

2015 Master Plan Committee Meeting

The **Master Plan Committee** Meeting of the Town of Cortlandt was conducted on **September 3, 2014** in the Vincent F. Nyberg Meeting Room of the Cortlandt Town Hall located at 1 Heady Street, Cortlandt Manor, NY 10567 with the following committee members and appointed staff in attendance:

Master Plan Committee:

James Creighton

David Douglas

Michael Fleming

Seth Freach, Town Councilman

Dani Glaser

Adrian C. Hunte

Michael Huvane

Theresa Knickerbocker

Barbara Halecki

Absent:

Daniel Hayes

Maria Slippen

Staff Advisors:

Chris Kehoe, Deputy Director of Planning

Edward Vergano, P.E., DOTS Director

Rosemary Boyle-Lasher, Assistant to Director of DOTS

AKRF

Michelle Robbins

Anthony Russo

Michelle Robbins from AKRF began the meeting with a review of the MPC's draft policies for Historic and Cultural Resources.

The Goal is to protect and preserve Cortlandt's historic and cultural resources and the policies were organized into Land Development Policies and Inventory and Preservation Policies. Once the overall Master Plan is completed we will need to show an overall goal, the policies and the metrics that are being met for the NYSERDA grant.

Michelle is beginning to draft chapters as they are finished for the MPC to review

Michael Huvane asked how we incorporate things that weren't achieved in the last Master Plan, moving forward. Michelle explained that she has been trying to utilize, from the previous MP, the historical policies that were not implemented and to incorporate them into the new policies.

The Draft Historic Preservation Policies were discussed:

#10 to Maintain and update inventories of historic and cultural resources (such as buildings, objects, structures, sites, places..) including locally significant resources not listed on national or state registries and make an inventory readily available on the

Town's website and through Historic Cortlandt GIS, has been re-worded as per the discussion at the last meeting.

#12 to develop an inventory of Cortlandt's scenic resources including views of and from historic resources as well as the Hudson River - Michael Huvane asked if this policy was repetitive (as to #10) however Michelle thought it was important to highlight specifically the scenic resources.

#6 Develop design guidelines for historic areas such as Verplanck, Van Cortlandtville, Oregon Corners - Michael Huvane stated that to develop design guidelines for historic areas is wide open. Are we telling people how to decorate their homes? Michelle explained it is left open on purpose to give flexibility or to call it whatever you want. Sometimes it can be architectural guidelines or a hamlet revitalization plan. This can be decided as we go forward. Chris Kehoe added that it will be up to the MPC to recommend to the Town Board how stringent you want to make design guidelines or rules. Rosemary asked if the guidelines also refer to public spaces, such as the street-scape, parks or signage. Michelle answered that they do include these areas.

Chris Kehoe stated that the formation of a historic district commission could be very controversial.

#8 to Establish Historic Advisory Council to promote historic and cultural preservation and oversee the Town's historic and cultural resource inventories - was added to establish a Historic Advisory Council and Michelle suggested that they oversee the Town's historic and cultural resource inventories.

#14. To conduct interviews and obtain oral histories from older long-time residents and families as well as residents familiar with Town's history - Michael Huvane would like to have the oral histories video recorded. They could be shown on C.78 or YouTube, for example.

Seth asked whether #16 through #26 were actual policies or just strategies to achieve. Michelle answered that they were actual policies to get to the goal. Seth commented as to how much history is in Cortlandt. Is it spread a little thin and were some of the strategies a bit specific (i.e. #21 - *Host an event at Steamboat dock with tours of historic boats and #17 Develop an annual tour of historically significant buildings, areas, and places in Cortlandt*). Rosemary suggested that #17 be changed to a self-guided driving tour, with perhaps a map being distributed at the Toll House or creating an App. For #21 it was suggested to change it to hosting an event at Steamboat Dock to highlight the Hudson River.

#24. Increase opportunities for historic and cultural learning at the Hendrick Hudson Library - Adrian asked if the Hendrick Hudson Library was the only library we had access to. It was decided to change the wording to increase opportunities for historic and cultural learning such as at local libraries (to include neighboring libraries) and at the Tollhouse, schools, etc.

