

## **From the Mayor's Desk...January 16, 2012**

“Let us be dissatisfied until from every city hall, justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. Let us be dissatisfied until that day when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and every man will sit under his own vine and fig tree and none shall be afraid. Let us be dissatisfied.”

-From Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Address to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference on August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1967.

As I reflect on this Martin Luther King holiday, I believe that Dr. King would be “satisfied” with the progress our nation has made regarding race relations. While there are obvious milestones like an African-American President of the United States, the greatest change to me is the attitudes of my children towards race. More than “merely” tolerant, they find it hard to see meaningful differences between people. While I suspect that the most color blind among us have always been children, it is nice to see children living in a society that, in at least their first decade, has failed to jade them with the prejudices of the past. The gains we have made in the forty years since the assassination of Dr. King have been impressive but we have to always remember that they have come at a great cost and there is always more to do. Take this day to remember those sacrifices and think about what we need to improve our world so all people will be absent of fear.

One great way to make a lasting impact in honor of Dr. King is by volunteering. If you are interested in getting more involved with any aspect of our Village by volunteering, from fighting fires to serving on a volunteer board, please contact me at my e-mail address below. If you are looking for other volunteering options, the Volunteer Center of United Way has a very helpful website: <http://www.volunteer-center.org/volunteers/mlk2012.shtml> While their MLK Day of Service was held last Saturday, they still have a link to many worthwhile organizations looking for your help. If you are still on the fence about getting involved, consider the Dr. King quote that Westchester County had on their website to promote the Day of Service: “Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'”

## **Hearing on the Waterfront Rezoning Scheduled for this Wednesday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

This Wednesday the Board of Trustees will hold a public hearing regarding our proposed legislation for rezoning the waterfront. The draft and additional information can be found here: <http://www.irvingtonny.gov/waterfront>

Many of you are aware of the history of the waterfront rezoning. The Irvington Comprehensive Plan from 2003 called for the rezoning of the Industrial District which included the waterfront area. Specifically, the Comprehensive Plan recommended a mix of residential and business uses to replace the outdated industrial uses. So, this process has started almost a decade ago. In the last three years, the Board of Trustees has had several drafts of potential rezoning. The previous plan included the idea of a “Master Plan” for any development, large setbacks, additional public access and a process for allowing a parking structure. While that plan had many desirable aspects, many residents objected to the idea of a parking structure while a plan without the parking structure was not acceptable to the property owner since they were giving a lot (land in the form of setbacks, public access, as well as the only zoning district subjected to a master plan) without getting anything. So, again, we were unable to get the waterfront rezoned away from industrial uses.

I have said at several meetings that I think the Board of Trustees was trying to accomplish too much on the waterfront through zoning alone. While our priorities were certainly commendable, and we still agree with almost all of them, I feel that we were trying to build too much in a zoning change that had its

origin in the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan (it can be found online here: <http://www.irvingtonny.gov/DocumentView.aspx?DID=606> ).

The portion of the Comprehensive Plan that deals with the waterfront is Section 6.0 Main Street Area and the Waterfront, the section that discuss how to achieve the vision of the Plan is Section 6.4 Implementation. There are seven items mentioned that apply to Main Street, the waterfront or both:

1. Preserve the Historic Character and Built Scale of the Main Street Area
2. Preserve Main Street Views of Hudson River
3. Address Traffic Congestion along Main Street
4. Encourage Mixed-Use Development on South Astor Street
5. Improve Pedestrian and Vehicular Access to Waterfront
6. Improving the streetscape along West Main Street
7. Elimination of Industrial Zoning

These seven items are where I started when we attempted to draft compromised rezoning legislation, I will briefly address each.

#### *Historic Character*

We have recently appointed a committee to, once again, work on the designation of an historic district as well as prepare recommendations as to what being located in that historic district will mean to property owners. Since this item has taken as long as the rezoning itself, I did not believe that we had to try and incorporate this into a waterfront rezoning. Additionally, the goal of the Comprehensive Plan was for a more encompassing historic district than several large buildings on the waterfront. I am certain there will be plenty of discussion to follow on this issue!

#### *Preserve Main Street Views of the Hudson River*

This is an item that is universally agreed upon as important by residents. The new draft encompasses this by limiting the height of any new buildings, providing for setbacks and limiting the size of retail stores and residential uses. In 2003, the Village Board adopted a View Preservation Overlay district to help protect the views of the Hudson River for properties West of Broadway.

#### *Address Traffic Congestion along Main Street*

While this is specific to Main Street traffic, the required traffic studies of the current draft would require the study of impacts on not only Main Street but other impacted areas like South Astor Street, Buckhout Street and Station Road.

#### *Encourage Mixed-Use development on South Astor (not applicable to the rezoning)*

#### *Improve Pedestrian and Vehicular Access to Waterfront*

I think it would be helpful to add the specifics of what the Comprehensive Plan said in regard to improving access to the waterfront:

- (a) Designating a pedestrian pathway along the road to Scenic Hudson Park. This will be done as part of the improvement to such road, which will include improved lighting and a pedestrian pathway.
- (b) Constructing a second overpass to Scenic Hudson Park.

This is far short of the blanket goal of additional public access that the Board of Trustees had in our priorities. While I still desire additional public access to the waterfront, I cannot promote legislation that will result in a taking of property rights. While I would love a public esplanade along the waterfront connecting our two beautiful waterfront parks, I cannot legislate away the property owner's valuable waterfront property to make that a reality. What can we do in the rezoning? Provide a reasonable setback

on the river front that would allow for a deal or a purchase of the property in the future. That is what we propose with a 28 foot setback in the current draft.

The two specifics mentioned in the Comprehensive plan are, in my opinion, beyond the scope of the zoning legislation. However, outside of the rezoning, I have been in touch with the property owners about a joint project to create a walkway on Railroad Way to provide better access from the railway tunnel to Scenic Hudson Park. Bridge Street Properties was very open to working with the Village to make this a reality.

*Improving the streetscape along West Main Street (not applicable to the rezoning)*

*Elimination of Industrial Zoning*

This is the big one to me, and the item that everyone agrees needs to be accomplished. If we eliminate the industrial uses, what do we replace them with? The answer is largely the same uses as the existing business district along with the waterfront specific uses that we highlighted in our priorities. These are the uses in the current draft and are very similar to the previous draft.

*Summary of my view on the waterfront rezoning*

The fact that we still have an industrial district in Irvington in 2012 is unacceptable. The current rezoning legislation eliminates the industrial zone and provides uses that are appropriate for a thriving waterfront district. While the BOT will not be able to accomplish all of the priorities that we outlined three long years ago, we can accomplish the largest and ensure no more industrial development on the waterfront. Lastly, the current rezoning legislation does NOT prohibit additional access to the waterfront in the future, an esplanade or even a parking structure in the future. It simply does not include these things in the current legislation, legislation that will, finally, eliminate the potential for undesirable uses on our waterfront.

Please send us your thoughts on the proposed rezoning or attend the meeting on Wednesday the 18<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. It is very likely we will have at least one more public hearing on this issue.

### **Eagle Scouts**

On Tuesday January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Jack Boyle and Seiichiro Ueda from Irvington Boy Scout Troop 55 achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. The boys and their families should be very proud of this great achievement. The Board of Trustees would like to extend our congratulations for a job extremely well done!

Thank you for reading my long message and as always, please share your thoughts and ideas with me.

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