

VILLAGE OF HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 7, 2009

A Regular Meeting was held by the Board of Trustees on Tuesday, April 7, 2009 at 9:10 p.m. in the Meeting Room, Municipal Building, 7 Maple Avenue.

PRESENT: Mayor Peter Swiderski, Trustee Bruce Jennings, Trustee Jeremiah Quinlan, Trustee Diggitt McLaughlin, Trustee Meg Walker, Village Manager Francis A. Frobel, Village Attorney Brian Murphy, and Village Clerk Susan Maggiotto.

CITIZENS: Fifty (50).

APPROVAL OF WARRANTS

On MOTION of Trustee McLaughlin, SECONDED by Trustee Walker with a voice vote of all in favor, the following Warrants were approved:

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| Multi-Fund No. 65-2008-09 | \$80,690.30 |
| Multi-Fund No. 66-2008-09 | \$50,330.63 |
| Multi-Fund No. 68-2008-09 | \$89,202.11 |

PLANNING FORWARD - A Board of Trustees Presentation on Goals for 2009 - 2010

Mayor Swiderski: Rather than the usual agenda, today I would rather step everybody through what we hope to accomplish over the next two years and provide you with a presentation.

We plan to issue a goals document like this on an annual basis, covering our plans for the upcoming fiscal year which runs from June to June. We will issue it early enough to help drive the budgeting process, and use it to help ensure we keep focused on initiatives that we agree are important.

I am going to first speak about our general approach to governing, as well as how we plan to pursue Village management. I will then discuss how we plan to stay in touch with residents regarding our plans. Then we will begin to talk about substance: what our goals are, and initiatives, in the major areas we seek to address. Those areas are above and beyond the usual job of Trustees to oversee Village operations. I cannot do this alone, and I have decided to delegate primary responsibility for each area to a Trustee. That Trustee will act as a coordinator working with the Village committees, volunteers, and external organizations to get things done. We are going to take on as much as we can handle individually, and no more. I plan to say no a lot so we can ensure that we actually get some things done.

Obviously, we are going to be responsive to good, new ideas that come along during the year, but it will certainly be easier for us if you come to us with a good idea and are also interested in helping us implement it.

First, a word about what the Mayor and Trustees actually do. We have a fine Village Manager, Fran Frobels, who is paid to manage the day-to-day affairs of the Village, prepare budgets, respond to resident issues, and make sure Village operations run smoothly. The Board of Trustees is responsible for oversight and policy-making. We are elected to set direction, ensure that the Village is managed well, and reflect residents' concerns. I am going to delegate to the Trustees, who will then work with our committee members, Manager, and residents to get things done.

We are going to experiment fearlessly. Everything might not work, but we are going to try different things to address the issues facing our Village. We are going to work collaboratively up here, and with you. I always assume good faith, and we will all work under the assumption that we all have the same good intentions at heart.

Finally, we seek to engage in a civil conversation and debate. We may not always end up agreeing. This is Hastings, after all. But we will seek out the facts, review alternatives, and try to be transparent about our reasoning and thought processes. That is what you can expect of us, and it is how we hope the discussion that moves the Village forward is carried out.

A few words about our general governing principles, and how we hope to carry out our core responsibility of oversight. We plan to focus carefully on fiscal issues. This will be my primary focus, as I will discuss later, and we will ensure that any new expenditures are merited and sustainable. We plan to work with the Village Manager to continue an ongoing process of formally evaluating and tracking Village services. We want to create the numbers and metrics that will help us understand issues to lead to improvement. From my background in consulting, a basic truism is that it is hard to improve what you do not measure. We also want to improve the way resident complaints are processed in the Village, both to provide you with improved service or at least a better sense of when you might see that problem solved. And also to better track problem areas. Finally, we also hope to more effectively engage the community using the remarkable resources we have in this town to solve our problems. You will hear more about this in a moment, as well.

I am going to issue a quarterly report via email discussing progress on the major initiatives we have underway, other things that may have come up, and any major issues before the Village. The Trustees, as well, will summarize their activities in annual reports. This is the first of several ways we are going to reach out and attempt to communicate with the Village. In addition to this, we plan to post documents that provide background and status on the

major issues before the Village. These documents will include timelines of when we expect to see projects hit major deadlines, and we hope to keep this up to date. This will all require substantial changes to our web site. Over the course of the next six months you can expect to see changes there.

