

Minutes of Vision and Goals Public Meeting/Draft

Thursday, June 18, 2009

Cold Spring Firehouse

Cold Spring, NY 10516

Attendees:

Village Board: Bruce Campbell

Special Board for a Comprehensive Plan/LWRP:

Michael Armstrong, Joe Barbaro, Karen Dunn, Lillian Moser, Catharine Square

Other:

James Thomashower (facilitator), Michael Mell (PCNR), Rita Shaheen (Scenic Hudson), Jan Thacher (video), Pete Henderson

Introduction and Welcome (Karen Dunn)

- Appreciation for coming
- Since 2006 there have been over 54 people who have worked on the project.
- In the early days we divided the Village in areas we could work on waterfront, village character, infrastructure, etc. Each group worked on their own angles and now they are integrating.
- We did a survey and had an excellent response of 20%. The hardest part was taking all the handwritten comments and transcribing them.
- We had a public meeting in October 2007. All anyone wanted to talk about was parking. We realized that as we went through the process the information we got was time specific and audience specific.
- What is on the table is a synthesis of what we have learned about people's vision and goals for the village from all the inputs. Now we want to know, have we gotten it right?
- We ask everyone to discuss them and report to the group.
- Thanks to Jan for all his roles and support.
- James Thomashower is here to moderate.

A breakout followed with three tables discussing the draft Vision and Goals in light of the following “agenda” questions, which were provided to each table:

- 1) Are these the right goals?
- 2) Is the list of goals complete?
- 3) Are there any goals that should be omitted or combined?
- 4) What specific examples would you add to the statements supporting the goals?

(Notes from the Table Discussions Appear in the Addendum to these minutes.)

Reports from Tables

Report from Table 1 (Mike Armstrong)

Goal 1: Okay as written

Goal 2: Add “and community services”

Goal 3: Okay as written

Goal 4: Okay as written but could be revised

Goal 5: Okay as written, want bias toward residents.

Goal 6: Add: Administrative purchasing, recycling and court system. Inter-municipality services.

Goal 7: Talk about cooperative purchasing. Talk more about tax breaks and tax incentives for energy efficiency.

Goal 8: Add: “and increase alternative revenue to the Village”

Broadly speaking, the goals are sufficient.

Report from Table 2 (Judith Rose)

Goal 1: Integrate with goals 4 & 5 (walkable), not just the physical place, but community, know the people

Goal 2: Preserve and enhance small town charm, historic character, diversity and caring spirit of the Village. Speak more towards diversity (be welcoming toward non-whites, newcomers) [My sense from the video and knowing Judith is that this goal needs to focus on the people instead of the place, and that’s where “caring”, welcoming, community, neighborliness come in—and I agree that we need that, whereas the first goal would be more about the place.]

Goal 3: Maintain open spaces and preserve and protect natural resources and environment, views of the waterfront and surrounding landscape. Talk more about protecting easements, view shed. Beef up zoning for the shoreline and implement SASS guidelines (Scenic Areas of Strategic Significance)

Goal 4: Add and talk more about water-related businesses and non-profits

Goal 5: Make the Village more attractive and accessible (using directional signs, egresses/traffic flow) for visitors and residents with concentration more on residents than visitors. Medical facilities needed.

Goal 6: Merge with goal 7

Goal 7: Examining government infrastructure, all should be efficient, move toward carbon neutrality.

Goal 8: Taxes should not be standalone, but overriding, and have a conversation regarding other ways of funding schools and the taxes.

Report from Table 3 (James Thomashower)

Goal 1: Good

Goal 2: Encourage village to continue to be diverse, neighborly. I think the following was on Goal 3. Add "central school district, educational, spiritual needs and non-profits" re-word to put synagogue next to churches.

Goal 3: See above. Good

Goal 4: Add also "creative and cultural arts and artists to work in the Village" "small businesses hire residents

Goal 5: Add "other stakeholders", e.g. employees.

Goal 6: Add: Operations and delivery of Village services

Goal 7: Should be simply: "Make the Village energy efficient,."

Goal 8: Address the issues of the continued rise of property taxes and the effect it will have on the Village.

