

Notes from the Stakeholder Interviews for the Comprehensive Planning Committee Held on September 22, 2015

**I. Michael Kress – Highway Superintendent, Richfield Springs Town Highway Dept.**

Mike said that he is responsible for 5 bridges in the village and 2 that are outside of the village. He also said that there are 35 miles of town roads and 15 miles of county roads within the Town. With respect to roads around the lake, he said that most are private but that he maintains a few.

Flooding: Mike said that in the 2006 floods, of the 34 roads, 32 had water over them, that one bridge was washed out and replaced with a bridge that had a wider sluice diameter, so in 2013 when there was flooding, that bridge held.

He also noted that drainage in the town is not as bad a problem as in the past, but the lake area has issues in part because the lake is surrounded by hills that drain into the lake.

The Elm Street extension includes seasonal camps that are affected by flooding.

The Aquinas (spelling?) Creek has the issue of debris that backs up the water flow onto private property; a permit is required to clean it out. Additionally, many areas are not accessible to heavy equipment.

Dam at Oaks Creek: is very old and there have been attempts to obtain funding to replace the dam, but that would not eliminate flooding behind the dam in the lake.

Bridges: The Ann Street Bridge has been closed for 6 years. Mike contacted an engineer to explore an idea for a new kind of bridge. The abutment on the current bridge is in bad condition and is very costly to replace - \$500,000-\$700,000. The new idea is to use concrete blocks and a concrete I-beam and the cost could be approximately \$150,000.

Mike said that he maintains all 7 bridges and that most of them have been replaced in the last 20-25 years. He does an inspection of the bridges every one or 2 years.

He also said that the annual allotment from the budget is often not enough to cover all the requirements.

There is a contract for Mike to plow county roads and the county comes right behind to sand the roads.

Going Forward: In response to a question of whether the town would want a storage unit for salt, Mike said yes. He gets 5-6 loads of salt a year and mixes 10 parts sand to part 1 salt, as he uses it. A dome would be a good storage facility.

He mentioned that his biggest concern is the maintenance facility on James Street built probably in the 1940's. There is 1 overhead door and 4 rows of trucks and it is difficult to maneuver the trucks in that facility. A new facility would be useful. In response to the question of where to put such a facility, Mike said that the Town owns property on Prey Hill on Mauer (spelling?) Road and stockpiles supplies in a shale pit and suggested that that location would be a good one for the trucks.

The question was raised as to whether that would mean moving Town Hall. The discussion included the thought that the Town Hall could remain in that facility, but that the facility would require an overhaul and renovation for use as the Town Hall.

With respect to debris in waterways, Lisa mentioned that the Susquehanna River Watershed helps teach the community how to remove debris and avoid eroding the land. She noted that Wendy\_\_\_\_\_ provides training.

There was also mention of possibly developing a written shared services agreement that could benefit both the Town and the Village.

The interview of Mike Kress ended and discussion moved to postcards of historic Richfield. Mention was made that Jim Kerkowski (spelling?) has the largest collection of postcards.

With respect to historical matters, there could be a bike/walking trail to Bakers Beach using the old rail lines path. Perhaps there could be a cross country trail to Cooperstown using the trail the old trolley took. Discussion noted that this kind of trail involves the questions of whether the Town would have the responsibility for liabilities and for maintenance.

The buildings at Bakers Beach require upgrading.

With respect to parks, there are: Monument Park, Spring Park, and Carey Park.

## **II. Karen Sullivan, Otsego County Planning & Solid Waste Dept.**

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In response to the question of the activities her planning department is currently pursuing, Karen said that they are in the early stages of strategic planning. Karen said that workshops will begin. The strategic plan for the county involves priorities for, among other things, economic development, and agricultural districts. The plan will provide guidance for budget considerations regarding where the county wants to be in the next five years. A survey of municipal leaders has been completed and Rob can obtain the survey from Nicole \_\_\_\_\_.

Transportation: Otsego Express: Karen said that her office oversees the Express and that there are 12 buses. The hub is on Alan's Lake Road in Richfield. Three lines, (OBT, Otsego Express, and ARC) will provide ridership for a year.

Agricultural District #2: Otsego Land Trust (OLT) does preservation to protect the intended purpose and use of the agricultural districts. In 2016 an intern from Oneonta will look at the agricultural district to find out whether the agricultural district is following its intended purpose and use and to provide information that could be used to make it more efficient for the county.

Karen said that the OLT also deals with applications for the purchase of development rights (PDR) to retain land as agricultural. There is an effort underway to update the 1998 plan for agriculture.