Finally, we will be engaging technology to allow us to reach out to you and vice versa. We may use Internet-driven polling. We hope to offer conference call access to most of our meetings, including committee meetings. We are going to use our television station to cover major issues, as well. You will be hearing about these initiatives over the next few months.

We have a substantial agenda ahead of us, and there is simply no way we can do this alone or even with the help of Village employees. We are going to rely on the boards and committees already staffed by over 100 citizen volunteers, as well as individuals and groups within the Village. But for this to work, it is time to take a hard look at how we use our boards and volunteers, and see if we cannot do a better job of coordination. This human capital, a term I am not wild about but is very descriptive, is the most important resource we have. Taking a long, hard look at the way things work now is extremely important, and will help ensure with have the help we need to help get the Village's agenda done. I have asked Trustee McLaughlin to step into the role of coordinating this review; she will speak about this now.

Trustee McLaughlin: The Village's Planning and Zoning Boards are constituted by New York State law. All the rest of them, from the Conservation Commission to the Beautification Commission to the Affordable Housing Committee and more than a dozen others, have been constituted over the year by the Trustees to serve the Trustees and the residents. In the next several months we are going to reexamine the functioning of those boards and commissions: are their missions still practical; should they be amended. We are going to be building on information that has already been gathered by the Comprehensive Plan Committee. They have been working at seeing how the boards and commissions fit into the Village and have provided a valuable foundation for us. I think one of the best things that Mayor Swiderski has said, that I would like to repeat, is that everything we try might not work, but it is more important that we try even if we fail than that we not try.

As the Mayor has said, our volunteers are a remarkable resource. Our Village is served through our volunteers, including the Fire Department and the EMTs, by nearly 300 people. Some of them have training to equal professionals in the field in which they volunteer. Sometimes we ask too much of them, sometimes we ask too little because the mission is not clear or because we have not seen that the committee is well-organized or have not given it clear direction. We intend that the service of the committees in the community will be more focused because the community needs you as a volunteer. The times need you, too.

One other thing that will happen over the next several months, we will be looking to you, the residents, for more service. Many of your neighbors are hurting. They are hurting financially, and then they hurt emotionally. Increasingly, they are looking to us for help. Services are being requested of people in official positions that are not necessarily part of what we thought we were going to do, but you are asking us for them and we are going to see what we can do to help. If you would like to talk with me, to talk with government, about what you can do or, alternatively, what you might need, we have an email set up by which you can communicate to me. It is volunteer@hastingsgov.org. That will be on the web site, so you will be able to click on a button and it will get to me. Use me, at least initially, as the person to whom you reach out to the Village if you are interested in volunteering in any way.

Mayor Swiderski: With the remarkable people this Village has, we plan to tackle several important areas. We are going to quickly review each area and what we hope to accomplish. I am going to start with what is on everyone's mind at this point in the year, which is taxes and budgets. I will not sugar-coat reality. We are in an exceptionally difficult fiscal environment: our revenues are decreasing, the economy is in desperate shape. We are going to do what we can within the existing environment, but of all the areas we plan to address this is the most difficult.

Overall, our goals are straightforward. We are going to seek to slow tax growth; we are going to seek to diversify our revenue base where we can, and to control costs. This year I plan to work closely with neighboring villages to identify and implement cost-sharing arrangements on up to a half-dozen different contracts. This should help to begin to control costs, and also get the villages used to working closely with one another on these sorts of initiatives. Last year I helped push along the first joint repaving contract between the villages and the Town of Greenburgh. This year we hope to expand to a number of other contracts. Longer-term, I want to set up an advisory group of experts in this village to work out the strategic vision for managing the future fiscal health of this village. This will include focusing, and expanding, the revenue base through seeking grants and government monies, where possible, as well as appropriate development. You will be hearing more about these initiatives over the next few months.

Another major focus will be the downtown. We want our downtown to thrive and attract residents. I have asked Trustee Walker to step into the role of coordinating this effort, and she will speak to this now. Meg brings a remarkable background in urban planning, and served for a while as our Village Planner. We look forward to the experience she will bring to this task.

Trustee Walker: We have a wonderful downtown. There is really a lot that is great about it. It is compact and walkable. It is near a train station and a waterfront. Cars do not speed

through because the streets are so narrow. And people live in and around it who provide a captive customer base and feet-on-the-street. In addition, we have wonderful local businesses, real anchors in our community, that we all appreciate and cherish.

