



MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES

Monday, April 29, 2024

Gateway Visitors Center

Schuylerville, NY
12871

MISSION STATEMENT

The Partnership's mission is to preserve, enhance and develop historic, agricultural, scenic, natural and recreational resources and the significant waterways within the Partnership Region. Through the tradition of municipal home rule, the Partnership will foster collaborative projects with pertinent non-profit and governmental entities with an emphasis on both agricultural and open space protection, economic and tourism development and interpretation of our natural and cultural heritage.

Board Members Attending:

Tom Richardson, City of Mechanicville
Kay Tomasi, Senate Appointee
Joe Durkin, Rensselaer Plateau Alliance
Cindy Wian, Hudson Crossing Park

Also attending:

Kate Morse, Hudson Crossing Park
David Wooden, Town of Waterford
Sean Kelleher, Town of Saratoga (Historian)
Megan Quillinan, Mechanicville CSC
Pam Pradachath-Demlev, BBF/LPC
Julie White, Hudson Crossing Park
Rebecca Keister, Erie Canalway
Pat Behrens, resident
David Mathis, resident

Andrew Alberti, Flatley Read
Judy Wood-Zeno, Village of Stillwater
Mary Roberts, Hudson Crossing Park
Jim Brangan, Lake Champlain Basin Program
David Pitlyk, NYS Parks and Recreation
Collin Devlin, Hudson Crossing Park
Gretchen Stark, CCTW6
Richard Behrens, resident

Tom Richardson called the meeting to order and made introductory remarks.

- Introduced Steve Bulger who is heading Saratoga County's 250 Celebration Committee. Among the 250 Committee's ideas is to utilize the GVC by making the downstairs floor an office and part of the overall plan of destinations and locations for tourists. Also noted that Drew Alberti is on the committee.

- The main reason for our membership meeting today is that with the completion of the GVC, the Partnership is now moving back to its original purpose regional projects for such things as tourism and history destinations.
- In connection with the Partnership's return to that original purpose, Kate Morse of Hudson Crossing Park will give a presentation about the creation of Hudson Crossing Park.

Kate Morse Presentation

Kate introduced herself as the Director of Hudson Crossing Park (HCP). She started by emphasizing that the way HCP got started and is continuing, is by working with the surrounding towns and villages, in particular Schuylerville (both town and village). She then took us through a tour of the local history as an underpinning of how and why initiatives such as HCP are important to the community.

The history of the Schuylerville is more than just the Saratoga Battles. Phillip Schuyler had a vision of building a canal system and the local canal basin (a harbor) as the hub of industry in the area. In fact at one point there was a theme – “Boats Bring Business”. What this meant is that because of the canal being a means of transportation of goods, mills, manufacturing plants and hotels grew up around the whole area. This canal system piggybacked on the availability of hydro power (water wheels) for the building of numerous mills. With this industry came the jobs that attracted more people to live in the area.

Unfortunately, as happened elsewhere, with the advent of the railroad systems through out the country, reliance on canal systems and the industries that were located near them began to phase out. By the 1920's mills and factories started moving to other places and literally “the Bottom Dropped Out”. After the industries left, people came together to find ways to save the community. One idea was to create a park recognizing how parks can be part of economic revitalization.

One result was to convert the island that HCP is now on into a park destination for multiple related uses; trails, history, recreation, environmental education. The first step was make arrangements with the NYS Canal Corporation, which was the owner, for the HCP to be established and built. Then the next thing was to get the community involved; money/funding, volunteer clean up days. One significant item was the restoration and conversion of the Dix Bridge, which had been a key local electric trolley bridge at one time, into a bridge for access to the island. This Dix Bridge project was among the first Partnership regional projects.

An important point is that HCP has been and is working on keeping the momentum going. This means keeping the community engaged. Part of this is to have a diversity of facilities to include a diverse audience. This led to building the HCP visitor center. The HCP visitor center is important for children programs. With this diversity of programs and opportunities, about 30,000 people visit each year. People from the immediate area, other parts of NYS and even beyond including foreign countries.

Kate concluded by noting how the combination of HCP, the Canal Towpath, Empire State Trail and the cooperation of the downtown businesses have all been part of the revitalization of Schuylerville.