

CAC Meeting, November 7, 2022 Minutes

Attending via Zoom: CAC members Jamie, Choral, David, Jane, Jono, Kim, Amy, Colleen, Jay, Wally. Meeting commenced at 7:00pm. We approved the October 2022 minutes.

Planning Board/ZEO Discussion

Colleen updated us on the application of the property next to Velazquez (previously Colman, now Monchak) which will be getting a full site plan review from the PB due to their concerns. There are discrepancies between the architect's plan and the engineer's plan and a plan to move the septic field to make way for a swimming pool which may require tree removal and additional land being cleared. There were also changes to the driveway at the top. Colleen and Erin were able to ask the applicant relevant questions that were well received by PB members, and other PB members themselves were actively engaged in questioning the applicant's plans. CAC members noted that this demonstrates progress. There will likely be a site visit to further pursue questions about project.

The O & G gravel mine renewal permit hearing was put on hold by the PB in order for the PB attorney to weigh in on the process. Because the mine has been inactive for several years, the process is not straightforward.

The Shepard project needs a variance in order to install a pre-manufactured shed close to the property line. The ZBA will hold a public hearing due to the variance request.

Colleen noted that the PB is trying to simplify the process by which an applicant approaches the Town with a new project. The goal is to help applicants understand the town law, have clear direction on what they need to submit, and generally improve the application process.

We need to follow up on the question of what factors would trigger the involvement of outside consultants in a PB application and how a consultant would be funded.

Enhancing forest protections in zoning

David asked Kim if it is likely that Hugh Clark would be willing to look at improvements to the zoning for forest protection in Ancram. Kim suggested that the CAC Co-Chairs send Hugh a letter asking if we should move forward at this time with new zoning improvements for forests and woodlands. Wally agreed to draft this letter which Jane and David and others will edit and then send to Hugh to get his inputs and views before we proceed with this major project. Jamie also asked Wally to draft a memo outlining the scope of the work he envisioned in researching and drafting any proposed regulations to enhance forest conservation in Ancram,

which Wally agreed to do. We also agreed to see how other towns have increased forest protections and to consult with Nan S. Jamie can also get input from the Columbia Land Conservancy and the town of New Lebanon which have been proactive in conserving and protecting forests. Jamie will send the CAC a forest fragmentation map so we understand changes and opportunities for greater forest connectivity.

Strengthening Scenic Overlay Zone law for Minor Subdivisions and single family homes

Given the strong development pressure on small lots along Route 22 in the SCOZ and the severe problems with the Velazquez project, Jane has suggested that we examine how to extend SCOZ regulations to minor subdivisions and single family homes. There was discussion and some confusion about interpreting the SCOZ laws as they currently stand. Jane agreed to do more research. Jamie suggested that we could consult Nan S about the SCOZ law. David noted that he thinks that all CAC members would agree that it would make sense to extend SCOZ regulations to include minor subdivisions and single family homes, but that we first need clarity in how the current SCOZ law is being applied and used.

Town Board Update

Amy noted that there are continuing efforts to support and strengthen the zoning enforcement process by the PB with some input from the Town Board. We need to get input from Erin Robertson on how the PB is working to improve zoning enforcement.

Climate Smart Community Task Force Update

Colleen briefly described three projects that the CSCTF is working on including 1) working on the Punch Brook Watershed Study, 2) joining the Columbia County Climate Vulnerability Assessment to draft a tailor-made study on climate vulnerability for Ancram, and 3) starting a sub-committee which will focus on climate-resilient farming and gardening for Ancram. Jay Lorenz is a founding member of this group.

Jamie recently collected water at eight test sites along the upper Roe-Jan for the Roe Jan Watershed Association, the final testing for 2022. A data report on water quality for the Roe-Jan River will be available soon.

Everyone on the CAC has taken or is signed up to take the NYS Sexual Harassment Training.

Next CAC meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 5, 2022.