However, as I was campaigning, and I think I can say this for my running mates, we heard again and again from residents that they were really concerned about the future of the downtown. It was, in fact, among the top three issues that were most frequently mentioned. When we going door-to-door, and in the coffees and parties we attended, it sometimes came up as the number one issue. That reflects both the desire to keep afloat our cherished downtown businesses and create a really attractive shopping area as well as the need to strengthen the downtown as a community gathering place, as the heart of our Village. I think people understand that it is more than just a place to shop, more than just a place to run errands. We all, I think, want to shop locally. But we also want to enjoy this as a place to interact with each other, to enjoy community gatherings, festivals, and events, and really create a vibrant community center.

The growing number of empty storefronts threatens the livelihoods of those who remain, and diminishes the downtown's appeal as a destination. It is critical to the survival of the downtown, and the local businesses, that Hastings be a destination. We are proposing that the Village government take on a proactive role in support of the downtown, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce. One of our principal goals, then, is to enliven the downtown and enrich the shopping experience for both Hastings residents and visitors alike. There are a number of low-hanging fruits that we think can help get us started in this direction, and things we think we can complete, in fact, in the next year.

We have discussed this with the Chamber, and I think they are in agreement that these are some of the top issues that they would like us to address. First of all, improving the parking situation. We would like to try to find remote parking for merchants and downtown employees. And not only find it, but provide incentives so they actually use it. It is not going to be very effective if we find it and they do not use it. We also would like to introduce way-finding signage. In fact, more than signage: a way-finding package for the downtown. Directional signage that will help visitors find the downtown and its many resources, and the parking lots. In addition, locate maps in key locations and on the web site. I think the Chamber is in agreement that this will go a long way to helping people find the downtown. If you are driving along Route-9, and there is nothing to direct you to it, you can just whiz right by it.

Thirdly, we would like to work with the Economic Development Committee to prepare a toolbox of guidelines and information to help new businesses, and also those renovating their existing stores and businesses, through the approval process: the Building Department, the

Zoning Board, and the Planning Board. This process can become cumbersome so assistance, especially if you have never been through it before, especially if you do not have professionals helping you. So we are look forward to working with the EDC to come up with some guidelines that will help this process. The Architectural Review Board is proposing guidelines that will help applicants understand the kind of design quality the Village is looking for. I think this will go a long way to communicating early on to applicants before they come to the boards what we are really looking for in our downtown.

Finally, we would like to plan an event, something like a first Friday or first Saturday event, at least one. Maybe more if we can. There have been a bunch of ideas thrown out. Tarrytown has become known for its first Friday events, which have been really successful in bringing visitors and residents to the downtown. It is a very festive atmosphere. Another idea is to continue the Farmers' Market atmosphere into the downtown, to bring the music and celebration of the Farmers' Market into the downtown on a Saturday, and extend hours; providing kind of a festive atmosphere, and extend the hours of the merchants on a Saturday. So we are going to look at a variety of ideas, and then try something out.

Then longer-term initiatives, we want to begin to work to attract visitors to the downtown. There are a number of people who are visiting the region who are staying in the local hotels. They do not know what we have to offer here. So it is really important that we provide some publicity and begin to attract people from out of town. We also want to begin to work with landlords to help fill these empty storefronts. We think that is a really important long-term activity. As you can see, we have a lot on our plate in the next year. And if you have ideas or would like to help us implement these ideas, we would definitely value your service.

Mayor Swiderski: One of the most important challenges the Village faces, and one that will define its future, is how we clean up and then develop our absolutely spectacular waterfront. Over the next few years we hope to see a long-awaited cleanup begin. I have asked Trustee Quinlan to step forward and coordinate this critical effort. Jerry brings to his job a legal background, a dogged tenacity, and a daily provocation of a view of our industrial waterfront right outside his law office's windows here in the downtown. We look forward to working with him to hopefully finally seeing some progress there.

