

The New 2015 Master Plan and Review

The Master Plan Committee Meeting of the Town of Cortlandt was conducted at the Town Hall, 1 Heady St., Cortlandt Manor, NY on *Thursday, October 3, 2013*.

Supervisor Linda D. Puglisi presided and other committee members were in attendance as follows:

Master Plan Committee

Richard Becker, Councilman
James Creighton, Esq.
David Douglas, Esq.
Michael Fleming, Esq.
Seth Freach
Barbara Halecki

Daniel G. Hayes, Esq.
Adrian C. Hunte, Esq.
Michael Huvane
Theresa Knickerbocker
Maria Slippen

Also Present:

Staff Advisors

Thomas Wood, Esq., Town Attorney
Ed Vergano, P.E., DOTS Director
Chris Kehoe, AICP Deputy Director of Planning
Rosemary Boyle-Lasher, Assistant

Absent:

Dani Glaser

Supervisor Puglisi welcomed the 2015 Master Plan Committee. The Master Plan will be completed by December 31, 2015. The goal of the Master Plan is to help shape the next decade in the Town of Cortlandt, with the committees input.

Supervisor Puglisi explained that a Master Plan is a guide, a tool and a vision but not a local law or an ordinance. New York State suggests that every ten years a local government updates or reviews, evaluates or writes a new Master Plan. (This is the third Master Plan that Supervisor Puglisi has been involved with in the Town of Cortlandt). In the ten year period you try to implement the plan and build on those implementations and policies and evolve into the new era. The Town Board has agreed on this new study and has appointed those chosen for the committee. Some committee members are also involved in other committees, boards and councils in the Town.

A consulting firm may be chosen if the Town receives a CFA grant. If the grant is not received the Town Staff will do the work. This is an open meeting and the Press is invited to attend, as well as citizens, which can also give their suggestions, in writing/e-mail.

Supervisor Puglisi asked that everyone try to be present at meetings, which will be scheduled in advance. The committee will meet monthly for 2 hour duration.

Supervisor Puglisi listed some of the accomplishments of the previous Master Plans:

- To have a Town Hall (previous space was shared with Croton)
- Open Space - protection of the environment (3,000 acres added)
- Strong environmental laws (i.e. wetlands, trees and steep slope protection)
- Cortlandt Train Station
- Senior Center expansion and Youth Center
- 9-1-1 system and Paramedics (ALS)
- Any many others

Next each staff and Committee Member introduced themselves:

Tom Wood has been with the Town for 36 years and since 1988, as the Town Attorney. This is his 4th Master Plan. Tom will attend various meetings when needed and will bring closure to the process at the end explaining the legal SEQRA process and next steps.

Ed Vergano, Director of Technical Services (DOTS) which includes Planning, Code Enforcement and Engineering, has been the Town Engineer for 16 years. He will play a large part in this process. Ed was also involved in the 2004 Master Plan.

Richard Becker has been on the Town Board since January 2008. Previously he was on the Zoning Board of Appeals. He has been a town resident since 1984 and is also a physician in the Town of Cortlandt. This is his first Master Plan.

Daniel Hayes moved to the town eight years ago. He is an attorney in a real estate development company which is building a 52 story building in Miami. He served on a planning division and a school board in Virginia and is very interested in the process here.

Adrian Hunte is on the Zoning Board of Appeals. This is her first Master Plan as a committee member. She has been a town resident since 1994 and is an attorney in the area.

Barbara Halecki is an eighteen year resident of the Town. She retired last year from the New York Life Insurance company after a 33 year career in IT. She lives in the Gallows Hill section of the town. This is her first involvement with a town committee and she is looking forward to participating.

Theresa Knickerbocker is a trustee in the Village of Buchanan and the Deputy Mayor. She is a lifelong resident of the Town of Cortlandt, in Buchanan. She has Master Plan Committee experience and she looks forward to this exciting process and watching the community develop in the future.

