

**Attending via Zoom:** CAC members Jamie, David, Jane, Jono, Kim, Amy, Colleen, Jay, Wally.  
Meeting commenced at 7:00pm.

Minutes prepared by Jane Meigs, David Dembo and Jamie Purinton

- We approved the November 2022 minutes.
- PB application updates by Erin and Colleen -- Monchak project with discussion of Dec 1 PB meeting. Will Monchak engineer's site visits and weekly reports to the PB provide adequate oversight? Do we have questions to bring up at the PB Public Hearing on January 5, 2023? The applicant agreed to leave large trees and reroute driveway as necessary. Also, will redo driveway to improve turnaround for fire truck access. Applicant refused to move carport and is repositioning septic to allow for swimming pool in the future. The PB has asked for an escrow account to be held until a C of O is signed off on. We had a discussion of the problems of having engineering oversight by an engineer being paid by the applicant. The engineer for Monchak was adamant about the fact that his license would be on the line if he was not truthful in his reports. That did not stop the problems encountered at the Velazquez site and several of us are skeptical about this process going forward. Colleen volunteered to rework the comments we prepared for the same site and the Coleman application. If we have questions, Jane volunteered to present them at the January 5, 2023 PB meeting.
- Velazquez violations—Discussion of Ed Ferrato's recent email to Velazquez and the fact that CAC's concerns, which were presented in writing to the PP during the application process, were dismissed. Should the SCOZ in particular have enhanced oversight? Does the town have any leverage to force Velazquez into compliance? Does Ed have authority to issue stop work order? We will ask that photographic evidence be provided along with the weekly reports so that those of us who do not have permission to access site can get a better idea of compliance
- Status of Jamie's email to Hugh re. updates to zoning for SCOZ and greater forest protection. We had a long discussion with major input from Kim, about the possibilities of the ZRC considering enhanced protection of forests and the SCOZ. Kim urged us to send Hugh a preliminary succinct letter asking about possibilities first, before going into detail on what we would like. There is the possibility that the ZRC is done with this go round, and that we might have to wait until a new Comp Plan process has begun to address these issues through zoning changes. If so, that gives us an opening to pursue public education on these issues. Jamie pointed out the opportunities for continued education on forest conservation and the work that the CAC has already done on education, including our fen presentation; amphibian crossing education; as well as written reports on several issues, including dark skies, forest protection, etc.

Colleen noted that an alternate method for extending SCOZ protections to private residences would be to ask the ZBA to clarify the term “general uses” in SCOZ to explicitly include private residences. This change would be to existing town law and would not require work by the Zoning Revisions Committee.

- Key points from recent PB training with Nan (discussion with all who attended)

The majority of the training centered on zoning covering “agriculture and Markets” and outlining the protections and privileges that have been granted to agriculture in Ancram. Nan also discussed our questions regarding the SCOZ. She said that she thought that SCOZ protections do extend to private residences under the phrase “general uses”, but she went on to say that the language is vague and might be challenged. She was quite clear in saying that SCOZ protections should extend to private residences and recommended updating SCOZ protections to include private homes. She noted that leaving out private residences could negate SCOZ protections as we see more development pressure.

In an email exchange with Wally, she also noted that CACs need to be careful not to push too hard to expand environmental protections as this might alienate town people and potentially reduce hard-won environmental gains. She added that Ancram is more pro-environmental currently than when the SCOZ law was debated at its outset, so the community might be more receptive to strengthening SCOZ now. Nan also emphasized that care should be taken in any expansion of protections of forests on private lands as this could backfire. She agreed to send us examples of ways that other towns have increased forest protection. Some CAC members thought that strengthening SCOZ should be a priority and that we should wait to focus on town-wide forest protection until we offer more public education on the value of avoiding forest fragmentation and maintaining wildlife corridors in contiguous forests in Ancram.

Nan also said that wetlands attached to streams are included in the required buffer zone.

We discussed the value of having a good index to the zoning law so that people can read all the relevant material on any particular topic. Hopefully Nan will be retained by the town to undertake this project.

Colleen noted that the New York Natural Heritage Program and the Hudson River Estuary Program will be combining their data on amphibian passages, making this information more accessible and user-friendly. This data will strengthen arguments for protecting forest corridors that are key to maintaining amphibian populations.

- Information gathering on forest protection

We are exchanging valuable information on forest protection and look forward to more input from Nan and to reviewing examples of forest protection from other towns that Nan will send us.

- Review of CAC year end summary. Jamie asked that everyone review the recently distributed 2022 Year End Summary and send along additions and suggestions by December 19. She especially wanted us to include any trainings we have undertaken and any suggested projects for next year.
- Holiday Potluck on Fri, Dec 16  
Friday, December 16 at 6:00pm at the Meigs' Home at 105 Carson Road. Please remember to take a covid test early that day.
- Punch Brook Watershed Characterization  
Colleen reported on the Punchbrook Watershed Characterization Study. She had sent us two documents to review: a flyer and a draft outline for the Punch Brook study. Work is progressing on the outline and more work will be going on over the next several months.
- We briefly discussed any suggestions for additions to the winter edition of the Ancram newsletter. One possibility was reporting on the bobcat study, but we have since learned that that has been put on hold due to difficulty in tagging bobcats in our area. Jono was volunteered to write up something about wildlife in the winter in our area, and subsequently, it was suggested that his dog walks at Round Ball provide plenty of material for a short piece. He will include material on protecting wildlife corridors in contiguous forests and on avoiding forest fragmentation. Jamie will check with newsletter people about their interest in such a piece.

**Next CAC meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 2 or 9, 2023.**