

Town of North East/Village of Millerton
Joint Meeting of Village and Town Boards and Staff
March 1, 2018

Issues

- Great ideas, but lack of financial resources to make things happen (Village Mayor)
- Aging infrastructure: cracked sidewalks, water system issues, need for sewer to support infill development and economic activity (Village Trustee) – these are things we need to spend funding on
- Obsolete zoning regulations: inconsistent definitions, outdated list of uses; zoning doesn't address today's projects (Town PB member). Need new plan to allow us to fix zoning.
- Housing
 - Limited by lack of sewer
 - Aging population: we have a population that's older than that of the County, more ages 65+ and also 55-64
 - Would like to see housing to address veterans returning to the area (Town Supervisor)
- Need for sewer, if resources [to support it], need to upgrade water, can be identified; very important for economic development and jobs, as well as the retention of youth (Town Board member)
- [*Asked about the types of applications received*] Town Planning Board mostly sees subdivision applications, but the Irving Farm project created some jobs
- Recreation opportunities are declining as they had to close pool; Rudd Pond is suffering, and the gym facility at the school closed
- Codes say nothing about conservation *subdivisions* or even a mechanism to discuss them with applicants (Town Planning Board member), also need incentives to do more land conservation
- We don't have a list of what applicants need to do – people don't know what they need to provide, e.g., a deed, site plan, other requirements (Village ZBA member), no flow chart. This needs to be addressed. There needs to be streamlined process.
- Different perspectives in the Town vs. the Village regarding development that must be reconciled. This is area where a lot of conflict enters. Land use list is outdated. We need to answer:
 - Rural town vs. a center for commerce
 - Example of Dunkin' Donuts: some see it as having a negative impact on community character, while others see it as a way to create jobs for kids (CEO)
- Adaptive reuse an opportunity in both the Town and Village
 - Buildings may be zoned for one thing, but can no longer be used for that – example of agricultural structures and zoning prevents those buildings being used for something else
 - Better to allow the structure to be used for something else than to let it decay
 - Current zoning may not allow it, but it's hard to get a use variance
 - Need more flexibility and opportunities
 - Ag buildings are not going to be used again for ag – needs to be able to be adaptively used. Can we use barns for housing – this would help keep landscape and keep buildings with a new purpose. We have had ideas like this but no way to allow it.

- Broadband/technology needs
 - Large parts of the Town are not covered
 - Broadband would help attract business
 - Young people *need* the Internet
 - Knows of 2 communities that have developed their own WiFi – is there a way to provide WiFi more cheaply than everyone paying separate bills (Village ZBA member)
- Should have a provision in the comprehensive plan to update every 5 years, not 25 years! (Town ZBA member). Have maps, but limited number of uses for them.
- Code doesn't have an easy enforcement mechanism if someone doesn't build as approved, so we'd have to take someone to court (Town PB member)
- Training for PB/ZBA members
 - Training done by County is very basic for what we need
 - Boards get training - Town Board requires PB and ZBA to fulfill training requirements annually
- Would love to see something in the comprehensive plan about being a *dark sky community*
- Now we are a climate smart community – need to know effects of climate change on the Town. We just started the State certification process – maybe will be a committee to work on this.
- Natural resources and zoning
 - We run into properties where it's hard to make the zoning work with wetlands or other natural constraints – zoning says it can allow a use, but the land doesn't
 - Planning Board can't easily use the Hudsonia report – doesn't mesh with zoning – need better integration
 - Give more attention to vernal pools and integrate with zoning (Hudsonia says 500' buffer needed where zoning says 100')
 - Zoning was done 40 years ago and Hudsonia report was done 5 years ago, and wetland delineations may have changed
 - We're over an aquifer and the village is surrounded by wetlands, so it's hard to find any place in the village not affected – [development] impacts the groundwater that the Village relies upon. Need to find places where the Village can grow
 - Flood plains along stream corridors can be an issue
 - Problems with storm water management – where to send water?
- Town and Village currently developing a solar law.
- Emergency services
 - Community relies on volunteers for ambulance and firefighting, but they're aging out... what to do?
 - Trying to take a regional approach with the ambulance issue
 - Need to retain young people
 - Trying to take a regional approach with the ambulance – likely to be same for fire.
 - Mandated training discourages some volunteers – taking 160 hours of training is difficult for someone who has a full-time job
- Concerned about widening of Route 22 by the state someday
- Town/Village municipal services

