



## **PAC Meeting #9, December 21, 2020, 3:45-4:45 PM**

**Present:** Roberta Roll (Chair), Alan Friedman, Andy Fisher, Len Barham, Peter Kelly, and Richard Wolf, Town Board Liaison. River Street Team with Margaret Irwin and Chris Snyder.

**Update on Inventory and Analysis (I&A)** – PAC will receive an updated version of the Inventory and Analysis, with new assessment and flooding/climate sections. Note that Margaret may need to touch base with the assessor at some point.

### **Flooding and Flood Data –**

#### ***Flood mitigation and local stewardship***

PAC members asked why there is such a long section on flooding if there is not a specific project addressing flood mitigation. Margaret indicated that despite a lack of data pointing to specific flood mitigation project needs, River Street will be recommending self-assessment, stewardship, education and coordination of actions by private landowners as well as ongoing infrastructure maintenance and ongoing culvert and roadside swale maintenance. For example, grants are sometimes available to communities and property owners using native plants to create riparian edges.

PAC clarified whether flood mitigation might be folded into each project. Margaret indicated that every project the Town undertakes must evidence its consideration and integration of measures to mitigate future climate change under the CRRA. Roberta added that the idea of a community challenge to improve riparian edges sounds small but also sounds exciting and is akin to the Copake culvert project. It was the first time someone had done that type of project in Copake and agencies were impressed by this. It really does make a difference.

#### ***Relevance and range of mitigation solutions***

This issue is highly relevant for DOS, DEC and DOT as they administer the CRRA (Community Risk and Resiliency Act) to work with communities and on climate exposure.

Alan indicated an understanding that DEC is interested in natural mitigation and making way for water versus building/digging methods, but noted that although the “mother nature solution” may be least expensive it may not be best solution. Margaret asked if there are examples of where structural solutions might be needed. She noted that constructed solutions can be very expensive – walls, berms – and dredging is not typically a sustainable solution. Moving toward natural mitigation systems will probably become more common as part of managed retreat or climate adaptation – moving people out of places that flood and considering how to create an effective piece of open green space. Good operations and maintenance of town facilities, maintenance of culverts, asking landowners to take care of their piece are all important. River Street will review the text and comments Alan provides.

#### ***Flood damage prevention law***

Margaret noted that Copake’s Flood Damage Prevention Law needs to be updated to comply with building code – requiring Design Flood Elevation of BFE plus two feet of freeboard.



**Vision and Goals** – If the PAC can confirm general vision and goals, the plan can be sent to DOS for review while PAC moves on to identifying projects. Margaret indicated it works well to keep the number of goals on the shorter side (4-6). PAC will review and select one of the taglines focused on waterways (or suggest new one). This should be very focused on water, nature, hamlets and the specific waterways. PAC member noted they were impressed by draft vision and goals and asked if the order of the goals matters. Margaret indicated the goals can be organized however PAC would like.

PAC task before next meeting is to finalize the vision and goals. Margaret noted that the projects need to fall out under specific goals. Roberta agreed that some of PAC's language did stray from focus on water but that the draft provided is what the team had in mind. RSPD welcomes any comments on goals and vision and can change specific language as PAC prefers.

The group discussed some terms used in the draft vision and goals: *Climate justice* - Less of an issue in Copake. Many communities, people left in floodplain are disproportionately poor, senior, people of color. Climate justice refers to making sure there is somewhere for people to go. *Blueway* - Any trail on water (kayak, canoe).

**Projects** – The PAC will want to generate a full list of projects that have been mentioned to date but more importantly create a list that the PAC believes should take priority. PAC member noted that the last page of the flooding document discusses the Spur; would expect there will be more detail on the Spur project. Margaret noted there will be more detail on all projects – the Library, Spur, anything that supports Rail Trail, resilience, and any mechanisms that forge virtual, directional or on the ground connections between hamlets. Need to be strategic about top projects for next five years and embed 1-2 under each of the goals.

