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2015 Master Plan Committee Meeting

The **Master Plan Committee** Meeting of the Town of Cortlandt was conducted on May 7, 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	Barbara Halecki
David Douglas	Adrian C. Hunte
Michael Fleming	Michael Huvane
Seth Freach, Town Councilman	Maria Slippen, Village of Croton, Trustee
Dani Glaser	
Daniel Hayes	

Absent:

Theresa Knickerbocker, Village of Buchanan Mayor
Supervisor Linda D. Puglisi, Town Supervisor

Staff Advisors:

Edward Vergano, P.E., DOTS Director
Chris Kehoe, AICP, Deputy Director of Planning
Rosemary Boyle-Lasher, Assistant to Director of DOTS

Also in attendance:

AKRF Consultants, Michelle Robbins and Anthony Russo

Anthony Russo, from AKRF, opened the meeting by reviewing the results of the "Pop Quiz" that was completed by the committee members. On the handout, each question was summarized (for the yes and no questions, the percentage were calculated for the others, a range of responses were given). - To review the Pop Quiz findings go to www.townofcortlandt.com.

The following were some of the items that Anthony thought were interesting:

1. Most participants responded that they wanted to be on the MP Committee because they wanted to provide input on the planning for the Town's future.

2. Thinking about the MPC meetings so far, what fact surprised you the most?

a) Town Economics/ Finances - Anthony noted the decrease in Town revenue response. He mentioned that throughout the quiz, the responses reflected a need to bring in businesses and offices to the Town.

b) Town Statistics, Characteristics and Resources: The amount of open/recreational space protected by the Town- stood out. Anthony stated that this goes to the Supervisor's comment that the Town has done a lot in this area.

c) Master Plan Committee Meetings - much of the time was spent on revisiting past project rather than on objectives for the future. - Anthony stated that this is what they are here for and what will be accomplished going forward. Reviewing the past is important and the foundation has been set.

3. Thinking about the MPC meetings so far - what are some of the top strengths/opportunities in our Town?

Strengths - excellent town leadership (Anthony thanked the Town Staff and Supervisor), and also noted the pro-active Town planning.

Opportunities - Waterfront development and the creation of a pedestrian friendly Route 202 corridor - stood out to Anthony.

4. Thinking about the MPC meetings so far - what are some of the top weaknesses or challenges in our Town?

The lack of Town Center and Town identity was the one comment that Anthony noted and asked for feedback from the MPC.

Jim Creighton spoke that this was a topic that the last MPC struggled with because there is not a center of town or a green area where we all get together. The Cortlandt Town Center is the closest thing because it is our economic engine if nothing else.

Seth Freach spoke that some of these challenges are out of our control, to some extent. He continued that most people think of where they lived based on two things: where their children go to school and what they write when they write their address; for example, Montrose, Croton and Cortlandt Manor, NY feel like distinctive, different places. The Post Offices and School District lines can't be changed, so those are barriers to a cohesive identity that will have to be dealt with.

Ed Vergano mentioned that regarding the Rte. 6 corridor there has been a strong effort on the part of this administration to make it more pedestrian friendly and more attractive. A 2 million dollar grant was received from the State for streetscape improvements that would include sidewalks, landscaping, center islands on Rte. 6, decorative lighting, all in an effort to give it a hometown feel. Anthony added that the Town also is trying to work with the developers along Rte. 6 to incorporate these elements (that Ed mentioned) into their projects.

Jim Creighton reminded everyone that the last MPC was successful in getting Cortlandt Manor, its own zip code (10567) instead of sharing with Peekskill. He added that Rte. 6 is also referred

to as Cortlandt Boulevard and we should push all the businesses to start using it.

Adrian Hunte stated that there are no signs along the highways for Cortlandt Manor (such as Yorktown) so we do not have that identity. She added that the sidewalks along Rte. 6 do not connect with sidewalks on the side roads, which make them difficult to access.

