

## 2015 Master Plan Committee Meeting

The **Master Plan Committee** Meeting of the Town of Cortlandt was conducted on **August 13, 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:

Supervisor Puglisi D. Puglisi, Town Supervisor	Barbara Halecki
James Creighton	Adrian C. Hunte
David Douglas	Michael Huvane
Michael Fleming	Maria Slippen
Seth Freach, Town Councilman	
Dani Glaser	

### Absent:

Daniel Hayes  
Theresa Knickerbocker  
Chris Kehoe, Deputy Director of Planning

### Staff Advisors:

Edward Vergano, P.E., DOTS Director  
Michael Preziosi, DOTS Deputy Director  
Rosemary Boyle-Lasher, Assistant to Director of DOTS

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Supervisor Puglisi welcomed the Master Plan Committee and introduced a new member of the Town of Cortlandt Staff, Mr. Michael Preziosi. Michael is the new Deputy for the Department of Technical Services.

The Supervisor has been meeting with the Town staff and AKRF during the past several months and has been updated on the progress of the master plan.

### Review of Policies:

Michelle Robins spoke about the original base studies from 2004 in which some of the demographic tables have now been updated. (these have been sent to the Google groups). Some of the trends that she noticed from the data were the following:

- an increase in the Hispanic population, in Cortlandt and Westchester County (and the entire country). This is a trend that is expected to continue. In Cortlandt the Hispanic population has tripled since, 1993 (presently 13%).
- The overall population in Cortlandt has had slow, steady growth.
- The 20 -35 year old population has been decreasing, in the County, especially in the wealthier communities. In Cortlandt this population was 22% in 1990 and presently it is 12%.

David Douglas was encouraged by the decrease in the numbers of families living in poverty, in

Cortlandt.

Michelle encouraged everyone to review the demographic data.

There was a discussion about the 20 - 35 year old population in Cortlandt. Supervisor Puglisi has noticed a number of young families still living in the town. Adrian Hunte believes that it is the young adults, who should be self-sufficient, that can't afford to live here. Supervisor Puglisi said for the future we have to attract and keep these young adults living in Cortlandt.

Michael Huvane added that in general it is very expensive to live in New York State.

Linda Puglisi noted that in the 1990 Master Plan, the goal was to control over-development and we also wanted more open space, of which both were achieved. Over-development was the rage in the late 1980's. This has been achieved through special permits, zoning, etc and by acquiring open space. As we go forward, we will need to decide what kind of development is desired.

The Residential Land-Use policies were broken down into categories:

Housing, Mixed Use, Neighborhood and Community Character, Waterfront, Energy Conservation and Sustainability and Land Development Regulations. Michelle asked for any comments.

Michael Huvane spoke regarding the multi-generational housing, that he understood it was to allow people to adapt their housing for the situation, not necessarily to convert to a multi-resident home. (It should be stated that this policy is more for accessory units for family).

Supervisor Puglisi noted that there is an accessory apartment law on the books, but not too many people take advantage of it. The owner of the property has to reside in the house.

Seth spoke that the Master Plan committee discussed that the housing might be something temporary that was attached to the family, not to the property.

David Douglas clarified that for an accessory apartment, the residents do not have to be related. The Zoning Board has discussed trying to make it easier for family members to live in the accessory apartment with a requirement that a permit would be needed every two years (which may also help in enforcing the laws). Linda added that presently only 25% of the house can be turned into an accessory apartment. This should perhaps be increased.

Supervisor Puglisi also suggested that the Town Assessor give the committee updated statistics on how many accessory apartments are currently in the Town.

Michelle asked if the Zoning Board gets requests to increase the size of the apartments. David said that they do and this is a sticking point. They have given applicants a range of no more than 30%. Michelle asked for the reasoning to keep the range under 30%? David and Adrian explained that the code is 25%. Therefore, the code may need to be changed. David thought up to 40% would be reasonable.

Jim Creighton asked if the current homeowner could live in the accessory apartment and still be the primary homeowner. The answer was yes. The property owner has to live in one portion of the house.

David again stated that he would recommend the code be changed to make it easier for family

members to live in an accessory apartment. Michelle noted that this could be a goal for the Master Plan.

Michael Huvane has been frustrated with a house in his neighborhood that was used as a dormitory for 15 people. Ed Vergano explained that the definition of "family" can be controversial.