### **Copake Spur**

Margaret noted she is considering contacting landscape architect working on Rail Trail and requesting assistance looking at Spur and crossing. They will be able to see synergies and challenges. Bridge being planned for short distance away will not make Spur case easier, but she will look at alternatives and speak with DOT. Group discussed Copake's current involvement with DOT on design for downtown (7A from northern side; looking at bike access, runoff). Margaret noted that well ahead of next meeting on this in March 2021, the PAC will have met with DOT for the LWRP projects. There may be no overlap between DOT representatives on these projects, but the more we can tie these things together the better.

Group discussed the cow tunnel option for the Spur crossing. Why can't it be made larger? Roberta indicated it's not high or wide enough and there may not be enough space above and the road. If excavating, may have flooding issues. Options are the cow tunnel, under bridge or on the road. Interesting that part of the continuation of Rail Trail from where it's going up north will go alongside Route 23 (main road). PAC should have a conversation with DOT about good options.

PAC member asked how the plan might be organized so the Spur is central to what State is going to be reviewing, since it's a priority for getting constructed. Will RSPD be able to provide economic impact document that shows growth in the town per the build? Margaret indicated it will be clear this is top of the list – catalyst projects will be emphasized and graphically highlighted. River Street will find ways with language, maps, layout to make it very clear that this project is central. Only issue is if Spur alignment requires property to be acquired – DOS grants can't be used for this. There are other ways and partners. Library, for example, would own the land and no issue here. If Spur is top priority we'll work with DOS to move this forward.



**Roe Jan Library Project**

PAC member noted that the Library project seems most viable; nothing stopping it other than funding. Provides access to waterway down by the library. Margaret described this project as the low-hanging fruit.

**Next Steps** – Next steps include:

- Table indicating what was learned from the inventory – hopeful areas and challenges.
- Pick major categories and lay out potential projects. Will create long lists based on what’s mentioned already in plans/recommendations and can then hone in on priorities.
- *What is timetable going forward?* Margaret noted it will partially depend on DOS review. Generally, this section is data and should be fairly set.
- **COMMUNITY EVENT:** After holidays, need to start planning the **online community event**. Will proactively update the website to have approved I&A, condensed outline of I&A. Once a date is selected, we’ll begin logistics for the meeting. Important piece is to make sure the word gets out about the meeting.
  - PAC discussed and selected date for online meeting: **Saturday, February 13, 2021 from 10:00-11:00 AM.**
  - Margaret emphasized it will be helpful if we can have advance discussion with DOT.
  - **EVENT PR:** Save date will go out in early January, with follow up every two weeks and reminder at end of January. Will try to get robust help from other organizations, links on their websites and via their email lists. REMINDER at end of January.
  - **Presentation:** Margaret noted that the online meeting is unlikely to go much more than an hour, 90 minutes max. It’s recorded so will continue to get input over several weeks. Best to get several presenters involved, with different people talking about Spur, Library, projects, etc., to have variety in the meeting.
  - Will need detailed discussion with library and regarding the Spur. To include: natural play area, gathering space. PAC member noted that the library cleared a beautiful path from parking lot to the water’s edge.
- *Timeline – when do we need to be done with planning document?* Need DOS to have approved plan by essentially end of March. Have 60 days after March 31<sup>st</sup>. Common for edits to be made in closeout period.
- *What will next step be after plan submission?* Engaging engineer or consultant to put together an engineering design for the Spur? Margaret advised that this be part of the grant requested from DOS (design). There will be some graphics in the plan that make it easy for someone to understand. Actual design, cost estimate, permitting and construction documents are things that DOS will pay for as long as we can resolve the ownership issue. Margaret noted that there is a chance DOS might allocate just for design and it’s not clear if there will be a grant round next year or not. Roberta asked if the LWRP plan will have some kind of feasible design or pathway included. Margaret indicated that there may be more than one feasible alternative and DOS will weigh in on this. Margaret will pull together description of projects then figure out who we want to begin with at DOT.
- Next PAC meeting: Waiting for DOS comments on the draft, so will want to wait until this review is complete to schedule next meeting. **Tentatively set for Wednesday, January 6 at 3:30 pm.**
- Margaret asked the PAC to consider whether the economic development group wants the plan to include anything specific or if there is anything of which we should be aware.