- Highway garage needed – we’re looking at a joint Town/Village building (but not a shared highway department; Town highway equipment can’t be used on village streets)
- Need a Town Hall: we’re working out of a converted residence that’s not ADA-compliant
- Limited tax base to fund capital improvements
- Town applies annually to NYS bridge program for grants, but never gets anything; Village has applied for state grants for sidewalks
- No capital improvement plans
- Unable to share services with communities just over the border in CT – e.g., transfer station
- Currently, Town and Village share police, recreation, equipment
- Zoning has to be separate between Town and Village – commercial aspect more concentrated in the Village
- Several culverts are major projects and need work

Current initiatives

- A Town committee is developing a solar law
- Town passed a motion to become a Climate Smart community: we’re taking steps to make sure we’re resilient in the face of a changing climate; just starting process and expect to create a committee
- Town fueling system – planned as part of highway garage
- Village got CFA \$ to do a sewer system feasibility study – will be Town/Village study
- Harlem Valley Rail Trail – village maintains trail head and County maintains the trail. We don’t know impact of next section of rail trail. Work is scheduled to begin in 2018 to pave to Main Street for 8+ miles to tie into the Columbia County trail. No projections on increased usage or parking needs. Parking may be an issue.
- Pedestrian plan done by Dutchess County for the Village for free – we just need money for implementation
- There was a plan to bury power lines on Main Street, but shelved due to lack of funds [for implementation]. Still interested in pursuing this idea. It would make community more resilient to climate changes.

Discussion of Harlem Valley Rail Trail

- County maintains the trail; village maintains trailheads
- County about to begin the next section of trail about 8 miles to tie into trail section in Columbia County
- Concerned about parking impact
- Millerton is the only place where the trail goes right through the village – economic benefit
- Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association held a meeting about 6 months ago regarding the extension of the trail
- Village has designated a County property on S. Center Street for rail trail parking. Another good parcel for parking is the Town Highway garage (when highway moves to the new joint building)

Other issues

- Population trends & impact of weekenders
 - There has been an effort to get them to vote here
 - Creates an imbalance that affects how businesses operate during the week, on prices, what products are sold, lack businesses that support locals
 - Seeing larger homes developed in the Town – affects land uses and values overall
 - We need businesses to support local (full-time) residents and our aging population
 - Consider clustering senior housing within walking distance of grocery store and CVS
 - Want County and state to help – every small town in Dutchess County dealing with same issues
 - Affects how public services are used when they are offered 24/7 but not used 24/7
- Housing
 - No housing here for younger families – starter homes, or a complex to allow people to live and work here
- Economic issues
 - We no longer have major employers here, with the closing of the 2 state institutions (Wingdale closed in 1994) – the entire Route 22 corridor was affected; no repurposing yet of old State buildings...could be an opportunity.
 - Some development in the area, like Silo Ridge, could create jobs, but primarily service jobs
 - We need professions that provide a living wage or support entrepreneurship
 - For technology businesses, pulling in [qualified] talent can be an issue
 - Feels that if we are a pleasant place to live, we can be “entrepreneur-friendly”. Adaptive reuse could allow for more affordable spaces.
 - Connectivity and reliability of the Internet is a big issue for economic development
 - Facilities w/ utilities and Internet access [for businesses] can be a challenge; elementary school building is a possibility; likes idea of reusing old barns, but retrofitting would be a challenge
- Perception by some that weekenders have “taken over” the town, but they could be donors and volunteers if we can harness their energy; need to interweave between different groups – they need to be brought together. Coffee house is a social gathering point where locals and weekenders get together and there is need for more of this.
- Need a shared Town/Village communications platform for events to address the fact that people don’t know what is going on. Local event platform needed – a shared community calendar.
- Our legislative representation doesn’t match up and they aren’t paying attention to our needs. We need a better voice for us.

Brainstorming Town/Village strengths

- Location, location, location
- Young people
- Moviehouse
- Rail trail
- Beauty of the area
- Private schools
- Intimacy of a small community

- Tight-knit community
- Spring for Sound
- North East Community Center (NECC)
- Coffee house
- Arts community
- Volunteer base
- Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation
- Accessibility to NYC via Metro-North
- At the crossroads of the Hudson Valley, the Berkshires, & Connecticut

Ideas for building on strengths

- NECC
- Coffee House
- Recreational facility at Eddie Collins Field – the “antithesis of Silo Ridge” where people of all ages can get together
- Downtown park with green space for kids and adults and to connect with Rail Trail with benches