Michael Huvane is on the PRC Advisory Board. He has been a resident for 26 years and has raised his children here. He is the Vice-President of Marketing and Economic Development for

the New York Power Authority and understands what it takes to build a community and create a vital economic society.

Michael Fleming has lived in the town for 12 years and with his wife is raising their two children. Presently he is an attorney with the Councils office at AIG. Before moving to New York he attended law school in Oregon and worked there practicing land-use law. He has been involved with planning committees at the University of Oregon and is looking forward to serving on this committee.

Maria Slippen lives in Croton. Professionally her background is in Communications and Public Relations. Presently she does consulting work. She and her husband have two daughters that attend CET in Croton, where she is the Co-President of the PTA. She is also involved in other committees in Croton including AYSO, the Arboretum Committee, Croton Caring and the Croton Recreation Advisory Committee. In addition, is a leader of a Girl Scout Troop.

Seth Freach and his wife have lived in the town for 10 years and are raising their son here. He serves on the PRC Advisory Board. Professionally his background is in financial IT, presently he works for himself as a general technologist in software development. He looks forward to working with clients of all sizes and different size groups, projects and infrastructures and finding new ways that technology will make those processes more efficient or lower cost for better results. He is hopeful that this can be accomplished in Cortlandt.

David Douglas has been on the Zoning Board since 2004 and the Chairman since 2006. He is also the chair of the Open Space committee since 2002, which has now merged with the CAC. He lives in the Mt. Airy section of Croton. He has 3 children and his wife is a substitute teacher at CET. David is also an attorney.

Jim Creighton served on the 2000-2004 Master Plan. He served on the PRC for 15 years and was it's chairman for many years. Jim is currently serving on the Planning Board. He is an attorney and finds the Master Plan process very exciting. He likes to see where Cortlandt has been and looks forward to making it even better.

Chris Kehoe works for Ed Vergano in the DOTS, Planning Division and has been with the town for 19 years. He lives in the Village of Croton-on-Hudson and was formerly the Chairperson of the Croton Planning Board. He looks forward to this Master Plan review and it is his second Master Plan in Cortlandt.

Rosemary Boyle-Lasher is a lifelong resident of the town and has had a diverse career in the Town of Cortlandt. Firstly she worked as the secretary to the Planning and Zoning Board and saw what the boards were able to approve without environmental laws. She was elected to the Town Board twice and worked with Linda and a Town Board who adopted many environmental laws. This is her third Master Plan. Rosemary currently works in DOTS/Planning with Ed Vergano and Chris Kehoe in the Town of Cortlandt.

The agenda was reviewed and discussed:

Master Plan Process

Tom Wood explained that the State Legislature has authorized towns to have a Master Plan in the Town Law section 272A. Basically all governments should have a study of its needs, assets and resources and should fast forward into the future and see what changes are expected to occur and how those resources and infrastructures will keep pace with it. The Town Board has the authority to adopt a Master Plan and to establish a process by which it is put together. Our town board has appointed this committee to come up with a proposed comprehensive Master Plan. He explained when the committee is finished with it, it will be submitted to the Town Board, then it will go through 2 steps: The Master Plan will be reviewed under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and that will create the generic environmental impact statement. These documents will go to the Town Board and the Town Board will conduct a Public Hearing. The Town Board must also refer it to the Westchester County Planning Department to obtain their comments. Once the Public Hearing is closed then the Town Board will enact the Master Plan. All acts that the Town Board, thereafter take, with respect to zoning will be reflective of the Master Plan. If the Town Board gets a project it should be in conformity with the terms of the Master Plan.

Tom Wood added that the Town Board and Town government does not control everything that is necessary to make a town what it is and to have everything operate the way it is. (i.e. the Sanitation service - the Town owns the garbage trucks and employs the workers but Westchester County owns the disposal facility- and the town is a part of a County solid waste district).