Michael Huvane reinforced that Cortlandt Manor doesn't exist with the DOT. There are "Welcome to Cortlandt" signs but not on the highways. Seth Freach agreed.

Anthony felt this was something to be explored. Perhaps Cortlandt Manor can be added, for example, to the Montrose/Buchanan exit sign off of Rte. 9.

5. What to you is "Downtown Cortlandt"?

The majority felt the Cortlandt Town Center/Route 6 Corridor was the closest to being downtown but that it is basically just a shopping center and not what makes up a community. Michelle stated that there is no housing there and that usually is what gives more of a downtown feel to a town. Michael Fleming mentioned the waterfront property in the town is stunning and that it is designed to pull people away from the shopping areas (Cortlandt Town Center), which he is fine with. Rosemary added that parades, festivals, or other activities where people gather is where you get the hometown feeling and this usually occurs in this hamlet area. The rest of our community is more spread out. The Buchanan and Croton residents don't always realize that they are in the Town of Cortlandt, she stated. (They are Villages).

Chris Kehoe said the committee should think about ways to enhance a downtown area (such as the Cortlandt Town Center or the Cortlandt Waterfront). Michael Fleming talked about the local parades (Montrose Firemen Parade) and how his family enjoys those community types of events. Adrian Hunte added that the Route 6 corridor is more accessible and the ability to enhance this area may be easier to do rather than in the other smaller communities in the Town. You can't walk from Rte. 6 to Montrose.

Jim Creighton reminded everyone that across from the Cortlandt Town Center is a major retail proposal. As we look at the center of town or how we can leverage that perception, we can think about what we want that area to look like. Michelle had attended a Planning Conference and commented that regarding the discussion of Cortlandt not having a downtown there is an opportunity to make nodes and create "place making" in different locations in Cortlandt. Perhaps give a role to these different locations in the town. Dani agreed that the reality is that there will not be a downtown Cortlandt but there are spots that can be made into a little downtown areas. Michael Huvane mentioned that little things (different Little Leagues/School Districts, etc) add up to a segregation of where you live and belong. How do we bring everyone together?

Seth asked how does Westchester County define its' identity? As diverse as the County is they embrace that diversity as its identity. That can be looked at as an approach to the identity of Cortlandt. Michelle mentioned a need for regionalism and creating an identity because this makes people want to come back to a place - this is called "place making" and involves signage, and other things that help create "place making" in someone's mind.

Michael Huvane said that having a consistent signage requirement would help give the town a

sense of identity, a visual that would help remind people. Anthony said this is being done in New Rochelle and that he believes this is important.

Michael Fleming added that where he lives, it is not a part of any village, and when the committee discusses regionalism he believes that most parts of the town do not fall into any subcategory (sometimes referred to as unincorporated Cortlandt). Seth felt that one of the tasks would be to find something unique about each area and thread that through the entire town. Rosemary agreed that these are the areas that are difficult to identify and even describe. Ed continued that there is no particular area with many restaurants, they are scattered throughout the town, but there is no "restaurant row". Anthony mentioned that there is the possibility for more restaurants at Cortlandt Crossings.

6. And 7. Have you attended a Town meeting or viewed one?

The majority have attended and watched and Anthony believes that after this experience on the MPC, that more will attend future meetings.

8. Which population is under-served in Cortlandt?

The answers ran the gamut, but the one that stood out to Anthony was the people wanting to work in the Town of Cortlandt.

Michael Huvane was amazed that senior citizens were on this list because he believes the seniors are over-served in this community.

9. Which population is currently best served in Cortlandt?

Anthony felt the most noticeable answer was homeowners and organized homeowner groups. Chris Kehoe and Michael Huvane agreed.

