

## **Rockland Riverfront Communities Council**

*Thursday, February 2, 2023 Minutes*

*Hybrid Meeting: Rockland County Department of Planning Conference Room, Bld. T, Pomona, NY  
And Microsoft Teams*

*Submitted by Jake Palant*

**Members Present:** Adam Carsen, Jim Creighton, Carmen DiBiase, Kathy Galione, Ellie Kassner, Ralph Kirschkel (arr. 7:18), Mike Kohut, Bill Pfaff, Matthew Shook  
**Members Not Present:** Marie Lorenzini, Laura Zitofsky  
**Others Present:** Jake Palant, Rockland County Planning Department

- 1. Call to Order** – The meeting began at 7:04 pm
- 2. Adoption of Minutes – January 5, 2022** – Kathy wanted clarification on the statement from the minutes indicating that Ellie was part of two library boards, as she did not remember this being stated during the meeting. Ellie clarified that she was part of two different types of library boards, and this statement was correct. Kathy also noted that “corps” was misspelled in several places. On a motion made by Carmen, seconded by Matthew, the minutes, as amended, were adopted.
- 3. Overview of Membership** – Kathy introduced Ellie Kassner as the newest board member of the Rockland Riverfront Communities Council. Ellie would represent the Town of Stony Point on the Council. Ellie stated that she owns a third-generation family business in the Town of Stony Point. She is in the iron working business and mostly does work in water treatment and wastewater treatment plant setting. She indicated that she is heavily involved in her community, mentioning that she ran for Town Council within the last year and plans to run again this year. Ellie is involved with the library system, is the president of the Board of the Tompkins Cove Public Library, and the past president of the Ramapo Catskill Library System (RCLS) Board. The RCLS includes libraries in Rockland, Orange, Sullivan, and Southern Ulster Counties. She is also involved with the Garner Arts Center and the Dominican College Palisades Institute. Ellie specifically mentioned that she worked with Ralph, and he spoke highly of the RRCC. Ralph had previously told Ellie that he learned a lot from this board. As a new member of the RRCC, Ellie hopes to acquire information and share it with her town.

Kathy stated that Ariana Polanco would join the RRCC at its next meeting on March 2nd. Ariana would represent the Town of Haverstraw. She is assistant to the Rockland County Task Force on Water Resource Management. Kathy asked Matt to discuss reaching out to other possible members that they had previously talked about for representing the Village of Piermont.

- 4. Election Update** – Kathy mentioned that officer elections would need to be held this year. She indicated that she wishes to revisit elections in May, prior to the summer.
- 5. Planning Speakers and Opportunities for 2023** – The group informed Ellie of recent site visits conducted by the RRCC, such as Upper Nyack, River Hook, Haverstraw Chair Factory, and the Nanuet TOD. Ellie mentioned a potential site visit could be Lovett site, which was the staging area for the Tappan Zee Bridge, where an organization is now constructing components for wind turbines prior to shipping. Mike stated that, while it

would be difficult to arrange visits to a Rockland Green site at night when they are typically closed, visits during the day may be possible. He also indicated that a new materials recovery facility (MRF) is scheduled for opening within the next 60 days, which may be a good location for a site visit.

Ellie suggested getting speakers from Clearwater or Riverkeeper. Kathy suggested a site visit to the Sky View neighborhood. Matt mentioned Michael Finewood, who teaches Environmental History at Pace University.

- 6. Town and Village Updates** – Kathy asked for updates on recent local developments. Ellie mentioned the annual Stony Point Seals Polar Plunge to occur on February 12, with the kickoff party to take place on February 4 at the Fireside Restaurant. Usually, 50 to 100 people participate in the plunge and go swimming in the river as part of a fundraiser for families with sick children. Kathy asked about the status of the Bar Mar development. Mike said that there has been a pre-grand opening sale of trailer homes. Ellie mentioned that some of the units are almost ready to be occupied. Ellie mentioned that she will have monthly meetings with Supervisor Jim Monaghan prior to the RRCC meetings.

Mike stated that the Chair Factory in the Village of Haverstraw was going to start SEQRA review.

Adam mentioned the update of the Rockland County Comprehensive Plan and implementation of a County-wide land use database/application program to simplify the development application process. The County will be involved with safety studies with the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) regarding the Routes 303 and 304 corridors. Adam, in his role as the Executive Director of the Rockland Municipal Planning Federation, indicated that the Federation will have a dinner on March 30<sup>th</sup>. The Federation will hold an in-person training session on March 16<sup>th</sup>, focused on building codes. Jake added that the County was working on implementation based on the Route 59 Corridor Study in the Town of Ramapo and Villages of Airmont and Spring Valley.

