

**Community Meetings at Starr Library with CPC Subcommittees  
October 12, 2022 6:00-8:00 pm**

**LAND USE, COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND ECOLOGICAL REGENERATION**

**MEETING WITH THREE BREAKOUT GROUPS**

(n=47 participants, plus 10 presenters and volunteers)

Presenter: Steve Rosenberg

Facilitator: Roger Quon

Recorder: Becky Tyre

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Attendee Introductions (first breakout session only)

Some attendees, but not all, indicated where they reside: Gardens;South Street (2); Mulberry Street (2;The Woods;Rhinecliff; Staatsburg; Wey Road. Two were part-time residents or visiting regularly.

Presentation:

Presenter explained that the Land Use, Community Resources and Ecological Regeneration Subcommittee is charged with coming up with recommendations regarding future land uses in the village and zoning of properties to make the zoning consistent with the new comprehensive plan, as well as community and environmental resources. The Subcommittee has three working groups focused on land use and zoning, public and natural spaces, and renewable energy and infrastructure.

More specifically, the Land Use Subcommittee is working on the following six major themes:

- 1) Enhancing the village's economic vitality for businesses based on local needs and regional assets;
- 2) Providing a more inclusive and affordable mix of housing options and businesses;
- 3) Ensuring that our natural resources remain intact and are accessible and contribute to climate resiliency;
- 4) Expanding the amount of public space available for residents and visitors;
- 5) Retaining the historic character, while adapting to change and embracing renewable energy; and
- 6) Integrating the schools, Starr Library, hospital and Fairgrounds into the fabric and life of the community.

Presenter noted that these six topics all seem valid and generate suggested solutions on their own, but conflicts arise when a community tries to incorporate all of them together into a cohesive plan.

Presenter asked how many people are familiar with the concept of “Smart Growth” and 1 or 2 people raised their hands in each breakout session. He explained that Smart Growth works on a regional scale to direct development to centers where built infrastructure already exists (like the village), in order to preserve the surrounding lands to prevent sprawl and conserve natural and agricultural resources.

Presenter indicated on a map the relatively few land areas in the village that are currently undeveloped, including but not limited to:

- 1) 6 Mulberry Street, with frontage on Market Street and South Street, commonly referred to as the Father Brogan Center. A developer has a plan for this property that is currently before the Village Board;
- 2) The empty lot in the area between Platt Avenue (formerly an apple orchard, now used for fair parking) and the Fairgrounds (Presenter disclosed that this property is right behind his house);
- 3) Area to the west of Mirbeau Inn and Spa and north of the community garden at the Thompson-Mazzarella Park;
- 4) An area between the Lions Mini Park and the Middle and High Schools along the Landsman Kill;
- 5) Parcel at the end of Crosmour Drive (wetlands); and
- 6) Used car parking lot at Ruge’s Subaru

Presenter noted that the subcommittee is looking at these areas and asking questions such as:

- Should they remain undeveloped or be identified for future development to achieve the goals of the new comprehensive plan?
- Should/could they be developed to specifically address a need such as senior Housing or other uses?
- Could they be used to create a village green or other public spaces?
- How can we increase housing options within the Village?
- How can we ensure we still have open spaces and trails?
- How can we preserve natural resources like Crystal Lake?
- How can we make sure Rhinebeck addresses climate resiliency?
- What zoning and planning rules might need to be tweaked or changed?

Presenter pointed out the small, outlined area that depicts the Village of Rhinebeck on a map of the Town of Rhinebeck. He told the group that the Village is mostly developed and is small in comparison to the entirety of the Town. However, the Village is much denser. The challenge is how to grow to the extent that some development is desired to achieve the goals of the new comprehensive plan. Presenter explained that new development will occur whether we like it or not, so the question is how to ensure it will advance the community’s goals.

Presenter said that the natural and public spaces working group of the subcommittee is looking at opportunities to create trails to connect public and natural resources in the village. A Land Use subcommittee member spoke up and mentioned the possibility of using a land swap to create land for trails or even to address other needs like parking.

Presenter reminded attendees that the subcommittee is still in the fact-finding stage and is not currently making any final recommendations. He encouraged everyone to submit any ideas on how various entities (the town, county, fairgrounds, hospital, schools, library) can better collaborate with (and within) the Village.

Several times the presenter reminded attendees that there is some natural overlap with the work of the Housing, Historic Preservation, Transportation and Mobility, and Business Center subcommittees.