#25. *Provide public access to historic sites and places along the River to connect residents and visitors to the river through the Town's history.* Jim Creighton suggested that The FDR V.A. hospital in Montrose be stated specifically - Seth commented that this is beyond our control because it is owned by the Federal Government. Chris Kehoe believes that through Governor Pataki's efforts we do have permission for river access, although it may have been damaged by Hurricane Sandy. Rosemary stated that there was a broader plan to make it more public but this may have changed after 9/11.

Michael Huvane commented on the picture of the amphitheater that was circulated and thought it would be a great addition to the Cortlandt Waterfront Park. The MPC agreed. Michelle thought although it may fall under the Recreation Policy, it could be added to the Historic segment also. Categorization is difficult because many policies fall into different categories.

Seth would like to surround the parks rebirth that is happening in Peekskill and to compliment it with fine arts in Cortlandt. Michelle will draft a policy for the amphitheater.

Draft Open Space Policies were discussed.

The 2004 MP policies - partially implemented or not yet implemented are listed on the handout.

David Douglas has shared these policies with the CAC/Open Space Committee and they will think about things they want to recommend. Chris Kehoe added that the CAC/Open Space committee had discussed the policy to *create a cemetery district and designate cemeteries as a cemetery zoning district* - the idea is that cemeteries do provide "open space" because it is part of the character of the community and maybe they should be called cemetery districts. They do have zoning (R40) but the chance they would be re-developed as a sub-division is remote. Jim Creighton stated that some cemeteries have open land that they would most likely use for cemetery expansion so if they could get more money for development that is not off the table. Seth Freach mentioned that with cemeteries, under state law, if someone that has the responsibility of running a cemetery goes defunct, it becomes the town's burden to bear.

It was decided to keep cemetery districts. Michael Huvane believes the older cemeteries bring character to a roadside.

David Douglas asked about the smaller cemeteries in the town where there are houses nearby, which are most likely not relatives to the deceased. If the homeowner decided that they wanted the tombstones removed or graves moved, could it be done? Chris stated that it may be difficult to re-zone the smaller cemeteries. He believes the neighboring property owners would not want to be bothered and would want everything left alone. Michael Huvane stated that he would want to know if there are any restrictions. Chris will ask the town attorney for direction. Seth thought this may become

burdensome for the town, in the long run. Rosemary suggested the zoning map be checked because the cemeteries may already be zoned "pros" or "cros" to reflect their open space character. She believes it protects them from future development. If this is the case, then it may satisfy Jim's concern and it won't require a new cemetery district. The staff will research this topic. Jim thought small cemeteries can be included in the historic policies to help protect them.

Rosemary asked if the MPC wants to *create village greens in existing hamlet areas and in other areas, where appropriate*. The response was "yes".

David asked *what Integrated Pest Management practices* were. Dani explained that companies that deal with pests are "chemical free". Chris noted that the Town's Park Department has gone in this direction already with the town fields. He believes this has already been accomplished, in some way. It has been partially implemented. This policy should be updated for 2014. Seth felt it should be stated as to continue the on-gong effort. Michelle will state it as to continue integrated pest management practices and she will discuss with Dani suggested terminology. Seth asked if we want to take steps to itemize approved and non-approved chemicals. Dani felt it best to educate and encourage the use. Rosemary said that this is the public outreach aspect and people should understand what they are near and what they are putting on their lawn and in their environment. Jim stated that Westchester County had removed some of their chemicals from their toolbox but there are still a lot of them out there. Michael Huvane wants to make sure that the Town of Cortlandt does practice what they preach before we put it in the MP. Dani believes that we are doing this already because as part of the certification process that we just completed, this topic was researched. Adrian suggested that we make the MSDS sheets available (Material Safety Data Sheets) from the EPA, which would include not only pest management but salting, snow removal and road maintenance.

Seth asked about the policy to *improve and expand access to designated open space by using existing road and utility rights-of-way and other properties to connect them to each other*. He doesn't believe this can be done. Jim believes this came out of the discussion regarding using the aqueduct or under the Con Ed wires because you have wide open areas that connect to other areas and it would great to have a trail there, bike access or walking. Seth commented that it has value for a green belt or migratory paths but not for active recreation.

