

Village of Sleepy Hollow

NY FORWARD

Meeting Summary

Meeting Name	Local Planning Committee (LPC) Meeting #1
Date & Time	May 25, 2023 – 6:00 to 8:00 pm
Location	James F. Galgano Senior Center – 55 Elm Street

Agenda

Welcome, Introductions, and Presentation (6:00 to 7:45 pm)

- 1. Welcome** | DOS and LPC Co-Chairs (6:00 to 6:05)
- 2. LPC Code of Conduct** | LPC Co-Chairs (6:05 to 6:10)
- 3. Introductions** | VHB (6:10 to 6:20)
- 4. NYF Overview and Timeline** | VHB (6:20 to 6:40)
- 5. Sleepy Hollow NYF Application** | VHB (6:40 to 7:00)
 - NYF Boundary
 - Vision Statement
 - Potential Projects
- 6. Q&A** | VHB (7:00 to 7:10)
- 7. Public Engagement Plan** | MUD Workshop (7:10-7:30)
 - Stakeholders
 - Outreach Methods
 - Community Workshop #1
- 8. Open Call for Projects** | VHB (7:30-7:40)
- 9. Next Steps** | VHB (7:40-7:45)

Public Comment (7:45 to 8:00 pm)

Attendees

Department of State

Amanda Wild
Susan Landfried
Amanda Bearcroft

Empire State Development

Thomas Scaglione

LPC Members

Mayor Martin Ruytna, Co-Chair
Dr. Marsha Gordon, Co-Chair (via phone)
Rev. Christian Santiago
Jessica Mejias
Kirsten Hase-McLaughlin
Laura Rey Innarelli
Mark Soja
Michele Gonzalez (via phone)
Michelle Spino Adruss
Rene Leon
Sara Hodgdon
Torrance Walley

Consultant Team

Catherine Zinnel (VHB)
Alex Moscovitz (VHB)
Shachi Pandey (MUD Workshop)

Summary

Catherine Zinnel (VHB), Amanda Wild (DOS), Mayor Martin Rutyna (LPC Co-Chair), and Dr. Marsha Gordon (LPC Co-Chair) welcomed the LPC members to the first meeting. Mayor Rutyna reviewed the LPC Code of Conduct and there were no recusals. The LPC members then introduced themselves. Together, the group included residents, local business leaders, and leaders of local civic groups and non-profit organizations, including a nearby church and a nearby school.

Catherine provided an overview of NY Forward, the program's goals, and the key steps in planning process, which culminates in development of a Strategic Investment Plan for the downtown area. Catherine reviewed a timeline for the planning process as well as the goals for each LPC meeting and public engagement activity. Alex then reviewed the roles and responsibilities for those involved in the planning process. Following this overview, LPC members raised the following questions:

- Better walkable streets
- Safety for micro mobility
- Parking
- Parking on our village

When asked “what are the biggest opportunities for downtown Sleepy Hollow,” the LPC provided 13 responses:

- Walkable and safe street to walk
- Easy and safe access to open spaces for leisure and enjoy outdoor space
- Proximity to the river
- Beautification
- Walkable routes between schools
- Economic revitalization in a Hudson River town
- Tourists
- Have a village people want to shop and eat
- Access to transit
- Different cultures collaborating
- Diversity
- To have the grant to revitalize !!
- Economic diversification

Catherine concluded review of the Sleepy Hollow NYF application by introducing a set of potential projects. Following this review, LPC members raised the following questions:

- Why is public broadband is categorized as marketing? Catherine answered that it is a wifi network that is available to the public and therefore is seen as an amenity to keep visitors in the downtown area.
- What is the process in the instances where there is a potential new development? We work closely with the project sponsor to offer technical assistance and understand development may be possible. However, it is important that potential projects are ready to be constructed within two years.
- Can this be an opportunity to reach out about vacant lots and understand more why buildings aren't built? Yes, a handful of vacant lots are being considered as potential project sites.
- Can the money be used as a tax break for an entity, such as a non-profit, to make the town more attractive as a place for their operations and services? The NY Forward provides capital funding.

Shachi then reviewed the NY Forward program's approach to public engagement and the components of the public engagement plan. She then solicited the LPC's input, using the following questions:

1. *Who are the stakeholders, constituent groups, and hard-to-reach populations we need to engage?*

- People who live in the downtown area (particularly with regards to quality of life) as well as business owners and property owners.

2. *What outreach methods and messaging have been successful in the past?*

- Bilingual outreach (in English and Spanish) is the most important consideration, including flyers.
- Flyers can be sent out through the school network provided they come before last day of school.
- In-person community workshops are preferred. An hour and a half felt like the appropriate amount of time for workshops. Providing babysitting increases turnout.
- Some LPC members thought that weekends (particularly Sunday afternoons) were best time to reach residents because many work long hours and work outside the village. Others felt that weekday evenings (starting at 6:00 or 7:00 pm) was better.
- Some ideas for engagement included barbecuing or music in the park, Challenge Camp, and other engagement with students.

3. *How can we engage hard-to-reach populations and how can the LPC help us reach a wider audience?*

- The community is 40% Hispanic/Latino and each culture is unique. They need to be able to own this process. The community also comes from cultures where there are political challenges and so they can be hard to engage in these types of events
- Collaborate with partner organizations who hold special gatherings celebrating each culture's uniqueness, such as at St. Theresa's, which is celebrating a food pantry opening.

4. *What would be the most effective engagement at the farmers market?*

- Some LPC members expressed hesitation about reaching downtown residents at the farmers market and instead preferred to support a gathering something in one of the parks.
- LPC members agree that concerts in the park, including one on June 3rd, are a good place to reach a diverse population.

Catherine introduced the Call for Projects, which is an opportunity for community members to submit projects for inclusion in the SIP, and reviewed project eligibility requirements. She then responded to questions by indicating that the Consultant Team can provide technical assistance to potential project sponsors. However, each of the proposed projects needs to submit an application that demonstrates that they meet DOS criteria. In addition, the municipal representatives from the Village of Sleepy Hollow are responsive to feedback and are working to engage with potential sponsors.

At 7:45 pm, attendees who were not LPC members offered public comment. Public comments ranged from recommended methods of engagement to the use of the comprehensive plan to inform the SIP to project recommendations and other ongoing issues.

- Audio. Many members of the public could not hear the presentations or the discussion due to acoustics within the meeting space. This will be addressed prior to the next LPC meeting.
- Recommended engagement methods. It is important that the NY Forward planning process address displacement. Other ideas for engagement include creating a “meeting in a box” for smaller groups, walking tours, creating videos, and providing food at meetings.
- Potential Projects. Ideas included activating the Strand Theatre as a community center, façade improvements, wayfinding at the top of Beekman Avenue, improvements to the public plaza on Cortlandt Street and Beekman Avenue as well as other gathering spaces, pedestrian safety improvements at the three-way intersection (Chestnut Street, Valley Street, and North Washington Street), murals, and other attractions.
- Ongoing issues. Other issues that were raised included the potential relocation of the W.L. Morse Elementary School, displacement and affordability, sanitation, vacant storefronts, and lack of incentives for landlords.

The meeting concluded at 8:05 pm.