

From: Citizens Action Committee
Of Waddington

To: Village of Waddington Board
Waddington, NY 13694

Recently, a group of concerned citizens met to form an action committee to help establish and implement a master plan for the revitalization of the village and town of Waddington.

This organization is the result of many discussions between members of various individuals on the Waddington and St. Lawrence County Chambers of Commerce. Our initial meeting was organized by Waddington Chamber president, Nancy Putney, who, like St. Lawrence County Chamber Executive Director, Karen St. Hilaire, best exemplify individuals dedicated to the revitalization of Waddington for the benefit of future generations.

A citizens committee, for this purpose, is also the number one recommendation of the Economic Development Study of Waddington, performed by the Merwin Institute in 1999-2000. This study surveyed a sampling of businesses and residents in Waddington to determine the perceived economic health of the area and offer recommendations to help guide citizens in the revitalization of Waddington. Both the village and town of Waddington sponsored this study.

This study called on citizens' involvement as being "essential" and should serve as the foundation of any revitalization efforts. Additionally, the study states, "the survival and enhanced quality of life rests ultimately with the people who live in the community."

Furthermore, the study emphasizes that citizens and the municipalities must work in concert to be successful – which is why members of our newly formed action group plan on attending both village and town board meetings on a regular basis. It is hoped that a representative or representatives from the village can commit to attending the regular meetings and become active participants of the citizens group. The Town of Waddington had a couple of representatives at the initial meeting and we hope this will continue.

It should be noted that anyone who is serious about the revitalization of Waddington and is willing to be an active participant, donating a substantial amount of personal time to this important effort, is welcome to become a part of our group. The task at hand will not be easy, but can be accomplished through the cooperation of many progressive-minded and optimistic individuals that share a common vision and don't understand the word "can't".

For too long there have been mutterings of reasons why something cannot be accomplished - this is going to change. We believe that with a strong sense of commitment, hard work and the political will, that anything is possible and we'll soon teach people to say, "it CAN be done", not, "it will never happen and there's nothing we can do about it."

Waddington has a very bright future if we can implement some of the ideas that people have been talking about for years, but never acted on. Our citizens committee has come up with some very good ideas recently and, undoubtedly, some will be incorporated into the master plan. Many of these ideas are connected to utilizing our most important asset – the beautiful St. Lawrence River, the shores of which have been, for 50 years, and will be, to a great extent, for another 50, under the auspices of the great state of New York.

The results of the Merwin study confirm, with a vast majority of respondents, that the perception in Waddington, is that NYPA's ownership of the shoreline has "prohibited riverfront development, hindered recreational opportunities, negatively impacted the community's tax base and taken away Waddington's greatest potential for development."

With the conclusion of the NYPA relicensing settlement, there are some very important and significant changes that will be occurring in Waddington. It is argued, understandably so, that NYPA could afford to do more, but the reality is that an agreement is in place (pending internal Government Task Force disputes and FERC approval) and that Waddington will gain some additional land and money from the settlement.

Members of the citizens committee believe that because of the NYPA settlement, this is a very critical period in Waddington and decisions made in the coming months will affect residents well into the future. Regardless of how we now feel about the settlement, there will be some changes to the project boundary, enhanced recreational facilities and additional money available, which, for a town the size of Waddington, can make an impact. What we do with these additional resources must be debated and decided upon by the citizens of Waddington. We have learned from our mistakes and will not sit idly by until it's too late. We pledge our commitment to this project, to set aside personal differences and go forth cooperatively pursuing community revitalization that benefits generations to come.

That said, there are a number of questions that our citizens committee have raised that are vital to the formation of a master plan.

1. How much money will be given to the village of Waddington as a result of the NYPA settlement?
2. What plans, if any, are there for this additional money?
3. Is any NYPA land being returned in the village? If there is, the citizen's committee would like to obtain a map showing these parcels.
4. How much money will be given by NYPA for the rehabilitation of Island View and Whittaker parks in the village of Waddington?
5. Has there been a plan developed for the parks in the village or any other areas within the village along the river shoreline? If so, the citizen's committee would like a copy of the plan.
6. Is there any revitalization plan for the downtown corridor developed by or for the village of Waddington?
7. What actions are being taken by the village board regarding the I-68 applications being suspended?
8. Is it true that NYPA will allow a marine refueling station (or pump) in the village of Waddington (possibly at the public dock at the end of Main Street) and has anyone expressed interest in building and maintaining a station?
9. Is there any ordinance against first floor apartments in the commercial buildings in the downtown corridor, and if not, would the board agree to such a resolution?
10. Are there any plans to resurface Main Street this summer? If so, where is the funding coming from and what would it take to get the utilities buried at the same time?
11. What incentives would the village be willing to offer to attract businesses to the village, especially the downtown corridor?
12. It has been suggested that the boat slips at the end of Main Street all be open to the public to increase tourism. Would the village favor this proposal? If so, would the village agree to the addition of water and electrical service for these slips?
13. Does the village board agree that if Waddington is an official port of entry, that this would have a significant, positive and immediate impact on the number of customers patronizing our local businesses? If so, what must be done to become a port of entry?
14. Would the village favor a proposal to create an economic development zone in the village, in an effort to attract small, light commercial businesses and offices?

We would request that the board answer whatever questions that can be answered now and follow up with a written response that can be distributed and presented at the next citizen's committee meeting to be held at 6:30 pm, on March 28th, at Murray's Old Irish Inn (the old Townhouse Restaurant) in Waddington.