

Village Views

by Elliott Auerbach, Ellenville Village Manager

Ask the Question

Near the end of *Four Blind Mice*, novelist James Patterson's latest best seller, the FBI Director asks likable hero Detective Alex Cross a very interesting question. The legendary cop-psychologist finds himself answering the question with a question when FBI Chief Ron Burns inquires about a small town in upstate New York while following up on a "mess... found in the mountains."

"You ever hear of Ellenville?" Burns asked.

"Actually, no. But I think I've been there recently," Cross said. "Have I?"

"Yeah, you have," Burns replied.

With three months on the *New York Times Best Sellers List*, James Patterson presents a question that Alex Cross and hundreds of thousands of loyal fans will ponder. The query will be asked and answered every time a reader has but five pages left of this three-hundred-and-eighty-seven-page thriller.

"You ever hear of Ellenville?"

Noted politicians like Rudy Giuliani and George Pataki have.

Hall of Famers like Gary Carter have.

Broadway, television, and movie star Judd Hirsch has.

Best selling author James Patterson has.

Now it's your turn to go out and ask the question "You ever hear of Ellenville?"

Ellenville...Up To Now

The three words "Up to now..." have been an important part of my delivery as I speak to community groups, elected officials, and village residents. These three words encompass all that was, and allows us to move forward as a municipality. The Ellenville of the next twenty-four to thirty-six months will look a lot different than the village we see today. "Up to now" we lacked a consensus of who we are and where we are going. "Up to now" we felt that we were not worthy of the growth and prosperity that was occurring only fifteen miles in every direction. "Up to now" we questioned and doubted that we would be nothing more than the last outpost in Ulster County and be only second to our neighbors in Sullivan and Orange.

All that has changed recently, and the Ellenville of tomorrow will be far different from what we have seen "up to now."

Some say it is happening by accident. Others say it was just a matter of time. There is a third group, however, who have been working and crafting this change for years. While most of those "changelings" (the people instituting the change) have been committed to their individual cause, collectively they are the people who are making it happen.

Look around. You know them. They are out there planning the next parade, fighting the next fire, and picking up litter along the side of the road. You see them hanging holiday decorations, teaching kids how to ski, coaching Little League, and planting flowers. You watch them raising money for a good cause, running a blood drive, putting on a concert or street fair, and serving a free meal. These are the folks that have prepared us for the opportunity that is about to come our way. They are the spirit of Ellenville. The people, that "up to now" believed in "the promise of things that could still happen here."

Add to that spirit of community a Village whose police still check for unlocked store doors and look in on senior citizens living alone... a Village whose Street Department still helps a disabled resident remove a little snow or some brush from their sidewalk... a Village whose Water and Sewer Department will work countless hours in winter's cold and summer's heat to ensure that a resident can run the water or flush the toilet... a Village whose Court will give a kid a break or help mediate a difference of opinion... a Village whose office staff will research a birth certificate, uncover a billing error, or freely notarize a document... a Village whose elected and appointed officials put in untold hours and subject themselves to make tough decisions for the good of the community. These are not the "clock watchers" or the "what's in it for me" people. These are the people that "up to now" have been operating our Village twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

So when you think of Ellenville, examine it carefully under the microscope and see what comprises it "up to now." And in two to three years from now, as some of us are patting each other on the back for a job well done, remember those people, both publicly and privately, who worked long and hard to make Ellenville a success overnight. 

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