#15 Increase connectivity between neighborhoods and from neighborhoods to business areas, waterfront, parks, and greenways through the use of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, multi-use paths and trails - Michael Huvane finds this ironic because of the Hanover property application where Apple Hill could not connect to the new property. He stated we have these great plans and create these roads but when the property is developed, years later the road is not opened. This is a red-flag for him and through him for a loop. He believes we talk a good game but when it comes to 20 people shouting at a public hearing, we totally cave. He watched it in Cortlandt Estates where Crestview doesn't connect to Habitat. You don't create town identity when you create gated communities,

without a gate. He continues that if we are saying these things, we have to have action that follows it up. This is all good and well but when he sees how the whole Hanover thing went, forget the fact that we don't have a park or field out of it, but the fact that we don't even connect these two neighborhoods that are right next to each other with a street that was already on the drawing board and approved (Apple Hill) is absurd. It is a disconnect from any reality that we have.

Chris Kehoe noted that laws and rules are only as good as the entities that enforce them. You can't not write a law or rule because you think at some future date it will not be enforced.

Michael continued that if we are serious about connecting neighborhoods, then we have to actually follow-up with action and not cave. If we are saying this and the pre-approved plan for Apple Hill, the street was on the maps but now that it is being developed, it is not connecting.

Chris asked what Michael's action/solution would be. He answered to open up the road as it was supposed to be. Jim Creighton added that an alternative solution would be to open it up to pedestrian access so people can get safely to the park across the street. Michael noted this also happened at Quarry Acres. Michelle suggested that by making a policy, this will prevent it from happening again in the future. When you have people appearing you can state that it is a policy of our Master Plan, that was adopted by our Town and although you folks may not want to see it, the majority of the people that filled out the survey or were involved in the process want to see connectivity.

Seth spoke that to rectify the problem that Michael is identifying becomes a matter of how broad or narrow the space for interpretation the Planning and Zoning Boards have in implementing their policies. If you want it to become closer to what our goals are you have to narrow their leeway and how much room they have to interpret the policy.

Michael Huvane does not know what there is to interpret when you have an Apple Hill Road that has a street on the approved plan going to a property that is not developed. How did the street get wiped away? Seth explained that there is nothing to force certain boards to adhere to those sorts of lofty goals.

Rosemary believes that there still can be trails, looking at the content of #15 - of which Michael started with. Nowhere in the content of #15 does the word street exist. We are talking about bike lanes, walking paths and trails. Maybe these streets can still connect with a trail. Ed believes that was the intent, as it relates to open space.

Jim Creighton stated that he did ask that they ensure that the language that was initially drafted and said no connection would only means no cars. It would be a crime for it to be anything other.

Rosemary believes there are opportunities for this in other places, such as Lakeview Avenue East and West. There are a lot of these. Some of it does make sense. Jim believes we should allow residents to get through with their bikes.

Ed added that the residents that live in these certain neighborhoods do not always want the connectivity to exist or change. (He gave the example of Ada Lane, near Baker Street.) Jim said you need to balance everyone's viewpoint but then make the best decision for the town.

Seth noted that the residents that do come to the meeting to "cry" do have a rightful complaint because they purchased a house for a specific living environment and quality of life that they sought and when it changes significantly that will have a large impact on their everyday life.

Michael only agrees if you are altering a plan, not one that was pre-approved. Apple Hill was pre-approved, and then it was unapproved. They knew when they purchased the property. It is frustrating because we talk the talk but don't walk the walk. He wants a serious effort, not lip service.

Anthony stated that Rosemary was correct to state that connectivity doesn't only mean by car. Rosemary asked does this policy do what you want it to do.

Michelle asked if you want to state in the policy that it is required to ensure connectivity between neighborhoods where appropriate and allow the boards to determine safety. Seth stated that you can set a high standard. Jim added that when it comes to the boards making decisions, they are guided by the policies but they don't have teeth.

Michelle noted that the difference between this MP and the previous is we will be required to prove that we are implementing these policies (these will have metrics). We will be held accountable by NYSERDA for some of these policies.

Dani asked if we create our metrics. Michelle answered we will be developing the metrics.

Seth stated that with new a development that happens or reconnecting existing a development, a certain percentage be set of what we consider to be inter-connectivity between neighborhoods. This can be a goal and measurable metric. This gives the town more incentive to accomplish this goal.

Dani asked if we put the metric in the plan does it have more teeth.

Jim would like connectivity between certain businesses also (i.e. along Cortlandt Boulevard). Rosemary stated that a policy should be to inventory existing opportunity for future connectivity.

Michelle would like everyone to start considering metrics to measure some policies.