In reference to the collaboration theme (and the Smart Growth concept), the presenter said we should not think simply about what happens within the Village, but how the Village fits within the Town and the greater Hudson Valley. For instance, many feel we need more housing here, which needs to be explored, but the Village has tight boundaries and we should also consider collaborating with the town to identify places for additional housing in areas that are adjacent or very near to the Village.

QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM ATTENDEES during Q and A:

**Q:** Can you explain the plan for the Brogan Center?

A: I believe the latest proposal is for 9 apartment units and 4 houses.

**Q:** How is Rhinecliff affected by the Village Comprehensive Plan?

Comments from attendees:

Reduce the use of cars by providing more trails/paths for walking and biking

Several others indicated agreement with this need.

**Q:** Hasn't there been previous discussion about a path to/from Rhinecliff in the past and specifically to get to/from the train station?

A: Yes, a formal study was conducted to determine the impact and feasibility of such a path.

Comments from attendees:

And not just a trail to the train station, but also for increased access to the waterfront, the Morton Library and Rhinecliff in general.

**Q:** Is the Dutchess County Fairgrounds in the Village or the Town of Rhinebeck?

A: Most of the fairground land is in the Village, but they have a special charter. The Dutchess County Agricultural Society is the largest land holding entity in the Village incorporating

approximately 12% of all the land. It was also noted that the Dutchess County Agricultural Society, Inc. is a non-profit 501c3 and is not required to pay property taxes.

**Q:** Do they (fairgrounds owners) do anything for the Village?

A: The fairgrounds hosts a heli-pad site for landing helicopters that transport patients to and from Northern Dutchess Hospital. The fairgrounds also contributes to local scholarships and provides other benefits. People may want to visit their website for more information.

Comments from several attendees:

This doesn't seem fair that they do not pay taxes.

People who attend events at the fairground spend money locally in our shops and restaurants and hotels.

**Q:** Can you define sustainability and affordability?

A: It is up to the community to define what constitutes affordable housing options in the Village as well as deciding what a sustainable future looks like. A comprehensive plan can set goals and provide a guide for zoning regulations that deal with ideas such as:

- 1) Addressing accessory dwelling units
- 2) Partnering with developers
- 3) Increasing the types of housing options available such as duplex and triplexes (note that current regulations only provide for the building of single-family residences)
- 4) Outlining how future development can happen without materially impacting the historic character of the Village

**Q:** What about the workforce housing plan?

A: Presenter pointed out the location of the land in the town adjacent to Wells Manor that is currently proposed to have 80 units. It is currently in the town review process.

**Q:** Doesn't the hospital own that land?

A: They did, but it has been sold to a developer. Also, it is in the Town, not the Village. This is an example of a town having an area zoned specifically for affordable housing. The town initiated the process 15 years ago and the goal is now being realized.

**Q:** If we have ideas, whom should we send them to?

A: Recorder provided the website: (<https://villageofrhinebeck.org/comp-plan>) and email address for the Village Comprehensive Plan: ([ourthrivingfuture@villageofrhinebeckny.gov](mailto:ourthrivingfuture@villageofrhinebeckny.gov)) Facilitator suggested that attendees sign up for the Village newsletter/ mailing list if they have not already done so: (<https://villageofrhinebeck.org/>) and scroll down to "Let's Stay in Touch".

**Q:** Wouldn't it be easier if the Town and Village were just one entity?

A: That's a good question for debate. There may be a concern that the Village could lose its distinctive character and identity.

**Q:** I attend the planning board meetings and much of the discussion are requests for variances for pools etc.

**A:** An attendee commented that the planning board approves or denies variance requests, but it is key to note that the requests indicate the wants of residents in light of village regulations.

Comments from attendees: The planning board does not adequately enforce zoning. Even if a resident is told NO, they may still build it and without consequences.

**Q:** When you mentioned an area of wetlands at the east end of the village, are you looking at the option to leave it alone? Or in some cases, add green space instead of developing?

**A:** Definitely! Referred to the wetlands map on display. And in some instances, it may be possible to have both development and preservation.

**Q:** Regarding different types of housing, what about the people who are taking multi-unit apartment buildings and turning them (back) into single family dwellings?

**A:** A comprehensive plan can help guide the zoning that allows or disallows this.

**Q:** I have a strong interest in urban planning. What does entry-level housing look like in Rhinebeck?

**A:** Part of the process right now is gathering input from the community to define what the housing needs are and what solutions may evolve. Presenter mentioned “missing middle” and cottage housing as options that could be explored, for instance.

