

Village Views

Time to Join the Parade

by Jeffrey Kaplan, Mayor, Village of Ellenville

There is a parade marching through the Hudson Valley, leaving in its wake unprecedented commercial and residential development and growth. While the Village of Ellenville and Town of Wawarsing have benefited from the parade – primarily through increases in real estate values, as a result of limited access to our community from the two major roadways (New York State Thruway and Rte. 17) serving the Hudson Valley – we are not really on the parade route.

Although limited access to our community has served somewhat as a detriment to the unparalleled commercial and residential growth the Mid-Hudson has experienced, I believe it can be a long-term benefit, providing us with greater control over the growth of our area, further insuring the quality-of-life of our residents is enhanced as a result of economic growth.

Our course is clear. We can either watch the parade from a distance and hope – by luck or some sort of divine intervention – we benefit from the parade before it is over. Or we can attempt to increase the likelihood that the parade will come through Ellenville and the Town of Wawarsing. I believe that the latter is preferable and would propose the following three steps that can be commenced simultaneously with each other to increase the likelihood that our community will benefit from the parade.

1. Joint Town/Village Master Plan: The Town of Wawarsing has discussed updating its Master Plan to serve as a blueprint for the future growth of our area, based upon developments within the other areas of the Mid-Hudson region. Preparing a Master Plan for the Town without including the Village of Ellenville would not only make the Master Plan incomplete but, in my opinion, would be a misuse of taxpayer money. It is time we all recognize that the Village of Ellenville will not prosper without the Town of Wawarsing prospering, nor can the Town grow without including the Village.

2. Consolidating the Village and Town Economic Development Corporations: Commissioning a Master Plan without follow-through by putting its recommendations to work would be a huge waste of time, effort and our taxpayers money. The Master Plan should be incorporated in a Consolidated Town/Village Economic Development Corporation program to aggressively market low-cost loans to existing and new businesses in our community who are willing to renovate their facilities or add employees. Funds should be aggressively sought to

staff an economic development office, which would also provide a one-stop source for available grants and low-cost loans for both commercial & residential development.

3. Town/Village Municipal Hall: We must clean up and rebuild the Village of Ellenville if we hope to have the parade march through the Town of Wawarsing. Building a state-of-the-art Municipal Hall to house the Town and Village offices, with a meeting room and courthouse to service both municipalities, would not only serve as a cornerstone to the rebirth of the Ellenville/Wawarsing area but will help expedite the consolidation of the Town/Village services at significant savings to our taxpayers.

Funding for this project could be at minimal expense to the Town and Village taxpayers by using the proceeds from the sale of both current Town and Village Halls (which will also result in putting these properties on the tax rolls, and provide an opportunity for new businesses and jobs), use of the Village trust funds received from the sale of Ice Caves Mountain to the Nature Conservatory, and possible State and Federal grants and low-cost loans from HUD. The revenue the Village will lose from the interest on the Trust account will be more than offset by the taxes the Village will receive once the mountain property is on the tax rolls (significantly increasing the tax base for the school district and Town as well). Aggressive lobbying by the Village, Town, and school district should expedite this.

Is this the only plan that will bring the unprecedented growth the Mid-Hudson region is experiencing to the Village of Ellenville and Town of Wawarsing? Absolutely not. However, it is a plan recognizing the need for our area to be pro-active if our area is to participate in the economic growth in the Mid-Hudson area. I urge the Town and private sectors to work with the Village in formulating an acceptable plan so we can all march in the parade. 🌟

JOHN VERDINO
JOSEPH VERDINO



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