10. Is there a specific site you would like to see developed in Cortlandt?

Michael Huvane would like to see something developed on the DiPaterio property because it is spectacular (it is located between Cortlandt Lanes and Mohegan Colony). It is a smaller piece of property with high visibility. Chris Kehoe noted that this property is zoned residential and the previous Master Plan Committee contemplated that it should remain residential. Anyone wanting to develop the property commercially would have to get it re-zoned, which would have been in conflict with the Master Plan. So if this is something this committee would like to think about then recommendations need to be made of what use might they want to be seen at this site.

Michael asked if the Ash Pit is untouchable for many years to come? Ed Vergano agreed that it is untouchable and not much can be done there. The ash is covered and capped. It is covered with topsoil, seed and flowers. Ed added that there is irregular topography, with steep slopes in certain sections so it would be difficult for development. *(Note from Linda: The NYSDEC would not allow any development at the closed ashpit).*

11. What purpose would you like to see at these sites?

The majority of the answers were active uses and restaurants.

12. What does “sustainability” mean to you?

For Anthony the comments of planning for extreme weather events to protect natural assets and catchy slogans/terms that generally have little substantive content, were the comments that stood out.

Dani added that the town is continually battered by egregious projects (Millennium pipeline, West Point Partners, Spectra, etc.). She asked how do we plan for that to stop? Is there a way? These projects take a lot of time, energy, resources and money to fight, which make us move backwards. Can this committee help plan for the future? Michelle commented that you can't make these stop, because even with a fabulous master plan, that includes every concept, there will always be something in the future that no one can plan for and you will be reacting to a proposal. However, with a very effective plan, you are saying what you will accept in your community and what you will not. It will set a policy and a vision for your community moving forward. If there is a proposal that doesn't meet that vision, it is easier to say no because you have already contemplated what you want. You have already created a vision that is accepted by the public.

Dani believes that because of the LWRP, the millennium pipeline was not built in Croton. The LWRP was a regulation that actually stopped the project. Are there regulations that we can consider that will protect us? Seth answered that what ever ordinance that we enact at a town level can be superseded by other agencies above us. But a common thread of certain projects, past and present, centers on a certain piece of property and access to the river, not encumbered by railroad tracks. This property is owned by Con Edison and is on the market. We can talk about waterfront being an asset for the town or talk about this specific piece of property.

Jim Creighton said that many things are not in our hands. We can say what we want but if a Federal agency is making the call or there is State interest, then we don't have a lot to say.

13. Do we have sufficient open space in the Town?

Majority thought yes and Anthony added that the Town has done a good job with this.

14. Do we need more economic growth?

100% responded yes. Michael Huvane said that the financial and cultural well-being of the town is dependent on the diversity within the town (commercial, residential and industrial).

15. Any other comments as we proceed?

Anthony mentioned the comments for the need to follow-through in policies/programs and identify areas where economic growth is desired and consider expediting approval processes.

Daniel asked about the comment - There is a need for stronger Town identity and asked what the Town identity is? Rosemary answered that there is a lot of history in the town (especially in Verplanck and Van Cortlandtville). Daniel felt it best when branding (or identifying something) to keep it simple, use logos that can be easily identifiable. Michelle said the MPC will be

contemplating this issue. Things to consider would be the 15 miles of waterfront, with scenic significance along the Hudson River. These are identifiable and very helpful. The Hudson River is one of the reasons Michelle believes Cortlandt was a good match for the grant. This is a regional resource and a huge part of living in this area and should be given strong consideration in creating more identity for Cortlandt. Chris noted that much of our waterfront has little public access. Rosemary said progress has been made though in giving the town identity, since the past Master Plans. We now have a Cortlandt Train Station, Cortlandt Manor has its own zip code, and we have our own Town Hall (previously shared with Croton). We have tried to provide more connectivity with the river. Chris spoke that the Verplanck and the Annsville Circle are two areas where we have attempted to do more re-zoning for waterfront tourism. This might want to be revisited. At Annsville there are a lot of possibilities to make this area a "Gateway". Some people don't realize they are in Cortlandt when they cross the Bear Mountain Bridge.

