

**Village of Cold Spring  
Special Board  
Comprehensive Plan/Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan**  
*Regular meeting, 7 p.m., April 20, 2009  
Our Lady of Loretto School*

**Present:** Carol Casparian, Chair; *Members:* Michael Armstrong , Marie Early, Anne Impellizzeri Marshall Mermell , Lillian Moser

**Members absent:** Karen Dunn & Jan Thacher, Catharine Square

**Preliminaries:**

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:00 pm. to start conversation with Mr. Joel Russell .

**1. Talk with Mr. Joel Russell:**

The following write-up was prepared by Anne and is included at the request of the Special Board.

**JOEL RUSSEL CONVERSATION WITH THE SPECIAL BOARD**

Circulated in advance: 1) questions the SB identified right after the April 2 conversation with Joel Russell(JR) on which we wanted his thinking, 2) his 5-point clarification of what he thinks we need to do.

JR began by asking **why we are doing a plan now**. Several reasons were offered: the need for re-zoning for the lumberyard demonstrated a need for an updated plan; the 1987 plan is 20 years old and there have been many changes in the village and in the population. As to whether we find specific inadequacies, Mike said, and there was general assent, that he felt the 1987 plan has many gaps. JR noted that he could not find a clear vision and goals of what the community wanted for its future.

Response to **our 3-prong approach for next steps**: JR said a binder of our work would be good. What we really need is a synthesis of: where we (the village) are and where we have been, the identification of common themes (where there is agreement, where disagreement, where unmet). We should identify issues of high agreement/low cost, high agreement/high cost, low agreement/low cost, low agreement/high cost, in order to understand what will be easiest and what harder to do. The synthesis could look at what are the most significant changes in the last 20 years, what issues have been addressed, what issues have emerged.

He observed that we have many ideas, a long shopping list. We have good public input from the survey and more; we know what's on many people's agendas.

Marshall said he and Anne, as our part of the 3-prong approach, had begun to **identify vision/goals** from the survey and the October 20 public forum. They found several **themes and related ideas** that could be the basis for Cold Spring's vision: small-town character, natural environment, economic vitality, concern about the property tax burden, and a few others. For example, related ideas associated with small-town character include: Main Street, historic architecture, walkability, close-knit community, neighborliness, safety, etc. Although Marshall and Anne's work is preliminary, they will **circulate their outline**. Marie asked if we could see the ideas about elements of village character generated by the VCHHP Working Group [Jan?].

Marshall and Anne thought about making a **matrix** with such themes down one side, with other attributes in the other dimensions and asked for JR's response. He said we need to look at what we would like vs. what the economics allows, the interests of visitors vs. those of residents and how to reconcile them. A matrix can be a good way to organize our thinking, but it is not a good way to communicate. We need to write toward popular understanding and avoid technical concepts and jargon.

Can it be done without **visualization**, Mike asked? JR said it depends on what you are trying to say. For example, in talking about the tax base, it probably isn't very helpful, but in talking about parking, it can be very important. He noted that the Philipstown 2020 plan does not use visuals. Then he spoke of some work he had done for Northampton which used extensive visuals; he encouraged us to look at visuals for that project which he emailed (and Anne will forward to the SB). Visuals, he said, can be very expensive, but we may have a number of people here—architects and graphic designers—whom we can motivate to help.

Regarding **zoning**, he said we should be careful not to get too deeply into zoning. The **vision** should drive the zoning, not the other way around. We need to describe what we want overall and for specific areas, such as Main Street, various neighborhoods, route 9D. He said we might possibly focus a session on one property, but that would be best after we develop a vision.

Lillian asked what right we have to plan for property in **private ownership**, why would a private owner want a meeting about his own property? JR said yes, we not only have the right, we have the responsibility to plan for private property. Actually, he said, zoning is public regulation of private land. But a focused discussion of one property is better if the owner likes the idea; it can backfire if it is not done right.

Marie raised the possibility of identifying 9D as a **commercial corridor** and whether that would mean that the Butterfield site should be commercial. JR said that today there is more emphasis on mixed use and smart growth, including light industry. If a plan focuses on particular uses, the result is to limit flexibility. Rather, the emphasis should be on the character of the site, of the area; we need to emphasize the vision, where we are going, what the community agrees it wants. Generally commercial strip developments are not doing well. The **evolution in planning today** is more like Main Street, with buildings close to the street, buildings that are individual in

character, with denser development, apartments and offices above retail, sidewalks, cross-walks, traffic calming measures.

