

Attendees: Jeanne Mettler, Rus Davis, Jerry Kraus, Nancy Schultz, John Pollok, Roberta Roll

Guests: Ruth Thomas, Arthur Rubinstein

The minutes of the October 10 and October 24 meetings were approved.

Ruth Thomas, Copake General Store – Interview

How did the town help you as you started your business?

They were trying to determine whether to buy or lease the building. She spoke with Supervisor Jeff Nayer to see if there were any tax incentives available to them. The only incentives were if they were to buy the building they could have received tax incentives on improvements. These were not helpful, so they decided to lease the building until they are sure the business is viable.

The Code Enforcement Officer did not provide much information. Fortunately the building was grandfathered from current code requirements because it had previously been used as a general store. They would not have been able to launch the business if they had needed to meet current code requirements for handicapped access, etc.

The owner of the building wasn't willing to do anything to ready the property to be used as a general store. They had thousands of dollars of expenses to get it ready.

The Health Department requires them to have their water (point well) tested every month which costs them \$30/mo. plus the logistics cost to get the samples to the lab. Fortunately they have had perfect outcomes.

They also had to meet the requirements of the State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Overall, the town didn't help much but also didn't hinder. They had to do it all on their own, except for excellent support from Karen DiPeri and Mike Peschel from the CEAB. It would have been helpful to have a knowledgeable liaison.

Why did they pick Copake?

Years ago the prior owner asked her husband to buy the business, and they eventually decided to do so. She would not have picked Copake because it doesn't have enough traffic/demographics to support the business. Eighty percent of the traffic is weekenders/summer people. Things die after Labor Day. The hamlet needs more destination businesses to draw more people into town.

Current residents don't come to the store. It is hard to change people's shopping habits. They are in the habit of shopping in the big stores where they can get everything they need once a week. They think shopping locally will be more expensive. People want gourmet foods for a low

price, and perishable items that cannot be profitable at low volumes. Some people come to their store because they don't have a car to easily shop elsewhere. They have found that they are a convenience store even though that was not their original plan. They can't compete with grocery stores. They will be focusing on segments where they can make a difference: catering, gifts, greeting cards, Copake memorabilia.

They are not supported by the local people, and some, including fellow businesses, even hope that they will fail.

What types of venues would help?

A Performing Arts Center would likely have a hard time being viable because of the same traffic problems encountered by the General Store. They also would be impacted by the economic recession.

We need to bring more campers into town.

We could use a movie theater, drive in movie, restaurant, wine shop, a place to bring families for art lessons, music lessons, dance, karate, etc.

What else would help?

A local newsletter would be great.

We should have more events to draw people into town, like a 50's Block Party, bike tours, cultural events. Small businesses in town do not have the capacity to spearhead these events.

Signage near Route 22 would be very desirable.

PR campaign.

Cooperation among businesses is poor, in fact some businesses don't get the fact that competition is a good thing.

Hamlet Plan RFP

The committee reviewed the Hamlet RFP edited by John Pollok. A marked up copy from 11/14 is in the DropBox.