In the comprehensive master plan the first part of the process is the base studies and then regional needs will have to be considered. After, recommendations will be given.

Supervisor Puglisi spoke about sharing services with both Villages (Buchanan and Croton) and also with the school districts. Sharing services has saved a lot of money over the years (\$20 million in 22 years) but there is still more that can be done.

Master Plan Base Studies:

Ed Vergano spoke that the Master Plan is started with base studies, which provides the information necessary to develop policies which will be included in the Master Plan. Ed added that in the 2004 Master Plan the base studies touched on subject matters such as the community socio-economic profile, land use and zoning, population and housing. Now we have the 2010 census so we have more current data. We will look at our infrastructure, our roads, which are very important issues. It will be discussed as to what improvements are needed. Traffic and transportation will also be looked at in the base studies. Archeological resources, visual quality, inventory of the open-space will be looked at. Energy and conservation are also important topics which will be evaluated very carefully.

Master Plan Process:

Chris Kehoe stated that the Town had applied for a grant. The governor reorganized the states grants process into the consolidated funding application process. One of the funding sources is NYSERDA and it was for comprehensive Master Plans. This tied in with our schedule and with

a major objective, which is green infrastructure. We have applied for a \$175,000 grant. If the funding comes through it will come through NYSERDA, which is the state environmental organization and the comprehensive master plan will have to analyze, with the guidance of the state, all our various topics. The grant would fund an outside consulting firm to help us with this project. We should know by the end of the year.

Michael Huvane noted that he may have some conflicts because the town is a customer of the NYPA and he is the VP for Customer Service. If there are any issues that may be related to the town, he may have to recuse himself. He will discuss with Tom Wood if there is a conflict. Others may have to do the same on other aspects of the study.

Adrian Hunte asked if any of our neighboring towns or municipalities are reviewing their comprehensive Master plans. Tom Wood stated that we can obtain other towns current Master Plans to review. Chris Kehoe noted that Croton has completed one recently as has the Village of Ossining. Theresa Knickerbocker stated that the Village of Buchanan was completed in 2005. Cortlandt's last plan was in 2004.

Supervisor Puglisi commented that the zoning ordinances and laws that the town board does vote on after holding Public Hearings does emanate from policies and recommendations from the Master Plan. She gave the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) as an example- the Town Board passed this ordinance. She also mentioned that the Town Board passed local laws to eliminate mining/rock crushing in the Town. In addition, the town tries to balance the preservation of the environment and open space with the economics. She noted the Cortlandt Crossing proposal located across from the Cortlandt Town Center, owned by Acadia Realty will assist the economics in the town and provide jobs and revenue.

Jim Creighton asked if there was a procedure on how to interact with the public. Will there be a survey or sounding board sessions. Supervisor Puglisi answered that presentations could be given to the public periodically. On-line surveys could be given during the process as we work our way through the base studies.

The Town Staff and Supervisor have been conducting mini-master plans throughout the community: The Montrose Enhancement Plan (MEP), Verplanck Enhancement Plan (VEP) and Round-a-bout Enhancement Plan (REP). Meetings have been held with residents of the community since 2010 to see what the residents wanted, short-term and long-term. They have been very helpful.

2004 Adopted Master Plan Overview/Base Studies:

Chris Kehoe spoke that in order to complete a comprehensive Master Plan you need to study where you are now, which is the process called the base studies. The base studies were adopted in the 2004 Master plan but the base studies were conducted in the 1990's. The base studies are very thorough and up-to-date as of March 2003. So the creation of our new base studies, through this process is being able to work off that document and update all the census data, because that is new data. Staff will be brought in to help create the new base studies (i.e. Highway, Engineering, Planning, Assessor, Tax Receiver, Comptroller, etc.) to talk to the

Master Plan Committee.

Adrian Hunte asked specifically how would this all work: Do we work by consensus? Does everyone have a wish list?