Bill indicated that in previous years, Upper Nyack rewrote its comprehensive plan and zoning code. The Village developed a technical review committee, to help review applications that were going before the land use boards. The Village had also offered input on developments in the Town of Clarkstown, such as proposed housing in West Hook Mountain.

Following the update from Upper Nyack, Kathy prompted the members of the RRCC to introduce themselves to Ellie. Kathy mentioned that the open positions with the RRCC included representation from Villages of Grand View-on-Hudson and Piermont.

Matt informed the group that he was just asked to provide comment for parks on the New York & New Jersey Harbor and Tributaries Study (HATS). The study is intended to find ways to prevent flooding in the Hudson River tidal estuary. Most of the potential structural improvements, such as seawalls and jetties, are in areas around the New York City harbor, the lower Hudson River, and the Hackensack River. The study did mention Stony Point in the context of natural flood mitigating features. Matt said HATS is conducting virtual public meetings, and one is to take place on February 6<sup>th</sup>. Carmen asked Matt if there were

any building moratoriums proposed within the study area. Matt responded that a moratorium was one of the recommendation options in the study. Adam stated that moratoria are temporary and must be tied to a specific process, such as a planned update to a zoning code.

Jim stated that Clarkstown was in the process of rezoning its hamlet centers, with a current focus on New City. He mentioned that Joe Simoes could come in and discuss this further. Jim also mentioned the Route 303 and 304 safety studies that would take place within their town.

- 7. Rockland Planning Land Use with Students** – Kathy wanted to discuss Rockland PLUS from a youth perspective and describe the process that leads up to the annual symposium. Ten schools and 290 students are participating in Rockland PLUS this year. Prior to the symposium, each school will be visited three times. Nanuet and Clarkstown South are the only schools to not participate this year. Kathy shared a PowerPoint presentation that would also be presented to the students. 2023 partners involved in the program include Kathy, Sonia Cairo, Margie Turrin, Marisa Annunziato, Brianna Rosamilla, and Kim Burgos. The program is focused on educating students on sustainable planning. The students will work on two projects: a local project and a collective project at the symposium. The students will work with mentors, including real estate experts, government officials, planners, etc., to develop different projects. These projects include a local project and a collective project at the symposium. Mike added how students from different schools will have an opportunity to interact with one another at the symposium and learn more about each other's communities. This also provides different perspectives to the mentors.

To demonstrate one of the activities with students, Kathy presented a slide that included two QR code links. Link 1 allowed the group to answer the question, in one-word answers, about what they liked the most about their community (in the case of the RRCC, Rockland County overall). Link 2, in the same fashion, allowed the group to answer what their biggest complaint was about their community. The results from each of these questions generated word clouds. Based on how the RRCC answered these questions, they liked how Rockland County was natural, scenic, historic, and diverse, while their complaints regarded transportation, traffic, overdevelopment, and litter.

Kathy shared the Community Enhancing Features sheet, which comprised a matrix of different sustainability features divided into five categories. These categories were Architecture & Smart Building Design, Transport, Business & Services, Social Connections, and Environmental Enhancement & Preservation. This worksheet was intended for another exercise. Kathy also presented Venn Diagram, which connected the components of the “economy,” “equity,” “environment,” and “social” with the concept of sustainability. She stated; however, that these components of sustainability could easily be interrupted by climate change.

Another slide that Kathy presented included a map that illustrated the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions produced by different countries throughout the world. The map stated that the average American's carbon footprint was 16 tons/year, while the global average was 4.8 tons/year per capita.

Other slides that addressed the issue of climate change included a pie chart of regional CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Report (2013), the different levels on which climate change needed to be addressed (global/international, national, local/state, personal, and business), New York State's leadership on climate action, youth drivers or "Climate Influencers" for combating climate change, information on B-Corps (certification for businesses), and different variables that must be considered in planning.

Ellie expressed how this symposium was a good opportunity for the younger population of the County to voice their concerns and opinions, where they can be taken seriously. Carmen questioned how students would react to being referred to as "constituents," since her interpretation was that a constituent is typically somebody who can vote. Mike responded that being a constituent did not necessarily entail the ability to vote. Carmen otherwise believed that calling a student a constituent might be empowering.

8. **New Business** – Kathy again noted that the Rockland Conservation and Service Corps is recruiting Corps members.
9. **Old Business** – There was no old business.
10. **Adjournment** – On a motion made by Mike, seconded by Carmen, the meeting was adjourned at 8:16 pm.

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