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Subject: Housing Advisory Group Meeting Notes -- 8/24/2026
Date: Monday, August 31, 2026 6:28:42 PM

Hello Everyone,

A small but mighty group gathered at the White Sulphur Springs Inn last Monday night, 8/24/2026, to discuss all things related to housing in the Town and Village of Liberty. We had an excellent discussion to help start sorting out the priorities to focus on in the next Town and Village Comprehensive Plan. The group included perspectives from Parksville, WSS, the Village, and Ferndale/Hurleyville.

As with my first presentation to the Joint Comprehensive Plan Committee in early July, the goal of the conversation was not to establish any specific policy priorities, but rather to build an understanding of where we are as a community and what we think we should focus on to make a positive difference over the life of the new plan.

The group that met on Monday discussed a lot of different issues, but we did come up with five priority areas to focus our work going forward. At our next session, we will look to establish sub-committees to look deeper into these issues:

1. **Strengthen Code Enforcement Across the Town and Village** - This is not a statement of displeasure with the existing code enforcement staff at the Village and Town! Because most of our housing stock and commercial buildings are old, the demand for Code Enforcement's time and skill far outstrips their capacity. More importantly, the group acknowledged that code enforcement is much more than an officer going out to properties to issue citations. The Town and Village need new resources and methods to ensure code enforcement violations are fully enforced (from citations to civil suits) on the properties that are contributing most to unsafe, blighted living conditions and deterring investment in both new housing and commercial development across the Town and Village.
A focus on code enforcement will also likely uncover poorly operated short term rental (STR) properties, leading to both better upkeep and increased revenue from more effective regulated STRs.
2. **Re-examine the Relationship Between the Town and Village** - It's no secret that the Village is struggling to make ends meet and, in general, people would prefer to have fewer layers of government in their life. At the same time, Village taxpayers fund a very popular, high-performing police force that carries a heavy burden of maintaining public safety, not just downtown, but also in important shopping areas and at hotels that are

used by residents from across the Town and County. The Village also has significant water resources that, if maintained responsibly, could support significant new development both in and outside of the Village limits and make our collective infrastructure more resilient and able to grow. As discussed back in July, responsible growth is essential to keeping (or getting?) our tax burdens under control.

It is easy for people to slip into the long-running either/or comparisons of should or should-we-not have a Village anymore. It is time to ask a deeper, more thoughtful question. How do we structure government within the Town limits to ensure the services we want our municipal government system to deliver are distributed and taxed equitably and fairly? The answer MAY be to fully consolidate the Village into the Town, but if it doesn't make sense to spread tax burdens across the Town for services that are important to the success of the Village but NOT the hamlets, what other solutions can we come up with to improve our shared condition as a community?

The Housing Advisory Group obviously did not come up with the answers on a Monday night get-together at the White Sulphur Springs Inn, but we definitely had a consensus that a fresh conversation on the future of the Town-Village relationship needs to be a part of comprehensive planning.

3. **Develop Strategic Priorities for Future Infrastructure Needs** - Building on the Town/Village relationship discussion, it became apparent to the group that both Town and Village need a cooperative plan for infrastructure development. Pursuing projects solely based on what is currently available within each jurisdiction's limits is not in our collective interests.

Further, while there is a clear and obvious need for new water, sewer, and sidewalk projects across the Town and Village to support recent and potential future growth, these projects should be pursued thoughtfully to preserve natural beauty and rural character in the hamlets. At the same time, we are seeing that suppressing such projects is not nearly the same policy as taking active steps to preserve and protect our rural countryside. Instead, opposition to infrastructure development across the county has led to excessive well drilling, "pocket plant" septic systems, and residential sprawl.

4. **Complete a Zero-Based Review of the Current Zoning Maps** - While we review the Town/Village relationship and the joint infrastructure plan, a thorough zoning review is also warranted. This will give the community a chance to review residential density and infrastructure priorities, not to mention exploring a modernization of commercial, industrial, agricultural and tourism land use priorities.

5. **Energize Community Participation in all of the Above with a Neighborhood Revitalization Program** - Finally, putting weighty planning issues aside, there was a cheerful discussion about the possibility of reviving the *Rock the Block* initiative started by Sullivan Renaissance prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Rock the Block* was successful

in beautifying and improving a distressed Monticello neighborhood in 2019 by combining corporate and private donations, volunteer time and skills, and renovations to a house acquired by the Land Bank and sold to a deserving family with limited income. Plans to do the same on Lincoln Place in the Village of Liberty were planned for 2020. Reviving this initiative will be an uplifting way to increase pride in the Liberty community, improve a neighborhood, and raise awareness of the steps it will take to make Liberty the kind of community we all want to grow old in!

If any (or all) of these topics are of interest and you'd like to pursue them further, please reply to this message. The next Joint Comprehensive Plan committee meeting will be next Wednesday, September 9th. 6pm at the Senior Center.

Warm regards,
john