Trustee Quinlan: When Peter gave me the call, I began to wonder why he gave me such an easy project to work with... We have not seen as much progress as we would like. I am glad you are here, Fred, so you can listen to this. I am hoping you can help us do something about the waterfront because we really do have a new beginning here tonight. I plan to get my teeth into this project with my dogged tenacity. The first thing that I would like to do, and both Peter and I have agreed on this for the three years that I have been on the Board, is complete the LWRP in the next year. That is one of the easier things to do, and working

together with this Board we hope to move forward and complete it after all these years. Trustee Goodman, as Peter mentioned earlier, has agreed to help us stay on this project, which she knows a lot about. She has been working on it for the last two years. We are grateful for her help, and we are going to move forward on that and hopefully complete it before the fiscal year ends. It is complicated, but that is something we can accomplish.

Push for deadlines on the Exxon site. This is going to be a little more difficult. But we have some ideas we have already been kicking around. We are going to need to work a lot more closely with the DEC. That is the state unit that controls the remedial cleanup and planning for the waterfront. It is a Superfund site, as everyone knows. We are going to hopefully have them complete the pre-design testing, and develop a remedial action work plan for what I call the Exxon site. The southern part of the waterfront is owned by ExxonMobil, about six acres. Uhlich owns about six. Hopefully, they are going to allocate a work plan and responsibility for the cleanup between the two of them, and enter into an agreement with each other. The DEC is coming to our next meeting. They, too, believe that this is going to be a new administration and a new start. They are going to give us a report, and I am going to ask them to continue to give us periodic reports.

We are going to have to determine how to best push along the cleanup of the northern site, too, which we call BP/ARCO. In the next few months, the Mayor and Trustees are going to develop a strategy which I hope is going to include regular reports by the DEC. We are going to ask them to come down on a regular basis and tell us what their thinking is and what progress they are making, and the status of the cleanup, either in person, as Peter indicated, and teleconferencing, conference calls, emails. We are going to see a new and useful communication in various ways. We are not going to say you have to come down from Albany, but we want periodic reports. I would also like to get our engineering firm, Malcolm Pirnie, involved, and give us guidance on which ones are the best of the eight design guidelines that BP has sent up to the DEC for approval, and push them to make a decision. We have a lot of resistance from all of the stakeholders except for the Village, and we are going to be more proactive and dog them to death to get them to make some decisions.

Long-term initiative: the waterfront planning. Meg and I are going to work together to form a partnership with the Comprehensive Plan Committee and all the stakeholders for a safe and effective cleanup of the waterfront, and make this part and parcel of that waterfront chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Meg is a planner and is going to help me do that. Between my legal expertise and her planning expertise, and the Comprehensive Plan, we are going to, have them develop a good chapter on the waterfront.

Mayor Swiderski: Finally, last but not least, we seek to make Hastings one of the preeminent examples of sustainable planning and programs anywhere. I have asked Bruce to step into the role of coordinating this vital effort, to steer the Village in the direction of a future that benefits our children. Bruce brings a professional background in public policy, as well as a deep interest and growing knowledge on these issues, to our Board. I look forward to working with him to make Hastings the sustainable place it should be.

Trustee Jennings: There is a growing awareness and change of consciousness in the world today which has come here to Hastings and will be as much a part of our local lives and our local community as it will be a part of the international global community in the years ahead. It is a basic change of outlook, and a recognition that we do not live among natural objects for us to use, and use up. But we live within, and depend for our very existence upon, complicated, interdependent, living systems that we affect, inevitably, with our own conduct and behavior, but that we ignore and abuse to our very great peril.

That change of consciousness is often given the term “sustainability.” We cannot draw more out of a fund than we put in or eventually we will go bankrupt. We cannot burden a complex, interactive, fragile living system beyond a certain point or it will collapse and die. Those seem like simple ideas, but they are enormously complex and difficult to get across. We believe, I believe, that Hastings-on-Hudson is a community both by virtue of the sorts of values and scientific understanding that exists among our people, and by virtue of the opportunities that we have both to take care of our local landscape and watershed here immediately to us in our community, but also be responsible stewards in terms of the ways in which we affect, by our behavior, the region, the atmosphere, the entire planet.

So we have got two levels of concern that this concept of sustainability brings home to us. We have to take care, and tread lightly on, our own land as a living system, and we have to be aware and mindful of what we are doing that has effects on many other people beyond our borders in Hastings.

