

Rockland Riverfront Communities Council

Thursday, January 5, 2023 Minutes

Virtual Meeting via Teams

Submitted by Adam Carsen

Members Present: Adam Carsen, Jim Creighton, Carmen DiBiase, Kathy Galione, Mike Kohut, Marie Lorenzini, Matthew Shook, Laura Zitofsky
Members Not Present: Ralph Kirschkel, Bill Pfaff, Dan Sherman,
Others Present: Jake Palant, Rockland County Planning Department Community Relations

- 1. Call to Order** – The meeting began at 7:08 pm. As Jake Palant was attending his first official meeting, the meeting began with self-introductions from the other members. Adam noted that with recent staffing changes and shifting responsibilities in the Rockland County Planning Department, at some point he may no longer act as the County representative to the RRCC but no decisions have been made yet.
- 2. Overview of Membership** – Kathy noted that the by-laws allow the RRCC to bring in its own members. There are currently vacancies for representatives from the Towns of Haverstraw and Stony Point and the Villages of Grandview-on-the-Hudson and Piermont. Kathy suggested approaching Ellie Kassner, who ran for Stony Point Town Council, is on two library boards, and has run a family business, as a potential member. Mike said he thought Ellie would make a good addition. Matt noted that having members of local government as members has been very helpful to him. Kathy noted that Ellie will likely run again for Town Council. Marie stated that Stony Point has not provided a representative for some time, and it would be good to have the Town represented. Kathy also suggested Ariana Polanco, who is a new member of the Rockland County Task Force on Water Resources Management. Kathy is going to meet with her and try to get more information. Another possible person is Ray Mosquea who is the volunteer Sustainability Coordinator for the Village of Haverstraw. Matt suggested Silvia Welch and Klaus Jacob of the Piermont Waterfront Resiliency Commission. Kathy added Piermont Trustee Kelly Evans Ruby.

Kathy also noted we need to hold leadership elections this year.

- 3. Adoption of Minutes – June 2, 2022** – Jim stated that the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) update should not refer to a transfer of development rights and should state that it allows for a transfer of development density. On a motion made by Marie, seconded by Jim, the minutes, as amended, were adopted.
- 4. Town and Village Updates** – Kathy asked for updates on recent local developments. Jim stated that the Town of Clarkstown has adopted a TOD revision and is planning on revamping the zoning code for the hamlet centers of West Nyack, Congers, Valley Cottage, and New City to make them more consistent and uniform with each other. NYSDOT is also going to conduct a safety study along Route 304. Jim noted that once the hamlet zoning updates are complete, Joe Simoes could provide the RRCC with a presentation.

Kathy noted that the Town of Orangetown is updating its Comprehensive Plan. The HNA Conference Center is still vacant and there has been discussion of the Town taking it over through eminent domain. There have been ongoing zoning and building violations at Nyack College and the Town has expressed interest in purchasing the property. Matt noted that he

thought the Orangetown Comp Plan update was very good, particularly regarding issues relevant to the PIPC. Kathy asked about resources to help her better understand Comprehensive Plans. Jim suggested the American Planning Association's website. Matt suggested looking at programs by Pace Law School.

Marie said the Village of Nyack has been working on local infrastructure projects and will provide more information.

Mike said the Village of Haverstraw will receive approximately \$10 million in state Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) funding awards. Some of the projects that have received funding were \$4 million for shoreline stabilization and public promenade at the proposed Chair Factory project and \$1.5 million for an expansion of the Brick Museum. Other projects that received awards were a 55-unit housing project, the relocation of basketball courts to expand the municipal parking lot, mural projects, and expansion of the ferry terminal to allow for alternative transportation (e.g., e-bikes & scooters). There are also two affordable housing projects that may move forward in 2023. There is also a planned waterfront restaurant at Admiral's Cove.

Laura said the Village of West Haverstraw has bids out for street infrastructure projects. Improvements associated with the Champlain Hudson Power Express power line project by Transmission Developers Inc. (TDI) are at the planning stage. There will be a park mural funded by a Rockland Resilience grant and an art installation at Peck's Pond Park. There are plans to improve pedestrian access near Railroad Avenue and Peck's Pond.

Matt said that the PIPC is getting ready to spend bond act money and are in the design process for improvements in parks. There are planned improvements at the picnic grounds at Bear Mountain Park. The PIPC hopes to re-open Lake Sebago and improve parking at the Reeves Meadow Visitor Center in Harriman Park. There will be improvements to the comfort station and water treatment at Lake Welch to try to fix the hazardous algae bloom issue that happened last summer. A new sustainable energy comfort station at Rockland Lake is planned. The PIPC is working with New Jersey and New York on a proposed bike connection between George Washington Bridge and the Mario Cuomo Bridge. PIPC also issued comments regarding the Watchtower project in Ramapo and is participating in 106 Historical Review of Eagle Bay.

Adam stated that the County is planning on updating its Comprehensive Plan and is working on an RFP for a consultant for that project. The County is also working on creating a centralized, on-line land use database and permitting service that would allow applicants to make applications for all County Departments. The County has also engaged a consultant to obtain a Clean Energy Community certification from NYSERDA, which will open up grant opportunities. The County's Open Space Acquisition program is moving forward with the purchase of several properties. Jake added that the County is working on a Hazard Mitigation Plan.

- 5. 2023 Visits and Speakers** – Kathy discussed potential speaker and site visits. Carmen suggested having someone from the Sky View Acres Land Trust come and talk about their activities. Kathy suggested a visit to the Stony Point Battlefield Park. Matt noted that the Battlefield Park closes promptly at 4:30 pm, so any visits would have to be during the day.

Other possibilities were the Marydell Nature Preserve and the Haverstraw Brick Museum. The Jehovah's Witness's Headquarters project in Ramapo was discussed, but no work has been started there. Regarding speakers, Kathy has a contact at the DOT who may be able to speak about resilience funding and the Inflation Reduction Act. Mike suggested a tour of some of Rockland Green's recycling facilities.

6. **2023 Meeting Dates** – Kathy noted that our by-laws require seven meetings each year. Kathy asked if we should continue to try to meet on a monthly basis. Jim said that he liked our practice of not meeting in the summer months and with a few meetings being cancelled each year due to a lack of a quorum, we will likely end up holding about seven meetings. Kathy asked about the prospect of having an in-person meeting. Adam noted that the Building T conference room has hybrid meeting capabilities. Mike said he prefers in-person meetings. Kathy said we can try an in-person meeting next month.
7. **New Business** – Kathy noted that the Rockland Conservation and Service Corps is recruiting Corps members and looking for summer sites and Friday projects, if anyone had any suggestions for sites. Kathy said that a Corps member, Charity Dixon, was nominated to be Corps Member of the Year by The Corps Network, a national group.

Adam shared a brief presentation about Babcock Ranch, a sustainable community in Florida that managed to survive the Hurricane Ian with minimal damage. It is completely run by a large solar array and battery storage system. It was designed to be a walkable community and incorporates resilient design techniques. Adam also summarized a report by Berkeley Lab that researched similar power system and found that they are feasible and improve resiliency. Adam pointed out the NYSEERDA provides model local laws for streamlining and regulating Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and Solar Energy systems. Mike stated that O&R is looking for locations for pilot geothermal networked energy projects and the Village is going to make a proposal.

8. **Adjournment** – On a motion made by Carmen, seconded by Mike, the meeting was adjourned at 8:46 pm.

The Council typically meets on the 1st Thursday of every month, except the month of August, when the Council does not meet. The next meeting is scheduled for February 2, 2023.