

What to preserve, how & why

Gardiner's Community Preservation Plan is a clear, rewarding read

by Frances Marion Platt

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY planners are undersung heroes. They keep saving us from ourselves, stepping in before it's too late to keep our beloved cities and towns from ruination by unchecked dollar-driven development. Without their timely intervention, we tend to end up with ugly sprawl, acres of asphalt, traffic snarls, spoiled viewsheds, historic neighborhoods bisected by highways. We may not like spending our taxes to hire them, but we need them, if our communities are to remain livable.

If you've worked much with planners, you may have noted that the term "policy wonk" was coined for such people, and the acronym "MEGO" (my eyes glaze over) for much of the reports they write. In their line of work, the social graces are optional, and enthusiasm for their area



NEIL RINDLAUB

Members of Gardiner Community Preservation Plan committee recently posed for a photo in front of the Town Hall. Top row: Richard Butler, Jon Benner and Ingrid Haeckel. Middle row: David Dukler, Jean McGrane and Linda Geary. Bottom row: Becky Fullam, Neil Rindlaub and Roberta Clements.

of expertise often outpaces their ability to communicate it clearly to laypersons.

With enough exposure, the rest of us can pick up a bit of "Plannerese," but fluency with the jargon takes time.

It is therefore a great relief to be able to report that the proposed Community Preservation Plan (CPP) recently posted on the Town of Gardiner website (www.townofgardiner.org/community-preservation-plan) is a thing of beauty. Writing about it seems to call for an approach more like a glowing movie review than hard news reportage. Gardiner officials were wise to invest in an environmental consultant with plenty of experience in drafting CPPs for other communities. Ted Fink of Greenplan, Inc. has done a stellar job in creating a document that is clear, accessible and completely understandable to the average citizen.

Kudos are also due to Neil Curri of PVE, LLC, Ingrid Haeckel of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and Vassar College intern Ethan Skuches, who provided significant technical assistance, especially with the creation of the GIS maps that are so crucial to this document. And the project wouldn't have happened without the volunteer energies of the Community Preservation Committee: co-chairs Jean McGrane and David Dukler, Toni Benevento, Jon Benner, Ilka Casey, Roberta Clements, Rod Dressel, Rebecca Fullam, Linda Geary, Kay Hoiby, Deyano Manco, Marc Moran, Neil Rindlaub, Laura Rose and Warren Wiegand. Gardiner residents who attended public information sessions on the CPP or responded to the community survey also played their parts.

But I have to reserve the bulk of my praise for Fink's ability to present a whole lot of technical data about Gardiner's natural resources, along with common-

sense parameters for how to prioritize preserving them, in language that isn't Plannerese by a long shot. In fact, the CPP is inspiring, educational and surprisingly fun to read. I recommend it even if you're not a Gardiner resident and voter (especially if you live in a township that hasn't yet adopted a CPP).

If anything, the text of the CPP errs on the side of repeating critical points to ensure that they sink in. The fact that the Town's acquisition of threatened parcels by use of Community Preservation Fund (CPF) monies would happen only with willing sellers, for example, is emphasized in boldface type more than once. Nothing is left vague or couched in inscrutable technical jargon.

Ample credit is given to earlier plans and studies (more than 30 of them over time!) done by the Town of Gardiner, with clear explanations about how the goals that the community has endorsed in the past have flowed naturally into the creation of the CPP. It's a logical culmination, a confluence of many streams of effort by citizens over the course of three decades. Adopting it, readers come to understand, will be the icing on the cake, the bow neatly tied atop the package of keeping Gardiner healthy and beautiful for the foreseeable future.

Different sections of the 80-page CPP explain, clearly and in detail, how the process of land preservation will work, as well as how decisions about investing the funds raised by the proposed Real Estate Transfer Tax will be made by the Advisory Board. Much of the document is dedicated to examining what resources compose Gardiner's intrinsic community character and why. The aforementioned GIS maps, attached as an appendix, illustrate exactly where these resources are concentrated and how they reinforce one another. We can see how the cream rises to the top, in effect, based on well-established community values.

While the general parameters of the CPP and how it would work have been public knowledge for some time now, until its publication the average Gardinerite didn't have a clear picture of what the specific criteria would be for rating a particular parcel of land, body of water or other community asset as a top priority for preservation. Fink clearly explains the process by which the Committee developed its five-tier rating system and how different conservation values have been quantified. If you really want to drill down to the level of specific tax parcels, there's even an appended spreadsheet where you can look them up.

There's much more that could be said about how CPP, CPF and the RETT will work, if the referendum passes on Election Day, and how Gardiner stands to benefit. But no summary by this reporter will express these concepts more clearly and elegantly than the Plan itself. By all means, go to the Town website and give it a read.

Briefly noted | New Paltz

New Paltz High School sports standouts sign for futures



PROVIDED

Twelve New Paltz High School graduating athletes signed commitment letters memorializing their intentions to study and play for their chosen college or university during a brief ceremony. Top row, left to right: Siri Walsh, Natalya Knoth, Bruce Oremus, Brady Saunders, Jacob Yasha Tamarchenko, Daniel Kniffen, Benjamin Pizzarello, Zachery Halstead. Bottom row, left to right: Peyton Curley, Jena Russo, Alexandra Frenza and Fiona O'Hara.

DURING A CEREMONY HELD IN THE NEW PALTZ HIGH SCHOOL (NPHS) auditorium on June 8, family, friends and teammates looked on as 12 NPHS sports stars signed commitments to study and play at an array of colleges. Gregory Warren, NPHS director of Health, Physical Education and Athletics, announced the names and accomplishments of each athlete as they approached the table to memorialize their intentions on paper, officially declaring their plans to play their respective sports at the collegiate level. Warren later referred to the student/athletes as "standing out as both students and athletes" and acknowledged the hard work required of the senior athletes to balance their academic responsibilities, sports participation, families and other obligations.

The students recognized included Peyton Curley, SUNY Brockport, Women's Lacrosse; Alexandra Frenza, College of Staten Island, Softball; Zachery Halstead, Bluffton University, Football; Daniel Kniffen, Hartwick College, Men's Soccer; Natalya Knoth, College of Staten Island, Softball; Fiona O'Hara, Southern Connecticut State University, Women's Soccer; Bruce Oremus, Utica University, Men's Soccer; Benjamin Pizzarello, Marywood University, Men's Lacrosse; Jena Russo, SUNY Oswego, Women's Basketball; Brady Saunders, Franklin and Marshall College, Men's Swimming; Jacob Yasha Tamarchenko, SUNY New Paltz, Men's Soccer; and Siri Walsh, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Women's Track & Field.



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