Anthony thanked everyone for filling out the Pop quiz.

Adrian Hunte asked if the Town residents would be filling out a questionnaire or survey similar to this. How will we conduct the public outreach?

Ed Vergano gave the example that in Clarkstown a survey was given and a scoping document was developed into their Master Plan. Seth asked where/who would this be sent to. Dani suggested it be put on the website, using a survey monkey, and let everyone know about it. Seth added that we need an infrastructure to reach out electronically to our residents. Michelle said this should be a Master Plan issue.

Michelle learned from new survey methods that people no longer want to attend meetings in the evening; they want to do it more via technology. Another note of interest was to have an effective survey, 400 responses are needed to be appropriate. She said it is more effective to go to a meeting, such as a Veterans meeting or a recreation meeting and hand out the surveys to a variety of residents, make it simple, make it quick and ask them to complete the survey. Also people would prefer meetings held between 3-5 p.m. They would prefer to leave work early, rather than give up their evenings for a meeting.

Daniel asked if the Town captures people's e-mails addresses. Seth responded that you can sign up to receive the town's e-mails, code red, etc. but there is no centralized town list. (*Note from Linda: we have one but more residents have to sign up.*)

Daniel said very few people will go to the Town's website to look around. Michelle will share some techniques that other communities use to communicate with their residents (at the next MP meeting).

Jim asked from the last Master Plan survey, do we know how many responses were received back. Chris will try to find that out. Michael Huvane said to be sustainable and have low costs we should use technology methods. Seth said it can be used as a tool but shouldn't be the only method used.

Anthony encouraged the committee to take more pictures around the town. Michelle explained

that this was an exercise for the committee to show identifying features of Cortlandt (what they do and don't like). Use anything that might drive home a point, with the policies that will be discussed and then could be used in the document.

Michelle showed a map of the Town, using the Assessor's data to categorize the land categories. (The 2004 Master Plan land use map had been categorized differently; therefore it could not be used for comparison.) This current map shows the percentages of land use categories. She noted that the largest was residential and commented that open space "is up there" and the town was doing well with that category. A very large percentage was vacant and we will try to figure out if these lots are actually vacant or can be categorized differently. Rosemary stated that this map was only a draft and the vacant parcels noted were drastically over stated. This is only a starting point and work will need to be done.

Michelle explained the Visioning Exercise. She referred to the "sample vision statement" handout. This is a sample of several different Master Plans to show how other towns have created vision statements.

Michelle attended the American Planning Association) conference. The APA is the organization which certifies Planning professionals and told how they are now creating standards for Master Plans. They believe the planners should now be taking the lead in sustainability. They have created principals that they want to see and want good planning documents. It includes methodologies for participation and implementation, as well as, different principles they would like to see reflected in the policies and goals of a master plan. Since these have not yet been adopted, she is not sure to what extent these standards will be incorporated into our Master Plan. She believes they will be adopted within the next year, just as we are unveiling our plan. They want to create a rating or designation system similar to a Leeds, where you can voluntarily apply to be designated (or rated). This committee will have to discuss this further but it's something to keep in mind. There are some excellent writing principles that we can use as we go forward.

The Austin, TX plan was noted (they had 3.5 million dollars to use for this plan). It is amazing and extreme, as compared to Rockville, IL, which had \$5,000. Norfolk, VA is also a very good plan. Foxborough, Ma seemed to be most similar to Cortlandt. Michelle mentioned that New Castle is currently working on a sustainable Master Plan, as well. Greenburgh also has a lot of similarities to Cortlandt. Seth asked how does Greenburgh approach their identity question, with 6 villages (they are still working on their Master Plan). Chris added that they do struggle with their identity because there are some villages you don't realize are in the Town of Greenburgh, because they are stand alone, identifiable places.

Michael asked if we knew what NYSERDA's expectations are. Chris responded that they did just send a small definition of what their metrics will be, but it is still very preliminary.