Karen also mentioned that there is a countywide inventory of businesses available.

Housing: mobile homes – affordable homes in Otsego County. There are 16 different properties in the county. River Street Developers out of Troy, NY is working with a \$660,000 grant for the replacement/rehab of homes for people on fixed incomes.

There is a 2-year wait list for Section 8 housing. Mention was made that the county needs to address the cost of single family occupancy for homeless to replace motels.

Mention was made of the Regional Economic Development Council (REDC), which consists of several counties, including Broome Co., Chenango Co., and Otsego Co.

Senior housing: Karen said that in Oneonta there are two low to moderate income housing projects and that when senior housing projects are created in Oneonta they are filled before they are completed.

Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank: provides money to foreclosed properties to demolish, stabilize or sell as is. There are 11 units that are foreclosing and funding for 6 in the land bank. There was discussion as to whether commercial properties could be part of the land bank. Both Dan and Karen are involved in/knowledgeable about the land bank.

Karen also mentioned that strategic planning at the county level for solid waste is underway. One option is that the end result is like soil and can be marketed as fill instead of sending solid waste to western NY to be buried.

Potential for Richfield: Karen noted that Richfield Springs has potential because it is on the route 20 corridor at the cross roads of routes 20 and 28. She mentioned the Bresee (spelling?) project in Oneonta is being developed in keeping with the historical concept of the area.

Other thoughts that Karen mentioned were:

- 1) Development of a Community College in Richfield, using the resources of the high school after hours, perhaps to assist post-high school residents to obtain additional education in evening hours after work.
- 2) Annual festivals in the park downtown to attract people from other areas.

### **III. Jim Jordan – Buildings**

Jim noted that the Village has a good sewer system, good cell service, an opportunity for natural gas. He that it has a good quality of life with a low crime rate, no pollution, and a peaceful environment.

Future of the Village:

- 1) Improvements in the school to make it more competitive. Jim felt that more parent involvement would help to tell parents what students do and should be doing.
- 2) The village needs a better appearance especially on the western end – perhaps with a sign on top of decorative stone pillars to announce that travelers are entering the historic Village of Richfield Springs.
- 3) The fountain at the east end of the Village should be repaired. Jim said that there had been a study that said that it would cost \$100,000 to drain, inspect, and repair the fountain.
- 4) Economic development: IDA is considering land behind Price Chopper as a better alternative to the site proposed on Butternut and Cemetery Roads for a Business Park; for the latter, Jim confirmed the price of \$7500/acre (which is more than twice the current value of acreage in that area).

#### **IV. Jim Bartle – Town Justice**

Jim noted that the assets of Richfield Springs include the surrounding countryside that should not be spoiled by windmills or industrial development, and the lake. He sees the area as a retirement community with storefronts in the Village that should be revitalized and maintained.

Jim sees a need to develop Village life so that people want to move here. Keep key stores in town, and revitalize houses that are falling apart. Design street lighting that is attractive, in keeping with the main street theme and provide for better lighting for people who walk along the sidewalks. Also, provide trees and benches.

Jim raised the issue that people drive too fast through the Village and need to slow down. He suggested:

- 1) Putting an island in the middle of Route 20 through the Village with attractive planters and replacing street parking with a central parking lot.
- 2) Hold concerts in Spring Park.
- 3) Harness history for the future: Preserve old buildings, like the old bank building, to attract attention of drivers so they want to slow down to look.
- 4) Create sidewalks the entire length of the Village with lighting designed for pedestrians, attractive buildings, and sidewalks to show people who drive through that they are in a different place than before they entered the Village and to encourage them to slow down, stop, get out and explore the Village shops.

Jim also noted that Town and Village offices are outdated, too small, cramped, and need to be re-designed and rebuilt. He said that there is a need for separate offices for the assessors, supervisors, court room and chambers of the Town Justice, maybe even a separate court house. The way in which the Town/Village offices appear and are maintained says a lot about civic pride in the Town/Village. Town/Village buildings that are ignored generate limited civic pride.

With respect to the future of the Village, Jim said it has two purposes: 1) a second home or a retirement home; and 2) a center for farming.

Jim also noted that St. John's Episcopal Church on Main Street provides a great venue for community activities. The church seats 200.

## **V. Carolyn Hopper – Richfield Springs Garden Club**

Carolyn, a graduate of the class of '69, said that the Garden Club maintains:

- 1) The rose garden around the clock;
- 2) Flowers at the firehouse;
- 3) School planters under the sign;
- 4) Flowers at the pump house (near state troopers); and
- 5) The herb garden at the library.