Chris Kehoe said there will be discussions. Supervisor Puglisi added that votes may be taken and discussions made throughout the process. Everyone won't agree on everything. She posed the questions: What do we need in the future? What is the vision? What do we want the town to look like? What is needed for all age groups for the committee to consider in the Master Plan process?

Tom Wood reminded that once the document is given to the Town Board, if any one has any descent, it can be expressed at that time through opinion/statements.

Chris Kehoe mentioned that the previous Master Plans can be found on the Town's website if anyone would like to review them. The Master Plan is just a guide. If a policy comes out of the Master Plan, that is the goal. If action is needed that would still be up to the various boards (Planning, Zoning, etc.) to approve, as well, pertaining to the subject matter.

Rosemary Boyle-Lasher emphasized that Staff is committed to the time line. Staff members will be building the base studies in between the committee meetings. We will work as a collaborative group using e-mail so we do not have to start from scratch at the monthly meetings.

Supervisor Puglisi added that anyone can e-mail her with any thoughts regarding the upcoming meetings, so it can be incorporated into the agenda or to be a topic to be discussed.

Daniel Hayes mentioned that a drop box would be helpful to use to review the base studies. He felt this would be more useful then receiving many e-mails.

Rosemary Boyle-Lasher will try to coordinate this with Matt Logerfo the Town's full-time IT person and report back to the committee.

Schedule/Timeline

The meetings dates are set for the remainder of 2013 (November 6th and December 4th.) Once the other boards schedule their 2014 meetings, the Master Plan meetings will be scheduled.

Most likely they will be held on Wednesday or Thursday evenings.

At the November meeting an overview will be presented using PowerPoint and GIS.

Policy Development

Rosemary Boyle-Lasher discussed Policy Development and spoke of the different chapters. The chapter names were set as part of a grant application (Chris Kehoe had referenced).

Chapter 1: Sustainability, Energy Efficiency and Climate Resiliency was chosen as chapter one based on the grant application. Linda agreed that this chapter and subject are extremely important. Linda noted that the chapters can be added to or deleted from as the committee wishes.

Another important chapter is the Community Character and Visual Quality topic. A property maintenance policy/ordinance is needed.

Traffic and Transportation is a common topic in every Master Plan.

The Land Use topic is another huge item to be discussed. Supervisor Puglisi gave some

examples of potential sites that could be developed (Rte. 202 and Lexington Ave, Round-a-bout area, Annsville Circle, etc.)

Adrian Hunte asked if the potential projects could go forward simultaneously while the areas are being studied. Could there be a moratorium? Supervisor Puglisi responded there have been town-wide moratoriums throughout the years, (which means no development for a year). There have also been mini-moratoriums on certain subject matters, certain zoning topics on corridors, to do traffic studies and to plan for what is needed. A Master Plan is a reason for a moratorium. If you have an existing Master Plan and you are changing the zoning, you can use the tool of a moratorium while the study continues.

Richard Becker added that the Town has followed the idea that the applicant files a project based on the laws that are in affect at the time it is filed. The courts have upheld that. During this (Master Plan) process, anyone that should file now would be subject to the current rules.

Supervisor Puglisi explained that a Master Plan evolves and changes. We are evolving and there is always something new to do. She and Richard agreed that you can have a moratorium but it probably is not needed in this case.

Jim Creighton added that is still a tool that can be used. Tom Wood noted that it would be used as a last resort and can only be voted on by the Town Board.

Municipal/Community Services - Fire and Schools, NWJWW (water) and the solid waste district are some examples. Tom Wood mentioned that water is critical when commercial development is being considered.

Recreation & Community Facilities- the Supervisor and Town Board are constantly trying to come up with new ideas regarding recreation in our town. Chris Kehoe mentioned that when subdivisions are approved for each unit there is a payment of \$6,000 into a recreation fund to help construct a recreation field paid for by the developer. That fund changes as time passes. The Town uses these funds for recreational purposes. (Recently, to construct a public boat launch, save a lake, build a new playground by the Hudson River and a new basketball court in North Cortlandt).

