

GREATER JAMESPORT CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Overview –

The Greater Jamesport Civic Association, founded in 1948, is celebrating its 75th anniversary serving our residents and fostering a strong sense of community. Our Civic represents individuals, families and businesses located in the hamlets of Aquebogue, Jamesport, South Jamesport and the portion of Laurel within the Town of Riverhead. Our geographic area spans the area east of route 105 to Laurel Road in Laurel. We meet monthly throughout the year, in addition to hosting special events such as our annual Independence Day celebration, holiday party and meet the candidates night. We provide our members a strong voice to address community concerns. The Greater Jamesport Civic Association celebrates the rich history, strong rural and agricultural heritage and precious natural environment of the North Fork. We work with elected officials, businesses and members of our community to facilitate prudent management of growth to maintain a balance between economic development and preserving those qualities that make the North Fork of Long Island special.

Projects/Actions –

Some of our Civic's accomplishments include playing an instrumental role in the following:

- Creation of Iron Pier and South Jamesport beaches
- Preserve Sharper's Hill, Maimogue Point and Broadcove as Town park/open spaces
- Secure improved ambulance coverage east of route 105
- Save and restore the George Young Community Center and honor garden as community meeting place and resource for community activities.
- Foster community safety, including establishment of the Jamesport/South Jamesport Fire Department, working for solutions to traffic problems, lowering tonnage and speed limit on Peconic Bay Blvd, installation of traffic lights on S Jamesport Ave at Main Road and N and S Railroad Aves, upgrading street lighting in Jamesport business district and providing CPR training.
- Monitoring Town Board, ZBA and Planning Board meetings and communicating with members through emails and monthly meetings on significant issues affecting the community.
- Meet with NYS, County and Riverhead elected officials to bring forward community concerns, including inviting elected officials to attend monthly meetings to answer questions posed by and engage in dialog with members.
- Sponsor meet the candidates events.
- Sponsor annual July 4th community celebration and various social events to bring community members together, sponsor community cleanups, participation in local parades.
- Distribute Hometown Happenings, a weekly newsletter informing members of community events.
- Provide annual Community Service Scholarships to graduating high school seniors.

Key Issues –

Key issues of concern to residents of our hamlets with respect to the Comprehensive Plan include the following:

1. Preservation of Farmland and Open Space

- a) Preservation of farmland and open space in our hamlets is a significant priority for our residents.
- b) Where resources are available either at the Town level or partnering with the County and community resources like the land trust, every effort should be made to acquire rights with respect to farms and open space to preserve these resources for the future.
- c) In connection with revitalizing the TDR program, sending areas should be extended north of Sound Avenue and South of Route 25/Main Road in our hamlets.
- d) The community supports looking at what incentives could be provided to existing farms to continue traditional crop farming.
- e) Vertical farming should be considered as an adjunct to traditional farming to foster sustainability of farmland. Vertical farming should be permitted to occupy a limited percentage of the plot, and there should be design standards and location and barrier requirements to preserve the open vista. Consideration should be given to granting the Town a right of first refusal to purchase the property in the future to preserve as farm land in consideration of granting permits for vertical farming.
- f) Where current open space is considered for development in the future, cluster development that maintains the maximum percentage of open space located around the outer areas after the development should be prioritized in zoning and incentives.

2. Village Centers

- a) The village center in Jamesport should be looked at as a whole and not part of multiple zones.
- b) Priority for the Jamesport village center, where most of the commercial establishments are smaller stores and which includes the significant historical Meeting House resource and the recently renovated honor garden, should be to maintain a walkable setting with a small town look and feel.
- c) No buildings greater than 2 stories should be permitted.
- d) A pattern book should be developed for future development east of route 105. Any new design should be consistent with look and feel of existing small shops and restaurants.
- e) The commercial owners in Jamesport and in the other hamlet centers benefit from tourists passing through on their way to vineyards and other destinations and the existence of the inns and motels in the town, but it would be inconsistent with the nature of the community to try to make the village of Jamesport or any of the other hamlet centers tourist destinations in and of themselves.
- f) There are anomalies in the current zoning that need to be corrected. For example, Article XII Rural Corridor Zoning Use District, which is intended to allow a very limited range of roadside shops and services that are compatible with the agricultural and rural setting leading into areas zoned Hamlet Center, contains an unexplained exception for retail stores on properties with frontage between South Jamesport and Washington Avenues. There is no sound reason in terms of the Town's land use policies to make a special exception in the RLC for this small stretch of Route 25 in Jamesport, and RLC Zoning 108-282-A(3) should be removed. Likewise, on South Jamesport Avenue the west side near Route 25 is zoned residential while the east side is zoned Country rural. The zoning boundaries in the hamlets should be reviewed and modified appropriately to eliminate unjustified exceptions and inconsistencies and adhere to the purpose and intent of the zoning districts within the hamlets.

- g) There is current commercial permitted zoning that extends into the residential neighborhood on north end of Washington Avenue. This zoning should be changed to residential to be consistent with the character of the neighborhood.
- h) Enforcement of code provisions relating to tree clearing should be strengthened.

3. Rural Corridor

- a) Rural corridor zoning should be strengthened to maintain the goal of preserving the rural character of the area including the use of a pattern book.
- b) Design standards should be made mandatory and not recommendations.
- c) Local incentives should be provided to encourage maintenance of existing historically significant buildings, a number of which have recently been lost to development.
- d) RLC Zoning -108-282-B(1,2,3) which allows a creep on ¼ mile of the business zone into the rural corridor should be eliminated.
- e) Permitted uses should not include medical and professional offices other than those that would occupy existing structures.