Wrap up and Discussion

James Thomashower moderated the wrap up discussion on Vision and Goals.

Thomashower: What the tables presented seem to me to be very compatible ideas. They all point to making the village more convenient, more accessible and more attractive.

John Dunn: We should talk some about how the village relates to other governments. What do we gain from being part of Putnam County? Why not think in terms of having Philips County, using a zero-based approach to government organization?

Mike Armstrong: Education should be made a part of one of the goals.

Karen Dunn: School taxes should be considered.

John Dunn: The money for schools is really at the state level. We have been promised reform many times but they have never come through.

James Thomashower: I am interested in the comment from Table 1 on alternative sources of revenue. What sources did you have in mind?

Michael Armstrong: Metered Parking is one example (laughter). Charging for boats docking at dockside. Factoring out services such as highway to generate revenue.

Judith Rose: Grants. Many available. The village should apply for grants. There is no staff to do this.

Michael Armstrong: Sell recyclables. Currently this is not cost effective, but in the past two years it might have been. A lot is just how issues are approached. For example, we could look at fire and police (emergency) services.

Lillian Moser: You need to be very careful how you look at that. You need to be sure your fire company gets what your fire company needs, but not ask too much.

Michael Armstrong: Yes, but we need to look at these things to see if there is an opportunity.

Karen Dunn: We could have a committee to seek out and attract green businesses, businesses we would want in the village.

Michael Mell: ...backed with some incentives?

Karen Dunn: We have a beautiful place, on the train line, with lower rent.

Michael Mell: I was thinking of tax abatements.

Michael Armstrong: We could also look into revenue rather than tax based transactions. For example, we could handle garbage like we do water and sewer. We could shift the nature of the transaction to incentivize certain behaviors. Charge for garbage by volume, for example, or by how much people recycle. Meter garbage by weight.

Pete Henderson: Or by the bag. Sell bags for \$5 per bag.

Karen Dunn: There's a flip side. People may dump in parks if they have to pay for pickups.

Lillian Moser: Tenants renting on Main already dump their trash into village receptacles.

Karen Dunn: Visitors bring garbage. Look at the bandstand to see just how much garbage is generated.

Liz Armstrong: This calls for cooperative agreements with other governments, with, for example, Putnam County.

Michael Armstrong: A room tax on visitors could be a source of revenue. We could probably come up with 100 different alternate sources of revenue if we put our minds to it.

John Dunn: In looking for alternative sources of revenue we should not just look at other government revenue – which is all coming out of our pockets one way or another – but at private sources as well. We need to increase privately generated revenue sources.

Michael Armstrong: You can combine services. For example, conference facilities. The village might need meeting space, but you can get revenue from conference facilities. It is all in how you look at village needs. Often there is a revenue aspect.

James Thomashower: Could you combine green and energy efficiency? What's the point of distinction?

Michael Armstrong: A good example is natural gas. The village has no natural gas. Gas is much less expensive than oil. Some people might argue that gas is not green, and would oppose bringing a gas line to the village. Others might want the line because it would compete with heating oil. Haldane recently had a study done of their heating system, part of their geothermal study, and the consultants saw that it would be much cheaper to heat the buildings if the school used gas. This is a hidden issue for the village. This is also something local governments typically get involved in, getting gas lines.

James Thomashower: I'd like to thank Bruce Campbell for coming. You are the only trustee present. Do you have any comments?

Bruce Campbell: Lynne Miller had another commitment, or she would have been here. This is an interesting set of goals. We need to take the time to start working toward them. The village board is looking into what putting the goals into practice might mean. This board has done a great job..

Karen Dunn: What I think is weak in the whole document is the vision. We could say our vision is to become the best, the greenest, most energy efficient village on the river... that we'd like to be number 1. We need to be a little pithier.

Michael Armstrong: A vision does not have to beat others, or be "competitive." We could just say we want to have very good river access. What you describe are really ways of achieving the goals, the methods of achieving the goals. This is where most of the combat occurs. Most of the combat occurs in the hard choices about means. Now we are trying to agree on goals, but these are a little like motherhood and apple pie, in that it is pretty hard to object to them.