Through this visioning process, Michelle does want to come up with a vision statement for the plan that we can relate our goals, policies and objectives back to. She wants the committee to start thinking about the policies they want to see in the plan.

The definition, for Planning, of "visioning" is the process by which a community envisions its

preferred future. It hopes to capture the hopes, dreams and aspirations of the community and help citizen's agree on what they hope they want their community to become. It is very future oriented.

Michelle shared details she learned of where the country is going demographically. There will be a shortage of units of housing, mainly small lot and apartment/duplex type of living. 75%- 85% of households will be without children by 2025. The two groups that are focused on are baby-boomers and millennials. They are both large population groups and are very similar in their needs for housing. They want walk-ability, and will exchange amenities for convenience. They will spend less on housing. The other statistic was that half of all new households formed between 2010 and 2030 will be single-family households. Michelle stated that the South and West were way ahead of the North East, partly because they have more open space and less developed infrastructure. The question is then how do you create middle housing, which is something between large apartment buildings and single-family homes. This will include more duplexes and condominiums, in walkable neighborhoods. A professor at the conference commented that we ought to be considering how to make single-family housing, more useful. Michelle asked everyone to contemplate these issues as we go forward.

Michael Huvane asked about any trend relative to multi-generations in one house? Michelle said this definitely is a trend. Part of this is cultural, because of the make-up of our population. The groups that are increasing in size are the ones that tend to live in multi-generational housing. The south is creating beautiful bungalow communities where they have tiny homes with a central courtyard, on smaller lots, with more amenities nearby and less expensive.

Chris Kehoe stated that from the previous Master Plan, there was a zoning ordinance to prohibit any residential development in commercial zones. This may be something that should be revisited. Adrian added that the Town just changed the accessory apartment percentages, which makes it harder for accessory apartments. Michelle noted that is a way of alleviating the stress for someone that can no longer afford to stay in their home as they age. If they are allowed to have an accessory apartment, this would allow others to stay with them.

Michelle continued that you need housing to support commercial uses. Michael Huvane noted that Yorktown is doing a good job of developing housing in commercial areas (near Elizabeth Seton and B.J.'s) which are close to the bus line and stores. There is a sense of community at the locations, because the church, library and stores are within walking distance.

Michelle added that another trend is people are going back to urban areas. Millennials prefer urban areas. Seth asked if Route 6 was already too far down the path of big box? Michelle did not think so. You can use big box as anchor stores but can create other uses in between. Dani Glaser asked about the plan for Cortlandt Crossing? Ed said it is still contingent on different issues. There will be an "as of right" retail center, approximately 90,000 square feet or it may be re-zoned to 175,000 square feet. Chris added that it will be a relatively standard commercial development. They may daylight a stream, which they may want to turn into an amenity for a possible restaurant area, due to topography changes they may use some curved

stonewalls where you can use public art. The wetlands behind the property may be donated to the town.

Jim Creighton added that some of the roads may possibly be reconfigured which will allow more pedestrian crossover. Jim likes the concept of walk-ability but without public transportation, walk-ability is just an idea.

Michelle asked the committee to consider the answers to the following question:

What would your community look like if you had the power to make it anyway you wanted? Where would people live, work, how would they get to their schools and work places? On their days off where would they go and what would they do? What kind of house would you live in, where would you shop and how would you get there? What kind of energy would be used for heating, for transportation, for travel? How would your air, water and environment be kept clean?

Try to be as specific as you can in your responses: (Michelle recorded the answers) and she will take the responses and put them into some themes and ultimately create a vision statement.

Dani: Outdoor cafes for coffee and wine

Michael Fleming: Commuter friendly

Barbara: Townhouses, semi-attached, garden apartments - wants more

Michael Huvane.: Multi-modal transportation with pedestrian walkways, interconnectivity

Adrian: walkable, different housing apartments, downtown neighborhoods, (i.e. Greenwich Village).