Please share your ideas. NYSERDA gave us criteria for the metrics but they will probably also use our ideas. This is not only a planning document for land development it is a planning document for the town.

#9 Preserve land to prevent encroachment on flood plains. - Adrian asked if we would develop metrics for this. Chris asked what is meant by this, acquire land? Michelle

explained that it means a buffer to keep land from being developed (this could include conservation easements). Chris suggested that this be re-worded.

#7 Preserve agricultural uses and land suitable for agricultural production - David asked if the land that is not being used for agriculture uses but theoretically could be, should be preserved for that purpose. Michelle thinks what you are seeing in many places, land that was underutilized is now being converted back to farmland (i.e. urban gardens).

Seth asked if we could establish a light agricultural zone. Rosemary reminded everyone to take into account the Westchester County Agricultural District, which encourages agricultural uses within the county. Seth asked if there was a different type of residential zoning that has much more relaxed rules about chickens and things of that nature. Can there be a change to what is permitted in the residential zone. Michelle said people are using their own yards more than they did twenty years ago for things such as beekeeping, chickens, etc. David suggested that if we want to encourage agricultural uses we could restrict it to just fruits and vegetables. The concern is the animals. David doesn't believe these fit into a residential area. Chris suggested checking with Code Enforcement because our zoning code talks about large animals and small animals, etc.

Dani believes we should be opened to the chickens and bees, etc. and suggested holding informational forums on this topic. David Douglas added that it can be an issue when the chickens and bees are at the neighbor's home, next to you. Not every neighbor is courteous. David is wary of promoting a policy that encourages chickens and bees in residential neighborhoods.

The policy could say to revisit the town's rules and regulations with respect to agricultural uses. Jim added that it should also say to support sustainable living. Chris stated that when you are broad, it ends up being someone else's problem to figure it out and implement it.

Adrian asked if the survey asked the question if people are using their land for growing food. Rosemary explained that one question does ask where you buy your food. (Grocery store, garden, health food store, farmers market).

#8 Limit suburban sprawl and direct new growth to targeted areas - Jim Creighton agreed with this policy but Michael Huvane felt it was too wide-opened. It was then suggested to remove this policy.

#12 Improve water quality of the Hudson River and its tributaries - Chris Kehoe does not like this and Rosemary agreed and asked how will we accomplish this or measure it. Dani noted that it is accomplished by monitoring the tributaries and all the waterways flowing into the Hudson. Rosemary said the public is being educated about not using phosphorus. Chris requested the policy be re-worded. We can state that we support education and outreach to help improve water quality.

#3 Continue to develop trail system throughout the Town of Cortlandt for pedestrian and bicycles and #13 Connect and link pedestrian and bike trails throughout Cortlandt -

David suggested that these policies be combined (and perhaps #14 *Develop a Master Trail Plan for Cortlandt showing the existing trail system and identify potential future connections*). Seth asked if the wording should be develop a plan or access the feasibility of a plan. The maps should be looked at. We do need a plan to determine where all the trails are. Chris explained that we did apply for a CFA grant to fund a Master Plan to answer this question. It was decided to keep the wording as is.

Michelle explained that there is actually no plan in existence that actually shows where the existing trail systems are. This would be a good start and everyone agreed they would like to see a visual inventory of our trails. Seth believes it will be very difficult to connect the trails, due to the geography of the town. He doesn't want to set it up, to then fail. Michelle explained that it doesn't have to connect everywhere. Having a map will help a lot, even though it is not connecting. It was decided that the wording for #13 should read connect and link pedestrian and bike trails throughout Cortlandt, wherever possible.

Chris stated that we do have the Cortlandt Shoreline trail that was developed in the early 1990's. It was mapped and approved as part of the Hudson River Valley Greenway. He suggested it be reviewed.

It was discussed that #14 should be kept as is (perhaps adding where the existing trails are located). Michael Huvane talked about passive and active land. He doesn't believe the Town's active land is active enough. He believes this policy will help with that issue.

#1 Protect wildlife and maintain bio-diversity - Seth agrees with the policy but asked how a metric would be set. Michelle would consider it more of a goal.