Natural Resources and Open Space - An open-space inventory has been created by the Open-Space committee, chaired by David Douglas and is used as a guide. It is an important part of a Master Plan to always consider natural resources and to preserve them.

Infrastructure: Sewers, septic systems, drainage, culverts, roads, traffic signals, and bridges are examples. What we have and what more is needed will be discussed by the Master Plan committee.

Technology is important in our lives. New policies will be developed. The Town of Cortlandt has a full time IT employee.

Historical & Cultural Preservation - History is important in this area. The Town Historian position came from one of the previous Master Plans. Laura Lee Keating is our longtime Town Historian and Jeff Canning is our History Advisor.

The Summary of Policies will be completed in March of 2015.

The Final Process will be completed by the Town Board. Supervisor Puglisi is confident that the Master Plan Committee will come up with a solid, strong and positive document on where the Town is headed.

Seth Freach asked to what extent the school board or the school superintendents can be included in the Master Plan process, since there are several different districts in the Town. Can we ask them to attend meetings to present their individual school districts plans? How will the school plans affect the Town's plans (i.e. fields)?

Supervisor Puglisi answered that communication is key. It would be helpful to have them attend some meetings. Rosemary thought they could be invited to attend the March 2014 meeting. It is part of the broader view of the Community Services topic. Tom thought it would be interesting to discuss the rolling census of students and the formula used to predict how neighborhoods age out and how enrollment is predicted.

Seth Freach mentioned that the new Superintendent of Hendrick Hudson School District is talking about the concept of approaching real estate agents and finding out trends and trying to determine how to attract families to his district. If the school boards have their own plans for their districts this will be an overlay for the Town's Master plan.

Tom Wood noted that the districts are all so different and includes other municipalities and village governments.

Supervisor Puglisi noted that school taxes are 69% of your annual tax bill, 11% is the Town taxes and 14% is Westchester County taxes with a few special districts. She summarized that we should interact with the schools and let them know what we are planning, so they can weave that in with their plans. She has met with them throughout the years on various topics and continues to do so.

Jim Creighton was frustrated with the communication with the schools from a recreation standpoint. He feels the school districts are a place to share services significantly. If the districts are willing, he would agree that including them would help. Supervisor Puglisi also suggested a joint board meeting with each school district board and the Town Board. This was done in the past.

Michael Huvane added that the trend now is for smaller families and the schools were built when the families were larger. The demographics from the census will be used when making decisions for the Master Plan. The Town Hall used to be a Lakeland elementary school, was closed and purchased, renovated and opened as a Town Hall in 1992, as an example.

The homework that was handed out was a mini version of the 2004 Master Plan. Staff has

reviewed the 151 policies and determined whether or not the policy was implemented fully or partially or not at all. Then it was determined why or why not it was implemented. On average 86% of the policies were implemented and that is very high.

Chris Kehoe noted that some of the past policies were very general and some were specific. They did not lend themselves to conflict because they were broad goals. Supervisor Puglisi added that now we could be more specific in the new Master Plan. She spoke about the WCA bus tour that was very successful in Westchester cities. She is hopeful the Town of Cortlandt can be the first town to do this in conjunction with the Westchester County Association during the Master Plan experience.

A PowerPoint will be viewed at the next meeting and input will be gathered from the homework.

Michael Fleming asked how the committee could best communicate with each other. It would be helpful to interact with each other, besides e-mail. Rosemary will discuss this with Matt Logerfo. Tom didn't think this would be a problem with open-meetings laws because there is not a majority of any approval bodies. He reminded all to be mindful that anything in writing is subject to FOIL.

Supervisor also suggested that sub-committees could be formed, if necessary, that could meet separately with staff when needed on various topics.

Supervisor Puglisi thanked everyone for attending.

The next meeting is Wednesday, November 6th at 7 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Judi Peterson