Daniel: Home as a retreat (moat)

Maria: Small specialty shops with local owners and products.

Jim: A diversity of housing choices that should be bikable

David: Open spaces and then go back to his home in the woods

Seth: a vision of walking out of a co-working space to go for a drink with other people in the neighborhood, and riding bike home from there. Work and live in a community. One stop shopping (similar to the "open scene of the Goonies"). A sense of community.

Ed: Townhouses, shops, restaurants, connected by streets along the waterfront

Rosemary: Wholefoods, Adams Fairacre Farms, Mrs. Greens- walkable, bikeable, or driveable.

Chris: Small-lot, single family housing - similar to Croton - walkable, shop local. Verplanck is very similar. He likes to live and work in the same community.

Dani: normally spends food dollars outside of the town, wants to buy at a Farmers Market/organic food in town. Wants a cultural center, music, Village Green. Her needs are shifting.

Rosemary asked how can we re-use existing neighborhoods to meet our needs? Michelle called this retro-fitting suburbia, through zoning. They will allow more businesses into residential neighborhoods. Smaller grocery stores, changing single-family houses into duplex colonies.

Michael Fleming: Loves to live where he can walk down the block, his children can play in the yard and the road, but does not mind having to drive to the stores and then can go back to his neighborhood that is not necessarily walkable. He values his privacy and the rural character. He likes his home very much and is actually expanding it.

Barbara: Jitneys, trolleys, (lives off Gallows Hill) and has to drive to get everywhere. Maybe if we had more multiple park and rides, we could cut down on the driving and traffic.

Michael Huvane. Culture makes a community. He felt more in a neighborhood while living in the Bronx. Integrating more of the neighborhoods. Moved here to be 1 hour from NYC.

Adrian: Wants office space, live space but still have a sense of quiet. Wants a Hotel or Conference Center to give Cortlandt more of a destination place. Mixed use.

Daniel: Appreciates the Paramount Center in Peekskill to be able to see shows nearby, (cultural attraction) but then able to go back to his house.

Chris Kehoe added that this refers to regionalism: Since the Paramount is located in Peekskill another cultural center may not be needed in Cortlandt. Rosemary mentioned outdoor venues could be built and used certain times of the year, coordinated with the Paramount.

Seth: talked about Peekskill making great sides as an arts-based Community Center. How do we work cooperatively with just the environmental realities that there is an arts-draw, nearby? Michelle said perhaps the Master Plan can include more connections to Peekskill. How do you work with adjacent communities, to make your community better? Compliment, instead of duplicate.
(Similar to Beacon).

Maria: Neighborhoods. Wanted to live near her neighbors, after moving from the city. Walkable to the train and shops.

Jim: Would like a Wholefoods Market. Also mowing lawn less by planting more, homesteading - having chickens. Have more things to help be individually sustainable. We should support this.

David: Hopes the town remains relatively, socio-economically diverse. This is one of the best things about Cortlandt, rather than other towns in Westchester.

Seth: Solar panels on his house.

Rosemary: Leveraging the hospital because they are a huge employer in our town and have put in brand new buildings. There is property nearby (Conklin Avenue) that could be residential (transitional housing). Wants the housing to be medically linked.

Chris wants to develop a town center area around the train station. There are properties for sale that can all be combined to accomplish this

Ed: More recreational facilities (*Note from Linda: An indoor ice skating rink*).

Michelle will combine all these thoughts into a vision statement.

Michelle discussed the Master Plan Structure:

For each Master Plan Chapter we will develop a series of goals and objective outcomes tied to metrics, and policies that will accomplish them. (See handout).

There can be more than one objective for each goal.

Homework: Please come up with 3 potential policies. Please try not to repeat past policies unless they need to be revisited or expanded.

(Michelle has an article regarding middle-housing, if anyone would like to read).

Minutes submitted by Judi Peterson