James Thomashower: Basically, these are the right goals. Nothing new or radically different has come up. We might combine a couple of goals, or tweak them, do some fine tuning, but basically these are okay.

John Dunn: I'd like to take exception to something Mike Armstrong just said, the use of Motherhood and Apple pie. This denigrates the goals – he of all people should know how much work went into this.

James Thomashower: I kind of like Motherhood and Apple pie myself.

Michael Armstrong: We will merge goals 6 and 7 [Maybe, but aren't there non-gov aspects of dealing with energy? and shouldn't energy include energy independence, moving away from fossil fuels?], and produce a more polished document.

Karen Dunn: We should do more with the vision.

Michael Mell: We have a goal to do A, B, C and the methods are. There needs to be a vision, an overall objective about what we want the village to be.

Michael Armstrong: We are not at that point of specifying methods. We are not at the point of having measurable steps and setting priorities, nor should we be. We had to do this first.

James Thomashower: Thank you all for coming.

Lillian Moser: Note the photographs taken by members of the Special Board to present ideas of "What Makes Cold Spring Cold Spring.

Addendum: Table Breakouts, June 18, 2009 Special Board for a Comprehensive Plan

Table 1 Catharine Square

(Same as table report0

Table 2 Judith Rose

Goal 1: Preserve and enhance the small town charm and historic character of the Village.

No changes suggested on goal wording.

Changes suggested for descriptive:

- Not just walkability, but to have the amenities to walk to- we are self contained and have schools, groceries, services, train, post office-the goal is that we want to preserve the fact that we have places to go

Other comments:

- Integrated with goal 4 and goal 5
- "Suburban in nature: or "suburban-like" – not just suburban
- Smart growth village
- Small town and walkable means we have community – we know each other and that is what gives us safety, it gives us community.

Goal 2: Encourage Cold Spring to be a diverse, neighborly community whose citizens have a strong tradition of volunteerism.

Changes suggested on goal wording:

- “whose citizens MAINTAIN a strong tradition of volunteerism and caring.”

Changes suggested for descriptive

- Such as more affordable housing opportunities (to help with the diversity- economic and racial)

Other comments:

- Be as welcoming as possible to the non-white
- Work to encourage all people to participate in activities whether a newcomer or not. Reaching out to include those who are not active.

Goal 3: Maintain open space and the natural environment, with special care taken to preserve views of the river and surrounding landscape.

Changes suggested on goal wording:

- “Preserve and protect”, rather than “Maintain” existing open space; (find ways to protect and acquire- encourage easements)
- Preserve views both of and from the river and Cold Spring

Changes suggested for descriptive:

- Implementing SASS guidelines and protect existing views of Cold Spring
- Beef up zoning and planning to protect and preserve views and open space that we have

Other comments:

- Protect bluff overlooking the marsh
- Improving and restoring viewsheds such as the highway garage-move it
- Work to connect existing open space, natural spaces
- Work on connecting entire shoreline
- Dark skies initiative
- Disguising infrastructure (burying wires)

Goal 4: Enhance the economic vitality of the village.

No changes suggested on goal wording.

Changes suggested for descriptive:

- Encourage water related businesses or businesses (or not for profits) that have a relationship to the water

Goal 5: Make the village more convenient for visitors and residents.

Changes suggested on goal wording:

- More “convenient, attractive and accessible”

Changes suggested for descriptive:

- Directional signs/unified signage to get to and identify historical and natural landmarks

Other comments:

- Handicapped accessible
- Dumping the trash on weekends
- Benches
- Medical facilities
- Stress alternate egresses from Lower Main, Constitution Ave; explore additional RR crossing

Goal 6: Ensure that the infrastructure in the village is efficient and cost effective.

Changes suggested on goal wording:

- This should be fully integrated with Goal 7. They need to be the same goal. Ensure that all infrastructure in the Village is green and energy efficient.

