

Town of New Paltz Historic Preservation Commission Meeting

Wednesday August 21st 2019 7:00PM - 9:00PM in the Community Center

Commissioners attending: John Orfitelli (Chair), Susan DeMark, Matt Maley, and Dawn Elliott (via telecon)

Also Attending: Neil Bettez, New Paltz Town Supervisor

Agenda

1. Public Comment
2. Review/Approve July Minutes
3. Historic Landmark Legislative Initiative
4. Put Corner Cemetery Brochures
5. Road Side Markers
6. Social Media for New Paltz Preservation

Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 8:50pm (once we achieved a quorum) with a motion from Susan DeMark and seconded by John Orfitelli. Motion carried.

Pledge of Allegiance

1. **Public Comment:** No public comments were received.
2. **Review/Approve July Minutes:** The Commission reviewed and approved [minutes from our meeting on July 17th](#) and John Orfitelli agreed to post.
3. **Historic Landmark Preservation Legislative Initiative:** Neil Bettez, Town Supervisor, provided the Commission with a detailed overview of the legislation recently passed by the State Legislature and currently waiting to be signed (or vetoed) by Governor Andrew Cuomo that will allow municipalities within Ulster County to impose a Real Estate Transfer Fee to fund preservation.

As reported in the [July 14, 2019 New Paltz Times by Geddy Sveikauskas](#), the bill was “happily” sponsored by [state senator Jan Metzger](#) and backed by assembly member Kevin Cahill. It is opt-in legislation. In order to establish a community preservation fund financed by a tax on some transfers of real estate, a community has to decide that it wants to adopt that tax — that is, to opt in. The jurisdiction’s top elected body has to vote for it, and the voters of the community then have to approve the program in a referendum. The original legislation specifies an exemption from the added taxes of properties selling below the median residential price.’

Neil provided the following status regarding [Senate Bill S6235](#) which specifically includes Ulster County as a designated community for [Subdivision 11 of section 1560 of the tax law](#).

Neil explained that the Town (via a voter referendum) will be able to impose a real estate transfer tax to create a fund used for the Preservation of community character that involves one or more of the following:

- (a) Establishment of parks, nature preserves, or recreation areas;
- (b) Preservation of open space;**
- (c) Preservation of lands of exceptional scenic value;
- (d) Preservation of fresh and saltwater marshes or other wetlands;
- (e) Preservation of aquifer recharge areas;
- (f) Preservation of undeveloped beach lands or shoreline;
- (g) Establishment of wildlife refuges for the purpose of maintaining native animal species diversity, including the protection of habitat essential to the recovery of rare, threatened or endangered species;

- (h) Preservation of unique or threatened ecological areas;
- (i) Preservation of rivers and river areas in a natural, free-flowing condition;
- (j) Preservation of forested land;
- (k) Preservation of public access to lands for public use including stream rights and waterways;
- (l) Preservation of historic places and properties listed on the New York state register of historic places and/or protected under a municipal historic preservation ordinance or law;**
- (m) Undertaking any of the paragraphs of this subdivision in furtherance of the establishment of a greenbelt; and
- (n) Preservation of land which is predominantly viable agricultural land,**

Neil is focusing on the areas highlighted above (items b,l,and m) for New Paltz in particular. The legislation requires that local governments interested in establishing such a fund first obtain the support of voters through a public referendum. Once the Governor signs the bill into law, Neil will be forming working groups from the existing committees for Open Space, Environmental Conservation, and this Commission along with Scenic Hudson, WVLT (and probably some others) to create specific plans and processes for utilizing funds derived from Real Estate Transfer fees. These plans and processes will be used to inform voters and build community support aimed at insuring the referendum passes. Best case is that the referendum can be included in the 2020 election.

As stated earlier, the current law which allows for the creation of a Community Preservation Fund (CPF) has been in place since 2007. Neil provided an [excellent document from 7/2017](#) that lists which communities have created a CPF and how the fee has been implemented.

An important aspect of the Transfer Tax is that it will replace the current bond methodology for funding preservation. The Town has utilized \$500,000 of a \$2,000,000 bond approved years ago for use in securing open space. This approach, however, is very costly to all taxpayers since they must shoulder the cost of the bond expenditure through higher taxes. Since the Transfer Fee is only paid by buyers of Real Estate, it will not increase taxes. Therefore, implementation of the Transfer Tax would, in effect, replace the bond as the primary means for community preservation funding and save the tax payers from future tax increases.

Two Excel models, developed by John Orfitelli, were updated to include five years of Real Estate transactions using Ulster Multiple Listing Service (MLS) data from 2014 - 2018 for Commercial, Multi-family, and Residential properties sold in the Town and Village of New Paltz. The models were provided to Neil for use in assessing the impact of various fee percentages and exemption levels on the total revenue and dollar amount of the average fee.

4. **Put Corner Cemetery Brochures for Hampton Inn:** John Orfitelli submitted the printing order to PDQ. Once completed he will meet with Historic Huguenot Street to solicit their support in supplying brochures for the Hampton Inn and perhaps other locations. Julie Seyfert-Lillis agreed to contact her friend at HHS in advance to determine who at HHS would be able to address our need for funding the printing of brochures at the Hampton Inn.
5. **Road Side Markers:** John Orfitelli and Susan DeMark met with Glenn Hoagland and Eric Roth at the Mohonk Preserve to discuss funding the road side markers for the Testimonial Gateway. Both Glenn and Eric were very supportive and agreed to determine if funds could be made available from existing and future grants or individual investors. John and Susan agreed to meet with Riverside bank to request funding for the Lent House marker and share our efforts involving the Testimonial Gateway markers to possibly gain their support in offsetting some of that finding for the Mohonk Preserve.
6. **Social Media for New Paltz Preservation:** Dawn Elliott agreed to begin working on establishing the various social media platforms for use by the HPC in highlighting prior accomplishments, importance of preservation in the community, and to promote our initiative to assist owners of historic landmarks through matching grants funded by fees collected on Real Estate transactions.

Motion to adjourn was made by Susan DeMark and seconded by Matt Maley. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:35pm.

Next Meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 18th 2019.