Seth spoke about #15 under Waterfront, of the Residential Land Use Policy: He commented that in Verplanck, there is a lot of industrial zoning and that we should not lose this in the town. There is still a need for this type of zoning and balance is needed. Supervisor Puglisi agreed.

Supervisor Puglisi asked if the committee was in favor of #10 - to permit the development of second-floor residential uses above retail stores and other commercial uses in identified Town centers and other targeted locations. Michael Huvane said that this policy helps develop a downtown and can make it more vibrant. This helps bring more people back into town. This may help bring the young adults back.

Michelle spoke about the goals for the Energy Conservation and Sustainability policy: The Goal is to encourage green practices in housing construction and rehabilitation that support durable, healthy and energy efficient homes. (#17 - #19 supports that goal).

Also, another statement made was to connect housing to jobs, childcare, schools, retail and other amenities/services needed on a daily basis by strategies such as directing housing toward certain locations, coordinating housing near public transportation, which may reduce vehicle miles traveled, which is a NYSERDA requirement.

Linda spoke that she and the Town Board are developing a property appearance town ordinance. They want this incorporated into the Master Plan, if the committee agrees. The Town Attorney and DOTS staff are working on this.

#### Historic Preservation Policies:

Michelle asked for any comments regarding the hand-out.

Seth Freach noted that the inventory of some of the historic things we have in town, some we have put a lot of effort to highlight (i.e. the Tollhouse) and some other things on the list, such as a stone wall or a mile marker, can't be located. Is there a way to incorporate a mentality to either love it or leave it? If it is designated historical, it doesn't lose its historical value but are we obligated to enshrine it with an historical form of protection?

Michelle stated that the state or nationally registered places get more attention but at a town level an ordinance for specific properties that have more meaning or more significance, can be listed and identified. You can rate the significance. The danger can be when certain properties are identified, you make them more financially valuable or people see that as unfair. This is an argument people can make.

Michelle asked if there was a Historical Advisory Committee that writes reports on properties. Supervisor Puglisi noted that there is an Architectural Review Council only.

Michelle commented that other towns have Historical Review Boards that if a property comes before them, they can write a report back. This can be a new policy in the Master Plan.

Linda added that an inventory of the historic roads and walls was completed but there is more to do. Seth gave the example of Albany Post Road, that is a historic road, but there is no evidence of it, in a unified way. Is it still historically relevant? Linda said yes.

Rosemary explained that although it may not appear historic, history still did occur in that area.

Linda explained that we had wanted to list the roads that dated back to the American Revolution.

Jim added that along Oregon Road, Con Ed removed 100 year old trees. How do we maintain something that is so historic, because you can't replace 100 year old trees? Jim asked the question that since it is a historic road does Con Ed have a responsibility. Seth answered that they do not.

Ed Vergano suggested that it would be best to maintain a historic theme, as much as possible. He gave the example that on Oregon Road the traffic light is more of a historic looking light. There are ways to spruce up a corridor that is historic in name only. Linda would like the property owners to step up, as well, to assist.

Rosemary would like AKRF to write up some options regarding how to deal with this and also give thought to giving the Planning Board and Zoning Board flexibility.

Michelle mentioned view corridors. Rosemary noted #21 - to coordinate with adjoining municipalities and those across the Hudson River to provide input and comments ...where development proposals will directly impact the visual character of the Town of Cortlandt. Linda noted that the Town is a member of the Historic Rivertowns, of which she is on the Executive Committee. They are always looking for ways to take our history, region and area and plan together and have events together. HHRT has gone to other communities across the river, but they have not been interested in joining.

Michelle will suggest for a Master Plan policy to enhance view corridors and this is done with the roads. You can specify specific segments of the road that are view corridors that cannot be changed.

Linda noted (#22) that the town has two historians, Laura Lee Keating and Jeff Canning and has asked them to coordinate historical seminars to be held in November 2014.

Seth Freach talked about the Peekskill Trolley and asked that we find a way to municipally encourage businesses in town that the predominate product would be historical (such as a tour) and that they would emphasize and sell as a product, the history of Cortlandt. Anthony gave an example of a town in Virginia that does historical tours and the tours would begin at a restaurant. Michelle also suggested hosting lectures that could be held at a local restaurant or park. Seth would like it to be less run by the town and more run by a business. Michael Fleming thought to

expand the tour/trolley aspect from Tarrytown on up to Cortlandt and thought that would be a great business but we would have to work with other municipalities to accomplish this.

