



**Project Advisory Committee (PAC)
Meeting Notes
Wednesday, July 29, 2020**

Present:

- Roberta Roll, PAC Chair
- Alan Friedman, PAC
- Andy Fisher, PAC
- Len Barham, PAC
- Peter Kelly, PAC
- Richard Wolf, Town Board Liaison
- Fred Landa, DOS
- Margaret Irwin, RSPD
- Chris Snyder, RSPD

Update

- Margaret reviewed progress to date on the project, including scoping meeting, kickoff and walking/driving tour of hamlets and waterways. She noted involvement of PLACE Alliance on the project, who was also lead consultant for downtown Copake strategy.
- Participation plan for community engagement has been laid out but may change dramatically given COVID-19 challenges.
- Team has reviewed enormous number of plans, maps and data and will provide Inventory and Analysis of existing conditions to PAC soon.
- Community Dialogue and Design Workshop input can be reviewed online; a very successful event that confirmed and amplified some concerns that group had discussed.
- Have integrated the PAC's work to date including SWOT analysis with PAC and community.

Revised Schedule

- Funding under DOS - initial contract is 5-year contract but in number of cases communities can use a "look back" option to go back to year in which they applied for grant. Copake can use this to capture match. Contract set to expire March 2021 and there shouldn't be a problem with meeting this deadline.
- Margaret reviewed timeline for completed and remaining tasks. Priority projects to be reviewed in Sept/early October and will have to determine best options for doing this. Final workshops often take place as public



meeting at Town Board meeting to present final project - format will be discussed depending on final projects. Choice of priority projects important; challenge in Copake is that there is little land water adjacent in public or non-profit ownership where a project can be proposed in straightforward way. Public-private partnerships add a level of complexity.

- Final reporting and workshop to wrap up by March 2021.

Volunteer Groups

- At February workshop, group had begun working on mechanism for volunteers to participate on very specific projects or tasks in addition to PAC efforts. Roberta indicated that at the first workshop people had very specific interests and she has list of potential volunteers. Would like to have zoom meeting soon to discuss how to organize volunteers, potentially by areas of interest. She will provide a few dates by email for possible meeting dates and times.
- Margaret asked for PAC members to contribute any suggestions or reach out to/rally volunteers as possible. River Street will make call for volunteers prominent on the website.
- Team discussed setting up initial meeting as the entire group of volunteers then assessing whether it makes sense to split out into separate areas.
- Will schedule first volunteer call prior to next PAC meeting.

Workshop and Inventory Review

- Margaret reviewed information from the community workshop about the Town, including demographics and related issues of seasonal homeownership, accessibility and amenities for aging population.
- **Demographics:** Roberta noted that with aging population, projects could be geared toward them and/or towards projects that would attract younger populations. The two are not mutually exclusive. Noted as well that with COVID-19 pandemic, younger families have been moving to the area.
- Team discussed current and potential effects of ongoing pandemic and recovery from pandemic on families moving to and staying in Copake and Columbia County, including ability to work from home, education systems that can accommodate influx, open space, infrastructure. Could change Town's demographic arc.
- Margaret noted team should consider kinds of projects they want to offer based on current and future demographics of the Town.
- **Waterfront parcels:** Noted significant differences between assessed value of land and waterfront parcels in Copake and the extra value associated with waterfront parcels.



- **Flooding:** High level of discussion and concern around flooding at the community workshop (loss of riparian edge, loss of properties and property value). Would be useful to continue this discussion. DOS is strong advocate for resiliency planning in communities.
- **Legacy forests:** Highly diverse blocks of forest in the area.
- **Waterways:** Described the Roeliff Jansen Kill, Taghkanic Creek, Robinson Pond and Copake Lake and the Bash Bish Brook waterways and their watersheds, water quality, associated development and attractions. Alan F. noted there are smaller ponds in the area; Margaret indicated the project is looking primarily at those designated as inland waterways (which excludes Copake Lake), but if there are issues related to smaller waterways the team would like to know about them.
- **Land Use:** Little land within municipal control, healthy residential base and significant percentage in active or passive agricultural use. Copake may need to think about where it would like new residents to live/areas of new development while considering effects of development on land and water resources.
- Margaret emphasized that Copake can pursue smaller projects in the hamlets and waterways that are meaningful to the area regardless of project size or cost, and package projects together.
- Alan F. - Vacant land 25% of parcels - could lead to problems if sold and used for purposes not in Town's benefit (e.g., casinos). PAC discussed zoning issues and impacts of allowable development.
- Margaret asked PAC to look at full SWOT and community comments on website.

Key Sites and Preliminary Identification of Projects

- Reviewed key sites, including potential of land behind the library. Roberta noted she, Lenny and one of the librarians have met and discussed current status of plans. The library has created a path to the Roe Jan, which is cleared along with an area by the stream. They imagine having a seating area and community gathering space, possibility of natural playground and potential small fishing area. Library very excited to develop this area and happy to work with PAC on ideas.
- Margaret noted that Ian could potentially review the range of amenities suggested and create a sub plan for the library's Roe Jan area for a non-profit and municipality partnership.
- Opportunities for rail trail connections and advancements - consider accessibility and safety issues for seniors and youth.
- Strong support for resolution of flooding, variety of fishing spots. Great enthusiasm for project ideas in Copake, which is important for leveraging funds and partnerships. Volunteer engagement important way to pursue this.



Next Steps

- Distribute draft Inventory and Analysis to DOS and PAC within the next week.
- Draft vision statement and goals, which serve as organizing framework for plan. Limited number of goals with associated projects. Will share examples with PAC.
- Community workshop was slated for early fall; TBD based on COVID-19 pandemic. Roberta suggested the school might be a possible venue with appropriate capacity for social distancing if gathering number is increased by the State. Margaret suggested this could be supplemented or replaced by alternative online venues.
- Next meeting's goal is to define vision for Town and its waterways and confirm/expand preliminary project list. Date and time TBD - aiming for first week of September.
- Final comment - match looks to be completely worked out.