



THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE
NEW YORK

**SOUTHERN WATERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT
TASK FORCE MEETING**

MINUTES

Wednesday, August 18, 2021 6:30 p.m.

Zoom

The Southern Waterfront Redevelopment Task Force Meeting was conducted via videoconferencing and the date is August 18, 2021, and the time is 6:39 pm.

Task Force Members Present: 8

II. Public comment (submitted written comments)

1. Naomi Brooks – S. Grand Ave.

As you consider long-term recommendations for this property, please keep in mind that we are on the cusp of updating our Comprehensive Plan and Zoning regulations. We can wait and align any new request for proposals with the results of these updates, especially because you have created specific recommended actions to help open the property in the short term. With such a blank slate, the potential is endless, and includes the opportunity to showcase modern principles of environmentalism and sustainability. The site and its shoreline can be designed to cope with sea level rise and intermittent flooding while providing habitat for land and marine animals. Buildings and parking areas can use materials with a number of ecological benefits. Even certain plantings can remediate contaminated soils. I again urge you to recommend that a professional park planning firm be engaged to create the overall plan, and to provide the lead in building placement, selection of amenities, materials, and finishes, and the landscape plantings. Firms whose expertise shows in the execution of these details created all of the examples that the Task Force describes as worthy of emulation. And as you consider the number and types of buildings for this property, please don't shortchange the city by only calculating potential taxes collected specifically from this property. A successful use will have a ripple effect. There are some amazing statistics about property values and the increased tax revenue on properties near urban parks. Beginning with Central Park in NYC in the 1860's, property adjacent to the park previously brought in less than 8% of the city's tax revenue; after the park was created, those properties brought in 33% of tax revenue, even though 10,000 taxable lots were removed in the construction of the park. This result

continues to be reported. In 2010, one year after opening the first phase of NYC's HighLine park, the city gained \$100 million dollars in property tax increases as a result of an increase in neighboring property values. In the subsequent decade, it has brought in \$2 billion in new developments and over 12,000 new jobs from an original construction investment of about \$240 million. And just this month, park analysts assessed a potential waterfront park in Indiana for its economic, equity, and brand impacts. They showed that by increasing tourism, and attracting and retaining local workers and residents, economic development is correlated with park investments, so much so that annual spending will repay the initial park investment and the cost of maintaining it for a generation. The staggering numbers I mentioned can be scaled down for smaller cities like ours, but the effect is the same. Building out, maintaining compelling programming, and marketing parks as part of the advantages of a region is critically important. We can see this in the ads for sales and rentals around our own Walkway, which mention their proximity to this community asset as a "selling point" for their asking prices. Please use this opportunity to reset and modernize the vision for this important waterfront property.

2. Brendan Mee – Barclay St.

I am trying to finish work and get over the Changepoint to watch this. If you get this in time and can put it in the record, I'd be grateful. My name and address are at the end.

I have been a resident in the City of Poughkeepsie two years to the day, and so far very happy with the move.

I walk a lot, and one of my favorite views in the City, if not my most favorite, is at the bottom of Rinaldi Boulevard looking south out over the Hudson River. I am writing so that this community does not lose sight of this spectacular natural resource as plans are made, even as I recognize that preserving the site as pure public space may not be in the cards, or even desirable.

I hope the Council will consider at least the following factors in approving and limiting any project at that site. To me, these seem like common sense and don't require any special expertise in urban planning:

1. Any plan for development should include substantial public access to the waterfront. There is nearly continuous public access to the water along the Poughkeepsie waterfront, and this section shouldn't be any different just because this is the South End of it. Ideally, "public access" to the water is not just a tow path either, but something robust and inviting. You don't have to look far to appreciate the value added by a public walk along the water. That applies whatever is done with the site
2. Don't build anything too high or too close to the water. It should be possible to build there without obliterating the view or the sense of place.

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3. Take the long view with regard to what sort of businesses could productively occupy that site. The small footprint, the need to keep the profile low, the train traffic behind—in my mind, all favor commercial use. Demand might be off because of the pandemic, but that shouldn't force a hasty plan. The pandemic will eventually end, but once the site is built there's no going back. Some thought should be given to searching out the business/tenant that might be viable there, and potentially that specific use could be promoted. It's an inviting destination.

Written comments submitted by City Administrator Nelson:

I briefly wanted to respond to a couple of the comments made over the last couple of meetings, or in writing by public commenters.

1. It has been recommended the City retain professional parks-design resources, with comments that the City lacks such expertise.

We're in agreement on the recommendation, however the city has been doing so for some time now. The City engaged New City Parks, of the Regional Plan Association, headed by Ms. Rose Harvey, to work with the City on parks design, construction and visioning.

Rose has done a couple of presentations to the Common Council, focusing on Pershing Park and Malcolm X Park, which are at various stages of design or construction. For those of you unfamiliar with New City Parks, please take a moment to review their website at: <https://rpa.org/work/campaigns/new-city-parks> . Also, for those interested in attending, the City and NCP are conducting an on-site public engagement meeting at Malcolm X Park on September 18, 2021. Time and further details to be announced soon. The event is in collaboration with Scenic Hudson, and we are grateful for the significant grant funding being provided to the City by Scenic Hudson with respect to our work on these specific parks.

2. It has been recommended that the city create a Division of Parks within its municipal organization.

We're in agreement with the recommendation, however the city has a division of parks and recreation, within the Department of Public Works. From memory I believe the division currently employs six full time and one part time employees, and is assisted seasonally by between 4-8 temporary workers (primarily in the summer months). Although the division has existed for some time, last year the DPW Commissioner began to return to the former practice of having specific employees assigned to specific parks. The work-plan improves 'ownership' and a pride in the work on the part of our team members, and has been very well-received, particularly with respect to our efforts at College Hill Park and Waryas Park. The historical footnote on this is that the city understandably got away from this practice during times of

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financial difficulty, as DPW resources were spread very thin for many years. Pretty consistently over the last four years or so, the city has been increasing resources within DPW (which also includes the Division of Sanitation Services). The ability to have done so stems in part from the city's transit consolidation with Dutchess County in July 2017, and the reallocation of resources to Sanitation, Parks, Trees and Streets which was possible thereafter.

III. Update on implementation of short term recommendations

IV. Long term recommendations report

V. Next meeting dates

- **Wednesday, September 1, 2021**

VI. Closing

A motion was made by Councilmember Brannen to adjourn the meeting at 8:25pm.

Dated: August 26, 2021

I hereby certify that this true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Southern Waterfront Redevelopment Task Force Meeting held on Wednesday, August 18, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Jasmin Nicole Davis
City Chamberlain