Linda mentioned that when the HHRT was established 15 years ago, there was a trolley that was shared. It was funded by Martin Ginsburg. It is now defunct. The money and funding/economy is now the problem. Perhaps HHRT or our Chamber of Commerce could assist us.

Jim Creighton added that the Little Red School House does host events with special guest speakers. Maybe the town can expand on these events.

Seth believes the key is to get a business involved because they will put the investment in the PR and the advertising. Michael Huvane asked if there was enough inventory to sustain this type of business and that other towns would need to be involved. Anthony added that you must tap into the regional resources. There was a discussion on the popularity of The Blaze that is held at Van Cortlandt Manor, in Croton. The parking area and roads are currently being renovated.

David Douglas had a question about #8, updating the inventory of historic resources every ten years, evaluating the historic significance of all buildings more than 50 years old. He believes this is a bit broad. Michelle explained that the State defines that anything over 50 years old could be considered a historic resource. It is done every ten years, because everything is aging and may become historically significant. She agreed it was an issue. She suggested doing an entire historic resource inventory, taking pictures, reporting about the historical significance and then when a Planning Board has to make a decision on a project, they have the information. A Historical Society can put together these inventories. David doesn't believe 50 years is historic and suggested maybe 80 years would be more appropriate. Jim spoke that the policy of inventorying all the buildings is an ambitious project. Seth thought that instead of inventorying all buildings only inventory those that have been previously identified as historical. Michael Fleming asked if there was a current inventory of historic buildings that could be referenced. Seth would want a historic committee that they would be empowered to review inventory and add items to a list.

Rosemary stated that there is an historic inventory listed in the 2004 Master Plan, which was put together by the Town Historians. It is an extensive list. This list does need to be updated.

Linda agreed that a Historic Committee would be good to have. Laura Lee Keating is our main historian and also the main curator of the historic Tollhouse. Jeff Canning is the main curator of the Little Red Schoolhouse, so both are spread thin. A committee would need to be appointed by the Town Board.

Michael Huvane asked about making a pedestrian sidewalk along Rte. 202 a goal and Michelle noted that it would be talked about in transportation.

#### Open Space:

The hand-out was reviewed. Michelle asked when thinking about open-space, what are some of the challenges? What policies would help you over-come those challenges?

This topic will be the homework for the next meeting.

Michael Huvane stated that he believes we have a lot of open space but it is too passive. He would like to see more activity going on because we don't seem to connect to it.

Adrian added that this area is ripe with beautiful open spaces and recreational opportunities and housing and it should be interlocked.

Michelle would like to add that we should expand the access to the Hudson River but that is in the Recreation section

Linda noted that 70 acres were deeded to the Town by the Hollowbrook, which most people do not know are there. It is somewhat steep but the intent is to develop a trail/hiking system. Similar to what has been done at Hillpoint (town owned property, 352 acres with a trail system and kiosk).

Seth would love to have people come to Cortlandt for recreational uses. Michelle thought a new policy would be to develop a master trail plan for Cortlandt. It needs to all be connected.

Dani would prefer to see that the open space is left alone and not put to use. She would like to let it be and let the trees be. Michael Huvane disagrees. Jim noted that this topic comes up constantly with the Planning Board. Sometimes open space is meant to be completely preserved, let it be because it is important that way but then there is open space that is meant to be enjoyed by the people of Cortlandt. We bought it because we wanted to enjoy being in nature. The community needs to understand that open space doesn't just mean completely preserved or always recreation but the two do go together and people need to realize this. It is public land and the taxpayers own it.

Dani is fine with developing some open-space as long as it is done in a smart, rational way that protects the environment.

David added that when the 2004 open-space inventory was completed, the committee tried to go through each property on the list and determine what was the value, what should be left alone and what should be used for active recreation. David explained that certain properties were put into categories such as highest level of preservation and particularly worthy of preservation. A numerical score was not given. Rosemary suggested that a new policy would be to update this open-space report.

Adrian asked about the Con Ed Transmission corridors? It was explained that this property cannot be used by the public. Post 9-11, it is a security threat.