Planters around the stores are maintained by the Chamber of Commerce.

There are approximately 17 members of the Garden Club and there is a need to attract younger members (the youngest is about 50 years of age). Members serve as point persons for each of the areas the Garden Club maintains.

The Club has no budget so has an annual herb sale and has earned up to \$1200 one year.

There is also a need for a location for the Garden Club that they can call their own to meet and store supplies.

With respect to integration of the Garden Club into the Village, discussion included:

- 1) A school garden club for elementary, middle school, and teens, especially since many teens will return to farm work when they graduate.
- 2) A community garden where community members could work in a garden.
- 3) Financial assistance from the Village/Town.
- 4) Restoration of the gazebo, which could include the addition of flowers.

## **VI. Brad Smith – School Board**

Brad has been on the school board for 7 years. He was born here in 1968, grew up around the lake, went away to school and returned to live here.

School:

- 1) A program at the high school level could be implemented for those who will be farmers when they graduate.
- 2) The issue was raised that recent low test scores may, in part, result from the number of low income people being placed in Richfield from social services.

He sees issues as enrollment and jobs. He said that lake property is too expensive for young families.

How to attract professional families: He said that the lake is a resource and that we have to do a better job of selling what we have to offer: Build up our parks and encourage activities; create a little league field; develop walking/biking trails around the lake and surrounding areas. Offer a fitness center.

Recreation: Snowmobiling: Canadarago Snow Toppers is our snowmobiling club. Ten years ago Richfield was a hub for snowmobilers and streets were opened up for them. Trails are already in place. We need equipment to move ahead with this sport.

Why not encourage the Lake House to add docks so that people in boats could dock and come in for a meal? We used to have Perkins store and the Drift Inn by the lake. Why not encourage the development of such places around the lake again?

We have to be willing to put time and money together to move forward. We should look at other towns to see what is successful in them that we could incorporate.

Town of

## Richfield

Village of

## Richfield Springs

## Joint Comprehensive Plan

September 22, 2015

Community Interviews

Richfield Public Library

Interviewee: Mike Kress

Interviewed by: Rob Holzman, Lisa Nagle,  
PJ, Dan

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

What are some of the good things, the strengths, of Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- 34 town roads
- Ocquionis Creek is considered a trout Creek
- 7 bridges within jurisdiction
  - 5 in village
  - 2 in town
- Most road system around lake are private-owned roads
- 35 mi town road
- 15 mi count road
- State funding (CHPs)
  - \$85k year
  - Based on miles of road lanes
- Pave about 1 mile/year
- \$600-\$700k annual budget
  - Consignation of county, CHPS, town
- \*Town could use an expanded storage shed (sand/salt)
  - Not enough storage space for sand and salt storage
  - James Street – location of DPW facility
- \*DPW building built in 1940 too small to fit equipment, especially in winter

What are some of the issues that Richfield and Richfield Springs are dealing with today?

- Major flooding in 2006
  - FEMA dollars to repair bridge
- Problems around lake area
  - Surrounded by hills
- Oaks Creek
  - drainage problems
  - survey completed
  - locater at south end of lake
  - lots of debris
  - clam issues – several studies complete
- \*Elm Street Extensive: flooding access to 7-8 houses
  - Possible bridge improvements necessary

- Ocionious Creek: passes through village Main street
  - Lots of debris tends to
- \*Ann Street bridge (behind school)
  - Closed for 6 years
  - Bad abutments; needs to be replaced
  - Limits emergency response

What are some of the future opportunities you see for Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- Coordinate with soil and water and/or DEC about debris in creeks
  - Look at Wendy Walsh program started Susquehanna watershed
  - Susquehanna Watershed basin
  - Town might be within the basin – Len will check in with Wendy
- Fountain needs to be repaired (fountain restoration) at center of village
  - Gravity fed with water from Elms Lake (in Springfield) - Villages water supply
  - Used to have lights

What are the obstacles you see for the future of Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- \*DPW should be calculated outside of Village
- \*Mowers Road = town-owned property centrally located
- \*\*Village seems resistant to developing a shared services agreement.
- \*Rec: request \$ to develop a shared services evaluation
- \*Historic markers: need to be refurbished
  - Volunteers reserve
  - Dick Shypsky
    - Might know location of markers

Anything else?