Anne noted the great community concern over rising **property taxes**, the fact that some two-thirds is for schools, and asked if there is anything a plan can do to affect **school enrollment**. Lillian pointed out that Haldane enrollment has not changed over the years, that the problem is with state mandates and technology. She referred to the Philipstown build-out study which projects future enrollment, with the thought that Cold Spring has no potential growth, although others noted some opportunities for residential growth on larger sites in the village plus the possibility of “tear-downs” for bigger houses. JR also said that as the population changes, people move in from areas such as Westchester where the schools have many services and their expectation is to have the same here. He said there is not much that local government can do, but we can point out the problem and that some solutions (e.g. financing schools in some way other than property taxes) are not within the purview of local government. He asked if we know the proportion of Haldane enrollment that comes from Cold Spring and from the rest of Philipstown. There was interest in getting the answer.

A potential for huge increase in property taxes, Lillian observed, is if there are **insufficient volunteers** for the Fire Department and we need to have a paid force. What is needed is **people who live and work in the village**, often craftsmen, and the people they help are people they know. How could we nurture the culture of participation, of volunteering? As in Philipstown, the people who grow up here cannot afford to live here. So a lack of affordable housing is part of the problem. For this reason, Philipstown made special provision for public service employees (fire, police, local teachers, and so on) to buy units in the new Glassbury Court. One thing we can do, said JR, is **point out connections**, such as the connections between affordable housing, property taxes and volunteers for the Fire Department and other services.

We hear that there is some **requirement to provide affordable housing**, Anne said. JR responded that court decisions, not state law, have ruled some zoning invalid and said they must have a mix of housing types and consider regional needs for housing. He emphasized that **Cold Spring has no such problem**, that we have a good mix of housing, including multi-family. Yet we have limited control over the population and who chooses to live here. For example, single bedroom homes attract quite varied people. Population changes tend to be cyclical; as people grow older, younger families move into their homes, etc. If we want information on regional housing needs, we could ask the county Planning Department.

It would be good for us to think, JR said, about **who lives here and who will live here in the future**. There are often trade-offs. For example, if we want diverse retail shopping, we would need a larger population base. In this economy, building owners may reduce rents, with the result that more businesses would open that serve residents. Marshall said he has found that building owners don't mind having empty space because they can use it as a tax write-off. Also, many Cold Spring business people run their shops as a hobby, not as a business.

What advice about **choosing a consultant** would JR offer? We should be comfortable with him/her, should be a good listener, should write so people can understand. We need to figure out what we want to ask a consultant to do—goal setting, identify issues, get to zoning. We should check their track record. JR says we can do much ourselves; the more we do the more it is ours. There are no doubt people in the village who can do a market analysis, and people with expertise who work for Tim Miller. We should ask consultants what they think volunteers can do, and what they think should be done by professionals. We should also ask how they would start, would they do a diagnostic about what the community needs as opposed to an approach “off-the-shelf”?

For Philipstown, for **example**, after a diagnostic, he helped them identify **three sections** for the plan—background, goals and strategies, and implementation: actions to achieve the plan goals. He guided the whole process and they **divided the writing**, with volunteers writing much of the background, working together on goals and strategies, and he doing the implementation which is more technical. As to **how long it took**, JR was engaged in 2000; the Special Board was appointed in 2002; and the plan was adopted in 2006.

As for how to look at **Marathon or any other single property**, Anne wondered if JR was suggesting it would be better to do so after we have developed a vision for the whole village? He responded that it often happens in the planning process that issues like this arise. Maybe we can use this as an opportunity. Maybe we could co-sponsor a session with the Village Board and the Planning Board. If it can wait until the planning is further along, it is usually better, he said. It would be good to talk together in a public forum about three huge tracts (Marathon, Campbell, and the West Point Foundry Preserve), or better yet look at the whole southwestern part of the village and how it fits with the larger vision for the village, what it has to do with the rest of the village. We could consider diverse perspectives, such as from the point of view of residents, visitors, businesses, etc. He mentioned light industry, possibly high tech manufacturing—which has no sound, vibration, odors, etc. A public forum would be good to generate ideas.

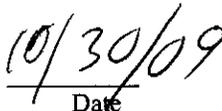
In conclusion, Mr. Russell agreed to write up his recommendations and he will answer some questions in writing that members may have.

**2. Review of future meetings:**

Casparian reviewed the upcoming meetings and agendas for the next meeting.

Early moved to adjourn the meeting and Armstrong seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 pm.

  
Carol Casparian, Chair

  
Date