

PAC Meeting #10, January 6, 2021, 3:30-4:30 PM

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

Update on Inventory and Analysis – Margaret will send out revised flood section to the PAC; this will be the last piece for Section II, Inventory and Analysis. She reviewed the existing sections of the draft plan and noted that the draft Vision and Goals section includes some examples of projects so the PAC can see how they would relate to each other. These will not remain under the Vision and Goals section but will move to a separate Projects section. The final section will be an implementation matrix with actions that will be needed to accomplish projects.

Vision and Goals – Do vision, goals and sample projects make sense to PAC at this point? These have flexibility to change as the Plan moves forward. PAC comments included:

- **Vision statement.** Roberta suggested language addition to the vision statement: “The current pandemic brings into sharp focus our *longstanding* essential bonds with nature...” – so it’s clear that although pandemic is an issue now, Copake has always had this connection.
- **3.A. Catalyst: Resilience Corps.** Copake has a Conservation Committee and the proposed Resilience Corps project could fall under this umbrella. Roberta noted this is an important goal and suggested leaving the language flexible regarding which group will spearhead this. Margaret added that the action plan could detail an Advisory Committee here as a key partner. There may be opportunities to connect with local high school students and schools.
- **4.E. Streetscape Improvements.** Roberta asked for clarification on what might be addressed as part of this type of project (e.g., Copake Hamlet road project, addition to gateway improvements in Crarville). Margaret noted that flood mitigation projects might be included here as well.
- **1.B. Catalyst: Roeliff Jansen Community Library.** Alan asked whether there is more detail available on this project. Roberta and Lenny indicated there are no specific plans beyond discussion of a playground and picnic area. Margaret suggested the next step would be to discuss with the library and consider a range of options. Roberta noted the Library doesn’t own all the land by the stream. Lenny clarified that the library owns some of the land and the rest is NYS land; responsibility is with Hillsdale even though it’s in Copake. Land ownership shouldn’t be a problem for this project.
- Was helpful to see projects as an illustration of how they will relate to vision and goals.

Flood Mitigation – Alan shared his input on approaches for dealing with climate change and flooding. Knowing DEC is philosophically inclined to let waterbodies go where they choose, planting shrubs along creek and waterbeds still does not seem like it would prevent flooding on scale of Irene. Construction-based solutions such as digging out and widening waterbed or installing reservoir seem like they would make more of an impact. The group discussed efficacy of natural versus construction-based flood mitigation (e.g., DEC policy was largely formed after Irene in response to construction issues that had made flooding worse than it was before; containment can make flooding worse). Margaret indicated that NYS’s Community Risk and Recover Act (CRRA) requires that many State permit applicants and state funding programs must demonstrate that they have considered future physical climate risks from storm surges, sea-level rise, or flooding. Minor changes to stream alignment, addressing areas filled with silt or blockages created by poor agricultural practices would be within the realm of options on the more “construction-based” side of mitigation. Alan noted that this type of change has occurred in Copake and Margaret will discuss this with DEC. They may consider this a maintenance issue and

provide support in this area. “Restoring capacity of creek” may be the best way to envision the goal – an intact riparian border without excessive silt loading. DEC/DOS may consider these natural solutions. Floodplain reclamation can mean allowing more water to go where it can be handled – DOT might redo culverts as part of a constructed solution.

The PAC discussed the DOT meeting on January 19th re: the bridge being repaired in Copake Falls. Alan asked if this has anything to do with water that goes from Copake Falls to this side of Copake. Roberta indicated it only concerns replacing the bridge. Margaret noted they must pass CRRRA review.

Margaret addressed concern re: Main Street flooding problems. FEMA is moving away from flood maps as a primary driver, as explained under Risk 2.0 section of Plan. There will not be additional data for Copake so it will be necessary to gather anecdotal data from property owners. She also suggested the PAC take a look at the Flood Factor website (<https://floodfactor.com/>) and provide this to residents, as they can enter address to confirm flood risk. There is nothing but Zone A anywhere in Copake except a few Zone C that are farms. No 500-year floodplain mapped. Flood Factor tries to correct for this. Roberta asked how and when the PAC should distribute the flooding questions/survey. Margaret suggested sending it out now, and following up if needed with any additional questions. Roberta will request DOS approval of survey. RSPD will set up as online survey monkey survey and a print copy will also be provided for those who prefer to mail it in. Will distribute to people on Main Street, post on website and include notice in Copake Connection to get word out.

The Copake Spur – Margaret left a message with independent engineer (Rob Morrison LRC Group) and will call Dean Knox/County Engineer to discuss the Spur. Roberta will speak with Chris Ricard regarding the Rail Trail and possibility for floating bridges that accommodate water levels.

PAC discussed whether town and landowner conversations should occur before or after the Plan is approved by the Board. Margaret indicated that DOT and DOS will likely have questions about what landowners think, but this is ultimately up to the Town Board. Roberta asked if DOS would preclude a project from being in the Plan if there is not yet agreement from landowners. Margaret confirmed a project can appear in the Plan without agreements in place, but agreements must be in place to secure design funding. It’s recommended that the Plan develop feasible alternatives. DOS will not fund a project on lands that are not owned or where it is not documented that an easement can be acquired in perpetuity from landowner. Peter and Roberta will discuss the option of a loop trail. Roberta emphasized that the long-term goal remains to connect to Harlem Valley Rail Trail. Margaret noted St. John’s in the Wilderness has expressed interest in being part of trail.

Community Workshop – RSPD has draft save the date materials for review. PAC discussed how these would best be distributed and whether Town Board might approve funds for a mass mailing. Margaret noted that circumstances have changed due to pandemic which limits the ways in which people learn about events. PAC decided a range of options including notices in the Copake Connection, the paper, email list of all attendees at prior meeting, PAC personal email lists, and flyers that the town can print and post, etc. should be effective at reaching most residents.

The PAC discussed the overall purpose or focus of holding a large group Zoom Meeting. A public meeting is both required as part of the grant and helps to improve projects through public participation. The community needs to understand and have the chance to provide input on the ideas on the table. Meeting will focus on presenting and discussing potential projects to obtain community input. Priority of projects is often driven by whether they have champions or funders. Need community input to determine what is most important to them.