We want to address this, insofar as can, at the local level. And there are three basic ways that we can, both as a village government and as a community, address this problem of sustainability, this change of consciousness and behavior, this change of awareness of the world around us in which we live and the way in which we live in it. One is the usual governmental role: laws, policies, and regulations. We can make decisions about what the government itself does and about what our residents in this jurisdiction are permitted to do that will be designed to improve and enhance our sustainability rather than to further behaviors and practices that are environmentally and ecologically destructive and unsustainable.

But law and regulation are only part of the story. Equally important, we as a village government can help with education and awareness and information and understanding on the part of the entire community; our children, as well we adults. Because a big part of this is not what government policy says, but what we ourselves do in our own individual private lives and in the choices we make as individuals and as families and how we behave, how we transport ourselves from one place to another, how we build our dwellings, how we consume and what we consume and how we dispose of what we consume, and so forth and so on. So education is the second leg of this three-legged stool.

Finally, the Village government can work with other groups both within the Village and in the region. Private, voluntary groups, not-for-profit groups, colleges and universities, educational groups: we can help to facilitate education and understanding. We can help to facilitate the creation of new systems, new technologies, new processes for living your life that makes it easier rather than more difficult for one to live in a sustainable and responsible way as a citizen of the land.

Finally, our basic goal is to take a certain ambitious notion that Hastings has the opportunity and the potential to be a model community in this regard. We believe that we can. We believe that over time it will become the common sense and the common will of our Village to be such a model community and to show other communities what can practically be done. So we want to set ourselves up as a community that others look to as an innovative, perhaps experimental but certainly open-minded, community in this regard. This year, I am not sure I would refer to this as low-hanging fruit. But there are definitely some action items that we believe are doable in a fairly reasonable period of time.

None of these things alone is going to address the major problems of loss biodiversity, unsustainable practices, and global climate change. But every incremental step we take does have an impact. And if nobody takes any of these small, incremental steps we are not going to reach the goals we need to reach as a state, as a nation, or as a human community. We can affect our impact on the environment and the atmosphere, in part, by the kinds of vehicles we use in the Village. And we can begin to do technology innovation through Village purchases and Village equipment. We have adopted a membership in a worldwide organization of local municipalities. And now it is our task to set, and interpret, the framework that that coalition or that cooperative effort offers us to meet our own needs.

ICLEI stands for the International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives. It was a group that was created in 1990, and the United States chapter of the group was created in 1995. It is now a worldwide coalition of local governments dedicated to adopting best practices and a framework of approaches, a variety of approaches, to local activities and local services that are sustainable and reduce one's carbon pollution footprint. We have joined

that coalition. We are going to be working with the resources that we get from it, the framework and objectives that they offer us, and adapting these to our local efforts and needs. We are also going to be working very hard on the educational front to coordinate the activities of many groups that already exist within the Village, official groups like the Conservation Commission and volunteer groups like Sustainable Hastings, and many others.

This is a village already full of environmental awareness and ecological sustainable activity. A lot is already being done. A lot of people are already working hard to do it. You might have noticed an article in *The Enterprise* two or three weeks ago about a couple of our local residents who are very concerned about groundwater pollution and the health effect of some the chemicals we use. That is an example that could be multiplied many, many times over: people who are working in the Village already. We are going to try to help to coordinate those efforts and encourage them and develop them.

We also can have an impact with our recycling program. We do that now. I think we are one of the better villages. We can do better still, and we can enhance that program. Eventually, we certainly want to look at one of the major sources of climate change: how we build our buildings. Basically, you have transportation, you have industry, and you have buildings. These are the three main sources of CO₂ that we pump into the atmosphere worldwide. A great deal of progress can be made if all of us around the world work to adopt better building codes and standards so they would be more energy efficient and less polluting in that regard. And we, as a longer-term initiative, intend to look at that in Hastings to make sure that as our housing stock and as our building stock changes over time we will be at the cutting edge and the best, most responsible level of building and architectural practices that any community can be. If we can, again, to set a model for others.

Mayor Swiderski: You have heard us lay out an ambitious agenda and commit to a set of initiatives that we look forward on working on with you. Hastings is a remarkable community that we love dearly. Its future is as great as we aspire to, as great as we make it, and as great as the people who live here. In short, our future is great, indeed, and we look to you to join us in the efforts ahead.

ADJOURNMENT

On MOTION of Trustee McLaughlin, SECONDED by Trustee Walker with a voice vote of all in favor, Mayor Kinnally adjourned the Regular Meeting at 9:50 p.m.