**Q:** Let’s talk more about climate resilience. I believe we are just going to get wetter. Let’s get ahead of it.

**A:** The subcommittee is looking at two sides of climate concerns: how to mitigate it and how to build resilience. For instance, we are looking at specific ideas like the possibility of solar panels on top of buildings, while being sensitive to the preservation of the historic character and charm of the Village.

Commentary from attendees:

I live on the stream. When we have heavy rainfall, my yard floods. It did not used to do this. And it’s not just big storms; rainfall is eroding the banks of streams and lakes.

**Q:** Has anyone done an inventory of the land at the Fairgrounds? Do they use it all?

**A:** Chris Tavener who is on the subcommittee reports that the Fairgrounds property accounts for approximately 12% of the land ownership in the Village. The Fairgrounds is a separate, private entity, and usage of the fairgrounds comes back to the discussion regarding collaborative and cooperative efforts. The community can provide ideas for what

they would like to see offered at the fairgrounds and suggest other ideas for access to and the use of the fairground’s land.

**Q:** Has there been any discussion regarding connecting the Village to the train station, docks etc.?

**A:** The Transportation and Mobility subcommittee is working on recommendations for this topic. It's been suggested that an intermunicipal task force be created to work on such projects that involve the Village and the Town.

**Q:** Are you working on the absence of sidewalks to TOPS?

**A:** Sidewalks have come up at every turn in the public input opportunities. The Transportation and Mobility subcommittee is working on this topic. Several of the subcommittees are addressing this topic and we are documenting your interest during this meeting, too.

Commentary from attendees:

- Drivers speed along there and that is a dangerous walk or ride. (Echoed by at least two others)
- I feel like there are residents that would walk or bike to TOPS if it were safer with a bike path or sidewalks. Maybe safer with trees as a barrier to such a path.
- You can cut through the fairgrounds
- My dream is to have a bike route to TOPS!

**Q:** Who pays for the buses that go to TOPS?

Answer from audience member: Dutchess County

**Comment:** Regarding the 6 Mulberry property, personally I think the proposed plan is too dense.

Commentary from attendees:

Three people "seconded" this statement verbally.

**Q:** Is there a coordinated effort within the Town and the Village?

An inter-municipal task force could address further opportunities.

**Q:** If we need more housing, why does it need to be in the Village? Isn't there more space in the Town?

**A:** There are development plans being advanced for properties both in and outside the Village (including adjacent land), and other development (and redevelopments and adaptive reuse) will occur and can be accommodated within the village. On a personal note, I raised my son here and ask, do we have a responsibility to give future generations the opportunity to live here in the Village?

**Q:** Is the Village green space set as a done deal for all subcommittees?

**A:** Nothing is a done deal. Subcommittees are in the process of gathering information. Please send your concerns and input— beyond tonight — via the comprehensive plan email on the Village website. All input is welcome.

Recorder’s note: This question generated a short discussion that referenced a subcommittee presentation earlier in the month that mentioned some possible ideas for revising the municipal parking lot. This led into the following question regarding parking.

Parking is on my mind. That lot is the only place to park. Recorder asked for clarification as to which parking lot he referenced. Attendee verified that he meant the municipal lot where the Farmers Market sets up on Sundays.

Attendee commentary: Several people mentioned the existence of other areas to park, including behind the bank.

**Q:** Are the undeveloped land parcels on your map private property?

**A:** Most parcels discussed are privately owned.

**Q:** Where on the map is TOPS?

**A:** TOPS is in the Town, so it’s not shown on the map of the village.

**Q:** Regarding climate resiliency, what are some ideas?

**A:** We should be looking at the community and asking if we can do more. A comprehensive plan can address new development and whether or not building near waterways will be allowed. We can talk about streets, storm drains, the tree canopy, etc. Also renewables; solar in particular.

Recorder’s note: This prompted a short discussion about using the dam on Crystal Lake as a micro-hydro power project and whether it would produce enough energy.

**Q:** Who owns the fairgrounds?

The Dutchess County Agricultural Society, a non profit association with its own board of directors.

**Q:** (follow-up) Do they pay taxes?

Answer from presenter: No, it is a 501c3, non-profit organization and not required to pay property taxes.

**Q:** We live in the Town. Is there a Town entity?

**A:** Yes. The Town business is conducted at the Town Hall, which is across Center Street from the Village Hall. It’s probably where you vote.

**Q:** Is there a Town Mayor?

**A:** No. There is a Town Supervisor.

**Q:** (follow-up) OK. Hired or elected?

**A:** Elected.