Rosemary asked everyone to review an e-mail from David Douglas and the OS/CAC members dealing with the *definitions of terms such as "conservation easement", "conservation parcels" and "open space parcels" should be more precisely defined so that, among other things, a better sense can be readily obtained of how much open space there is in the town, how much of that "open space" might be developed, and how much of the "open space" is being or might be used for various purposes (e.g., drainage, utility uses, etc.)*.

The Town Board should work with the OS/CAC to develop and adopt revised definitions of such terms with respect to their acquisition, regulation and monitoring. Jim stated that this is very important and asked if the Town Attorney (Tom Wood) is reviewing. Chris state that Tom Wood is reviewing it and then he will provide it to the Town Board, who will then give it to the other Boards. Seth would like this to be included as a policy. David noted that this discussion has arisen before.

Chris reviewed a map that shows a variety of open space categories (i.e. County and State Parks, Teatown, and the conservation easements, such as Valeria). He continued that the question is what you should do with these easements. Valeria is monitored by the Westchester Land Trust that walks and reports on the property once per year. This is not done for all the other easements in the town; nor should it be. Maybe some land should

not be called a conservation easement. Michelle added that some should not have public access because they were specifically set aside as open space. Chris gave an example with the Planning Board when there is left-over land from a certain project that will never be developed; historically it has become a conservation easement.

Michelle concluded that these policies will be reviewed again once more feedback is received from the OS/CAC Committee.

Sustainability

Michelle spoke that sustainability is the umbrella under which we are organizing this Master Plan. It is the principal that is guiding us. Sustainability can be defined in many different ways. Michelle researched and the building blocks of sustainability were listed: Quality of Life, environment, economy, equality, public health, regional inter-connectivity and education/lifelong learning. This chapter will reach out to all the other chapters. Different ways to describe them were listed

- Improving the livability of the built environment/community vitality
- Environmental Health
- Economic Resiliency
- Planning with Equity
- Planning for a Healthy Community
- Regional Connectivity (Mid-Hudson Sustainability Plan)
- Education and Life Long Learning

These are strategies to help achieve the goal of sustainability. These are the metrics that have to be discussed in the MP. She asked everyone to look at these concepts and come up with other concepts, as well for the comprehensive MP and the policies that we are developing.

In the individual sections, we are creating the actions that implement the strategies.

Michelle added the educational aspects because it is a huge piece of this.

Please read the climate resiliency definition. She explained this is driving a lot of the planning actions right now.

Chris noted that this will not be a normal chapter and may be difficult to write.

The plan now is that in the Sustainability Chapter, the vision statement (as to what we want our community to look like), will be placed there. We will talk about why these are important to us and then state that the policies related to these can be found in the chapters. Michelle explained that this is how we proposed to set it up in the grant application. NYSERDA has given us six metrics to abide by, with one being how we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

NYSERDA will ask how the money is being leveraged, that they gave us.

Michelle had copies of other communities' plans that have created metrics. It is a real challenge as how to organize the entire document. Most likely every policy in the MP will relate back to sustainability. This will be Chapter #1.

Dani suggested keeping it clear and simple.

Seth asked regarding the sustainability chapter if it would make more sense to approach this chapter at the end or keep it as a vision statement, listing everything you want to accomplish. Michelle will try to create the outline of the document. The committee will decide how to wind this topic throughout the entire document. Dani will be consulted for other suggestions. Dani worked on the sustainability plan for the Mid-Hudson region and stated it was organized very well. She will review this for the next meeting. She will look at the chapter headers for guidance and decide if they relate to Cortlandt.

Jim spoke that although the grant and our focus for the plan is Sustainability he doesn't want to lose sight of what we want to do in this MP; we shouldn't feel handcuffed Michelle and Anthony agreed, stating there are things that we might have to include in the Master Plan that we might not necessarily include otherwise, but we will not keep anything out because of NYSERDA.

Dani noted that the Climate Smart Communities program that the Town followed was extremely organized and detailed. This will give us some ideas.

Jim added in regards to the Master Plan, that because these will be guidelines for the homeowner, he wants it to be searchable.

There was a discussion regarding the survey and how it will be distributed. The survey will take about 15 -20 minutes to complete. A link will be given out for people to complete and hard copies will be available to those that do not have a computer. There will be an outreach plan.

The survey will be out there for a long time (until the public outreach meeting in January). A flyer with the link will be distributed by Michael Fleming at Family Fun Day.

The next meeting will be October 1, 2014.

Minutes submitted by Judi Peterson