

Minutes

Copake Economic Development Advisory Committee
Thursday September 24, 2020, 4pm
via Zoom

Present: Tom Goldsworthy, Chair; Deb Cohen, Julie Cohen; Kevin Davis; Rich Lee; Roberta Roll; Austin Urban; and Richard Wolf (Town Board Liaison)

The committee approved minutes from prior meetings.

1. Roe Jan School Re-use.

A. On September 30, to get input about previous efforts to rehabilitate the Roe Jan School, the committee had a meeting Jeanne Mettler, Town Supervisor; Meredith Kane (a commercial real estate attorney with the law firm, Paul Weiss); Jack Alvarez (architect and historic preservation expert in Albany); and Todd Wolfarth (from Hillsdale). They said:

- The architectural and structural integrity of the building (the “bones”) are good.
- It will need remediation for asbestos and lead paint, but that is feasible.
- Estimate that building will need roughly \$20MM in systems work for utilities
- 1960’s wing is also structural sound, and still in solid shape
- Capital Repairs would be eligible for a 20% federal and state tax credit. The credits can be applied to other income outside this project. Tax credits can also be sold for .90 on the dollar to others.
- Non-Profit or Institutional Use would need a benefactor willing to fund the acquisition and rehabilitation for use as a school, college or foundation.
- Housing (senior, affordable, workforce) Use - Local developers say new construction is preferred. Affordable housing would need to meet complicated criteria to apply for government programs.
- Hotel Use - Foster Supply Co, which operates five Catskill boutique hotels, came to look at the property in 2019. In comparison to their other hotels, this project seemed too large for them, although they did a financial projection.
- Current Owner is a commercial real estate investment company in the Bronx, named Altmark, which has not been contacted.

B. Kevin Davis will plan to visit the school with Julie Cohen, and Main St Hospitality Group, a hotel operator with properties in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Kevin and Tom Goldsworthy will try to evaluate the market and economic criteria that would be necessary to make a hotel here financially feasible.

2. Copake Lake Parking Area. Austin Urban reported that Copake Lake Conservation Society is willing to talk to us about improvements to the parking area at Lakeview Road and County Route 7. There is a concern about boats, kayaks, and other personal water crafts bringing outside and invasive species. Possible improvements may include a swimming area, fishing dock, or boardwalk so people can use it and

not disturb the ecosystem. Tom will approach a landscape architect, pro bono, to develop some conceptual designs to advance the discussion.

3. Copake Hamlet Retail. Roberta Roll reported on discussions she's had to set up temporary "pop-up" retail in the hamlet for Christmas. Tenants will need to pay for insurance and heat at a retail space in the back of Wine Works. Also there is a possibility to have a market at the Grange.
4. Housing. Tom had a call on October 9 with Janis Smythe of the Hillsdale housing committee. She provided the results of a survey done with 250 responses. Also a needs analysis that was prepared by a consultant. Working families were the most important group that needed housing, and second was seniors. Hillsdale is considering a Habitat for Humanity project and seeking a location. Would be willing to work with Copake if a project were near the Hillsdale hamlet.
5. Sewer District Information. Tom summarized what he learned about Hillsdale's sewer district. The total project cost was \$1.8 million. There are 60-70 properties in the district, which was formed with a referendum which required a 51% vote to approve. The district taxes properties at \$65 per month (more for commercial businesses) to maintain and pump their septic tanks and process effluent at a common treatment and leach field. The system was installed with flexible pipe and directional drilling that did not require digging up roads. If 60-70 properties are necessary to make a sewer district economically feasible, Copake hamlet may not have enough properties unless a district is enlarged to other areas. Also residents may not feel \$60-65 a month is a reasonable charge. Perhaps CEDAC could provide guidance to certain groups of businesses for them to cooperate and install small combined private sewer systems. Austin will investigate what the combined sewer system is that is being used by homeowners on Golf Course Road.
6. Survey. Rich Lee is setting up the online survey of businesses. Tom has compiled a master list of email addresses to approach businesses. An email solicitation, the Copake Connection newsletter, and social media will be used to reach business owners. Also a physical mailing will be done to businesses unable to be reached online.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday, October 22, 2020 at 4PM via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,
Austin Urban