- \*Relocate historic springs/spas
  - Consider restoration as tourist destinations
- \*\* Map historic rail bed – Adam Helmer Historical & Rec Trail (Dan)
  - Connect with Baker's Beach
- Baker's Beach: needs improvements
  - Building improvements
  - Beach sand



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Community Interviews

Richfield Public Library

Interviewee: Karen Sullivan

Interviewed by: Rob Holzman, Lisa Nagle,  
PJ, Dan

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

What are some of the good things, the strengths, of Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- Countywide trail system
- County developing county strategic plan
  - Focused on strategic priorities
- Survey completed – sent to all municipal leaders
  - LaBerge tabulating
- Countywide inventory of businesses
- County working with ED consultant
  - Tahoma Developers
- County has 12 buses; coordinates with ARC
  - Otsego Express – located in Richfield Springs (Allen Lake Road)
  - State has eliminated on-demand
  - Several residents use it to get to work at Bassett
  - Needs to be expanded
  - Look on-line for schedules
  - \*Karen can send us ridership rates
- County Ag Preservation Plan being updated
- Get Study – County completed housing study in 2008 on County’s website under “Reports”

What are some of the issues that Richfield and Richfield Springs are dealing with today?

- County’s position on hydro-fracking?
- Currently reviewing Ag District 2
- County considering consolidating all five Ag Districts into one
- \*County evaluating if Ag districts are doing what they should be doing
  - Hoping to start in Fall 2016 with SUNY Oneonta intern.
  - \*Partner with Otsego Land Trust to protect farmland (PDR program)
    - Farmers in Town are starting to talk about instituting a PDR program.

What are some of the future opportunities you see for Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- Farming: hops, medical marijuana
- Countywide trail development
- Town should consider developing Ag land Protection Program
- 1.3 new solar array in Town of Laurars on County property service all County buildings
- Potential hydro-project at Gibley Lake (Green Energies)
- River Street Developers
  - Helping County develop programs to rehab / improve properties
- Land Bank Committee (6 county REDC – looking to get chart for Land Bank)
  - Owner of last resort
  - Demo, rehab, sell
- Support efforts to partner with the County Land Bank
  - Develop task force or a community advisory group to inventory and monitor vacant abandoned structures.

What are the obstacles you see for the future of Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- Housing is big issue
- \*Continuum of Care group meeting submit application to HUD (5 county group)
  - DSS, Catholic Charities, Karen developing brief
- Otsego County does not have Housing Authority
- County needs more SRO's
  - Problem with homeless in County
- New Visions: developing affordable housing in Oneonta
  - Major can help
- Develop a satellite education program
  - Hartwick, Oneonta, Albany, pilot program, Utica, HCCC
    - Locate at H.S.
    - Set up a broadband network

Anything else?

- Richfield is a gateway community
  - Transportation (Rt. 20, 28, 90)
  - Lake
  - Beauty
  - History and culture
- Similar to Oneonta
- Need a “focal point”
- Focus on community appearance

- Strong community
- Residents commuter to
  - Albany
  - Marcy House
  - Oneonta
  - Bassett/Cooperstown
- Need to improve schools (not a comment from Karen)
- Market to NYC weekend population

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Community Interviews

Richfield Public Library

Interviewee: Jim Jordan

Interviewed by: Rob Holzman, PJ, Dan

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

What are some of the good things, the strengths, of Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- Natural gas – one of few communities to have
  - Water - Superior to
  - Sewer - Cooperstown
  - 3-phase power
  - Quality cell service
- Number of fiber optic lines in Richfield but cannot get access to Time Warner Cable provides internet
- Report Countywide communications study completed – IDA has
  - About 3 years ago, about 30% of County had internet access
- High quality of life
  - Clean air, low crime, peace and quiet

What are some of the issues that Richfield and Richfield Springs are dealing with today?

- A high population of low income
- Failure to look to the future
  - Too many people here do not see into the future
- \* Need to improve gateways into the Village
  - Create – Village tree program
- Improved streetscape

What are some of the future opportunities you see for Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- \*\*1: School district has to be ranked as top notch
  - Will draw people into the community
  - Need to increase parent involvement (look at Sweden's model)
- Change Street lights to LED

- \*\*\*Fix the fountain (study was completed about a year ago)
- Crowell Farm – should be evaluated for business park
  - IDA taking option on property
- Old industrial park site being looked at for a solar field to generate power for Cooperstown, Cooperstown CSD, Otsego Co. offices

What are the obstacles you see for the future of Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- Village (municipalities) should be able to carry a fund balance
- Bassett is moving approximately 100 jobs to Utica (data center moving to Utica)
- Attracting technology companies
  - New York Central: home insurance company
    - 1,000 employees
    - Approximately 700 in Edmonson
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> largest employer in county (?)

Anything else?

