote, Catherine was elected, unanimously.

6. Regular Monthly Meeting Date

Open Meeting Law: Jeanne advised the committee that the Town Attorney has said that this committee must comply with the open meeting law. This means that we need to meet in public and in person. This does not preclude attending remotely. If a member has an “extraordinary circumstance” such that they cannot attend in person, they can attend remotely. Extraordinary circumstances include such things as illness, taking caregiving responsibilities, and an unexpected event precluding attendance at the meeting. A member demonstrating “extraordinary circumstances” can attend remotely and participate - and vote- if there is a quorum in the room.

A member can attend remotely without showing “extraordinary circumstances” but they cannot vote.

The committee reviewed members availability for every weekday. Jeanne projected that meetings might last up to two hours. The committee agreed that the second Monday of the month at 5:00 pm was the best for the most people.

7. Adjournment The meeting was adjourned at 5:27 pm. The next meeting will be **Monday December 9 at 5:00 pm**. Jeanne asked that everyone should read the 2011 Plan in preparation for the December meeting. Jeanne will also send out the Grant Application for member’s review.

Submitted by Jeanne E. Mettler
with Secretary, Catherine Mikic