Changes suggested for descriptive:

- Cost effectiveness balanced with concern for the environment and health of the residents.
- Green and sustainable- move towards being a carbon neutral community
- Need long term plan for infrastructure replacement that is green/energy efficient

Other comments:

- Natural gas to Cold Spring

The new Goal 7 could be examining government structure:

- Emphasis on Cost sharing, consolidated services
- Explore what it would mean if we became “Philips County”
- Explore government sharing or merger
- Merger with Nelsonville.

Goal 8: Limit the growth in property taxes.

Changes suggested on goal wording:

- We did not feel this should not be a stand alone goal- should be overriding in everything.

Other comments:

- School merger – need to find a way to have a voice, find alternate ways in funding schools
- Zoning needs to address balance of cost of development to revenue brought in

Table 3, Below from James Thomashower

Village of Cold Spring
Special Board
Comprehensive Plan/Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan

Community Discussion of Draft Vision and Goals
Cold Spring Firehouse
June 18, 2009

This report will summarize the consensus of the discussion that took place at my table. With regard to the draft goals and supporting paragraphs, I have noted proposed new text added in red, and text deleted in <blue brackets>:

Goal 1: No changes to goal or supporting paragraph.

Goal 2: Rewritten as follows: **Encourage Cold Spring to continue to be a diverse, neighborly community.** [Delete the end of that goal as originally stated, namely <whose citizens have a strong tradition of volunteerism>.] The rationale for the deletion centered on the problem that a goal for the future could not retroactively mandate into existence a tradition. There was no objection to encouraging volunteerism. With hindsight, appending at the end of the sentence words such as, “that fosters and enjoys a high rate of volunteerism” might accomplish the goal of reinstating this worthy concept.

The supporting paragraph was rewritten as follows.

1st sentence: No change.

2nd sentence: Village life features parades, fund-raising events, a century-old volunteer fire company, a central school district, active churches, a synagogue, and non-profit organizations. [Reference to the synagogue was moved adjacent to the reference to the churches.]

3rd sentence: The village may want to consider ways of maintaining its <the> socio-economic diversity <that underlies this participation> while serving the educational and spiritual needs of the community.

Goal 3: No changes to goal or supporting paragraph.

Goal 4: No changes to goal.

The supporting paragraph was rewritten as follows

Strategies for accomplishing this could include making better use of the natural and historic assets of the village, providing opportunities for creative and cultural artists to work in <opportunity for musicians and artists to work and attract visitors to> the village, encouraging small business to <that> hire residents, and supporting home businesses and the establishment of more overnight accommodations.

As amended, this paragraph would therefore read as follows:

Strategies for accomplishing this could include making better use of the natural and historic assets of the village, providing opportunities for creative and cultural artists to work in the village, encouraging small business to hire residents, and supporting home businesses and the establishment of more overnight accommodations.

Goal 5: Make the village more convenient, accessible, and attractive for visitors, <and> residents, and other stakeholders.

Rewritten, it would read like this: **Make the village more convenient, accessible, and attractive for visitors, residents, and other stakeholders.**

No changes to the supporting paragraph.

Goal 6: Ensure that the <infrastructure in the> village infrastructure is efficient and cost-effective in its operation and delivery of services.

Rewritten, it would read like this: **Ensure that the village infrastructure is efficient and cost-effective in its operation and delivery of services.**

No changes to the supporting paragraph.

Goal 7: Make the village energy efficient. [Delete the phrase at the end of that statement, <as far as is economically feasible>.]

No changes to the supporting paragraph.

Goal 8: Completely rewritten: Address the issues posed by the continuing rise in property taxes and their effect on all sectors of the village. [Delete the prior statement of the goal: <Limit the growth in property taxes.>]

With regard to an overall vision for the community, I suggested at our planning meeting several weeks before the community discussion that we consider a BHAG (Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal). (Follow link to Wikipedia entry.) Specifically, it might be something like this: "Earn international recognition, respect, and acclaim as the quintessential Hudson River town." To accomplish this, Cold Spring would have to preserve, protect, and celebrate its long history and heritage, charming small-town qualities, beautiful waterfront, etc. In fact, all of the goals above would help us achieve the proposed BHAG.

Respectfully submitted,

James E. Thomashower
August 7, 2009