Utilities supersede the town government. Jim asked that we still continue to ask to find ways to access public utility land.

Michelle reminded everyone that this topic will be talked about in detail at the next meeting. We will also finalize historic policies.

David wants the input of the CAC/Open Space committee and mentioned that the timing may be

tight. He will e-mail the group for their input. Rosemary said it would be discussed in October also.

Dani asked where the topic of invasive would fall. Michelle thought in the Conservation, Sustainability category. Dani continued that the invasive plants are very difficult to battle. The invasive plants are attacking our open spaces and they have to be pulled out, not cut down. Maria added that they have to be clipped and dripped (with poison). Education is needed. Perhaps connect with the Cornell Cooperative. Michelle suggested that one of the policies could be that you require native species for any landscaping that are being installed. Dani will research what other communities are doing. Jim added that there are water invasive (water chestnut), as well.

#### Public Survey:

Anthony explained that the Master Plan Survey and cover letter was developed by AKRF, the town staff and town supervisor.

The survey is on-line on a survey monkey. (This can be put on Facebook).

The following points were made:

The town does not have everyone's e-mail. (about 25%)

The Code Red phone call can only be use in emergencies.

The School District web-site is limited for the Town to use.

The survey link can be put in the Recreation Brochure with a page that can be dedicated to the survey.

A hard-copy can be picked up at Town Hall.

A computer workstation can be set-up at town hall for residents to complete the survey while visiting Town Hall.

Michelle noted that when she had conducted a survey that was not on line, the response was horrible. She will research survey monkey results. David Douglas added that if the survey is just on-line, we would cut out certain residents from responding.

Both options need to be made available.

It was suggested to put a notice on the water bill, however, not everyone is on town water and this may be difficult to add to the bill because of space limitations.

A notice regarding the survey can be posted at the Hendrick Hudson Free Library and at other libraries (Croton, etc.).

It will be posted on the Town's website and Facebook.

Linda thanked Barbara for her suggestions and input regarding the survey.

Seth would like to add the question: Do you currently reside in Cortlandt?  
That could incorporate where exactly they live in Cortlandt.

Is the survey anonymous? Can we ask for their e-mail address? Should we ask for their zip codes?

Seth asked if collecting demographics about the respondents is important to the purpose of this survey. Michelle answered that it would be helpful to determine if we are missing an important segment of the population.

Michael Fleming stated that by asking for demographics, many people will be turned off to filling them out. He suggested if you do include it, put it in the back and make it optional.

It was decided that the ages of the respondents should be included (by grouping ages).

Maria felt that the Village of Croton respondents should be sorted out because some of the questions (i.e. on recycling, water and sanitation) may not be as relevant to them. Having the geographical location may help us to know the areas of where we are getting the responses from.

Michelle stated that regarding surveys, for the Master Plan process, you need public input. Dani thinks people will want to fill these out, if they care where they live. Michael Fleming suggested distributing the survey to Homeowners Association and/or neighborhood watch groups.

Dani asked about a communication plan as to who to send the survey to and a timeline to respond.

She asked to list all the community groups of who we all can outreach to. (This is part of the homework).

When will it be complete and ready for people to take? Will it be ready at Family Fun Day? (9/6/14)

Michael Fleming volunteered to sit at a station and assist at Family Fun Day.

It does not need to all go out to everyone at the same time but in stages, and in various formats.

Michael Huvane asked if there is a threshold that we have to hit. Michelle explained that in a Master Plan it will need to be stated and a description given as to what was done to reach out to the public. They want it bulleted and specific. Michelle noted that 400 respondents is the magic number to get a relatively good sampling.

Adrian is concerned within a household that some of the residents you may want responding to the survey will be away at college. How do you capture them?

Who we want to respond to the survey should be stated in our communication - PLEASE ENCOURAGE ALL MEMBERS IN THE HOUSEHOLD TO FILL OUT THE SURVEY.

Dani suggested we try to collect as many e-mails as possible.

Seth would like to include Peekskill in the question of where you would like to dine-out.

Adrian asks to include in #18, the young adult housing category.

Is the survey ADA standard? Rosemary asked how that question would be formulated.

Michelle suggested it be added to #14 (add ADA accessibility).

Everyone was encouraged to check the Google groups for updates and homework for the next meeting on September 3, 2014.

Minutes submitted by Judi Peterson