4. Residential Concerns

- a) The plan should adopt FAR standards to prevent overbuilding on lots in order to get out in front of issues that Southold and other towns are facing because they were not proactive with respect to establishing maximum limits on size of homes based on lot size.
- b) Where preexisting commercial uses exist in residential neighborhoods, zoning should be clarified to prevent ancillary uses that are not consistent with the residential character, including outdoor commercial hours, noise issues, etc.
- c) Maximum size of homes, including ancillary buildings on the property, should be limited in all cases to a maximum of 10,000 sq ft.
- d) Prohibition on renting residential properties for a rental period of fewer than 30 days should be maintained

5. Commercial

- a) Agritourism is supported as a vital part of our community. Codes need to be reviewed and updated, as required, to assure that capacities and events are consistent with health and safety concerns.

6. Traffic and Transportation

- a) Traffic is a real pain point for our communities, especially as agritourism has become essentially a year-round phenomenon.
- b) The plan should look at whether businesses benefiting from the traffic can introduce modifications to entrances and exits to mitigate traffic safety issues and provide resources to direct traffic flows during peak times.
- c) Parking should be prohibited at intersections on Route 25 so that cars going straight can pass cars turning left to help eliminate bottlenecks.
- d) Enforcement needs to be a priority to maintain safety in traffic flow.
- e) The Town and owners should be encouraged to experiment with ways to encourage public transportation to reduce traffic, like running buses or limos from the Riverhead and Mattituck LIRR stations to vineyards.
- f) Adoption of safe community streets to encourage safe walking, biking and driving on roads.

7. Environmental Concerns

- a) The comprehensive plan must address environmental concerns, including the potential effects of climate change on our beaches, the bay and other wetlands, marine life and other resources.

- b) The plan needs to address protection of groundwater and surface water quality.
- c) Sewers should be considered as replacement for cesspools in coastal areas where wastewater runoff into the bay and sound are most acute.
- d) Development needs to be balanced with water requirements and potential strains on infrastructure and resources. Where development will result in significant future public costs, the plan should provide for the mechanism for those costs to be identified and quantified so that they can be factored into the project and borne by the developer.

8. Hamlet Boundaries

- a) There is an ongoing concern that the maps being used in connection with the Comprehensive Plan process do not represent the community's understanding and are inconsistent with the historical understanding of the hamlet boundaries. We've provided information on the correct boundaries. We'd like confirmation that the maps and other resources used in connection with the process will be modified to reflect the correct hamlet boundaries.

Priorities –

Our community's priorities are reflected in the key issues outlined above.

Additionally, we would share that our hamlets contain unique resources, including access to the bay and sound, farmland and open spaces and small village centers. The western boundary of the area covered by our Civic, route 105, is an important dividing line in terms of the nature of commercial development that must be vigilantly maintained.

Access to the bay and sound is a unique resource for all residents in the Town of Riverhead and must be preserved. We need to be vigilant with respect to any environmental issues that could adversely affect the future use and enjoyment of our beaches and waters.

Preservation of open space and farmland and maintaining the rural corridor with limitations on development and design standards that maintain the rural character of the rural corridor is a priority to maintain the rural character of our community for the benefit of both the residents of the Town of Riverhead and attraction of visitors to our area. Maintaining rural charm is a key economic driver in attracting visitors.

The village centers should be maintained with small town look and feel and small shops. While accessible to visitors as well as residents, the village centers within the hamlets should not be tourist destinations and the businesses should be of a nature primarily serving the needs of local hamlet residents.

Other Considerations -

While our response to the survey has focused primarily on issues within the area represented by our Civic east of Route 105, our Civic works together with the other Civics in the Town of Riverhead, and our members are involved with issues throughout the Town which affect us all.

We look to the Comprehensive Plan to provide a blueprint to balance future commercial and residential development with infrastructure and resource constraints and the desire to maintain the rural character of our hamlets for the benefit of Riverhead residents and visitors.

What are the current constraints in terms of water, traffic, schools, open space and other issues that will be impacted by growth and development? How should capacity be responsibly increased and how will the costs be borne? What are the ultimate limitations in terms of costs and tradeoffs in quality of life for our communities? Where should we be incremental to experiment to see what works and what needs to be modified in the future rather than jumping into projects that could significantly change the character of our Town all at once.

Balancing growth and resource constraints, the key elements of the Plan, including land use and density, should drive towards an established population cap for potential population growth over the Plan period. We believe the potential Town of Riverhead population of 40,000 to 42,000 people as discussed in the GEIS for the 2003 Comprehensive Plan remains an appropriate guidepost for the current Plan.

We need to be part of regional solutions with other towns. There is greater need for affordable housing and senior housing in Suffolk County, for example, but we need to find solutions where the region as a whole steps up, and Riverhead or other towns aren't looked to shoulder a disproportionate share of the solutions.

There is a sense that in the current planning process, the planners may not have adequately analyzed the 2003 Comprehensive Plan to determine what has and has not worked in order to inform the current plan.

There is also a sense that the prior plan was a static document that wasn't revisited and didn't evolve over the 20-year period leading to the current work on a revised plan. The new Comprehensive Plan should build in mechanisms to assess what is and isn't working and what new issues that were not anticipated by the Plan are facing the Town, and to permit the Plan to evolve, with appropriate input from all constituencies, including the Civics representing our residents.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this response to the planners. It's vital that the Civics have a seat at the table going forward in the process of drafting the Comprehensive Plan and that ample time is provided for residents to review and comment on drafts as they are prepared. Participation of the Town's residents can't be seen as a check the box exercise. While there won't be unanimity on issues, for the Comprehensive Plan to be a meaningful blueprint for the future, we need a process where all stakeholders feel heard, and there is no concern that the document is unduly influenced by particular stakeholders.

Thank you.

The Greater Jamesport Civic Association