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Community Interviews

Richfield Public Library

Interviewee: John Bartle

Interviewed by: Rob Holzman

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

What are some of the good things, the strengths, of Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- Beauty of country side and lake
  - Should not spoil
- Historic, beautiful buildings and houses
- High school, church, library
  - Civic buildings are an important part of expressing community pride
- Spring Park

What are some of the issues that Richfield and Richfield Springs are dealing with today?

- Do not appreciate the architecture that is here
- Everything is on its own little island of parking
  - Pizzeria is its own little island
- Offices for the Town and Village need significant improvements
  - “Ugly”
  - Inefficient set-up
  - Need separate facilities for various functions
  - Need a court room
- Residents take for granted what we have here
- \*Need sidewalk/trail connecting Village with Price Chopper area

What are some of the future opportunities you see for Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- \*Promote as a retirement area.
- Develop “Village Life”
  - Keep key businesses within Village
  - Street lights should be more pedestrian-oriented
    - Need benches, trees
  - Slow down traffic coming through the Village
    - Make road not “feel” so wide

- Need to preserve the old buildings
- Purposes: Second homes or retirement homes
  - Suburb of Cooperstown
  - Build agriculture
  - Get Rt. 20 users to stop in Village
- \*\*Harness history for the future

What are the obstacles you see for the future of Richfield and Richfield Springs?

Anything else?

- We have a lot to offer.
- Recreation Department should be formed.

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Richfield Public Library

Interviewee: Carolyn Hopper

Interviewed by: Rob Holzman, PJ, Dan

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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What are some of the good things, the strengths, of Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- Richfield Springs Garden club
  
- Maintain 5 area in Village
  - Firehouse
  - School planters
  - Library (includes herb garden)
  - About 17 club members
  
- Carolyn Bayzon – chamber maintains planters on Main Street
  
- Plant sale is primary funding source
  - Rose Garden
  - Pump House
  - Clubs in district 5 (federated Garden Clubs of New York State)

What are some of the issues that Richfield and Richfield Springs are dealing with today?

- Garden Club could use storage space, meeting space
  - A place they could call their own



What are some of the future opportunities you see for Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- Community Garden behind the library
- Utilize “community room” in library
- Create a school garden program
- \*\* Need dedicated meeting and storage space
- Need continued support from Village: help put up Christmas lights, opening hydrant to water planes
  - Financial support
- Could use outside money to come in and restore some key buildings (like the Beekman Brothers have done in Sharon Springs.
- Make Spring Park more beautiful with flowers.

What are the obstacles you see for the future of Richfield and Richfield Springs?

Anything else?

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Richfield Public Library

Interviewee: Brad Smith

Interviewed by: Rob Holzman, PJ, Dan

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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What are some of the good things, the strengths, of Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- School Board for 7 years
- Lake
- Backpack program
  - Friday afternoon students
  - Pick up backpack with food
  - Coordinated with food bank
  - Approximately 70 students
- School teacher in Cooperstown

What are some of the issues that Richfield and Richfield Springs are dealing with today?

- Declining school enrollments
  - Mostly related to declining job base
    - General Pneumatic, GE, Remington Arms, etc. all left
- Families not moving into area
- Younger families cannot
- Properties around lake have become second homes
- Concern about number of people with social service needs being placed here
- Free and reduced lunch program are very high

What are some of the future opportunities you see for Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- Town could build boat docking area with fuel and restaurant (not Brad's idea)
- Opportunity: ag, insurance company, hospital
- Village, Town, School district can come together
- Develop hiking, biking trails
- Stronger community center
- Sell the community
- Improve parks
- Develop interconnected trail network
- \*School is in process of getting hydroponics program in place
- \*Need a park within the community with baseball, basketball, other sports
- Canada snow toppers
- Snowmobile club
  - Snowmobile trails through Town and County
    - County or OPRHP should have GIS layer
- About 10 years ago Richfield Springs was the hub for snowmobiling in the region
- Consider developing a "Park-n-Ride" for snowmobile community (Bakers Beach?)

What are the obstacles you see for the future of Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- Need to be better at selling to outsiders
- Particular need to
- \*Stop putting blame on one group or the other
- \*BIG ISSUE: Complacency
- Need to be proactive

Anything else?

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Community Interviews

Richfield Public Library

Interviewee: Jackie Hinkley \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewed by: D. Sullivan \_\_\_\_\_

Email: jmmhinc@aol.com

What are some of the good things, the strengths, of Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- A very caring community. If we can get people to work together, we can move mountains.
- Organization that service community, zone, RSCC, rotary, lions/eases, Garden Club, \_\_\_\_\_.
- Our own health center in town.

What are some of the issues that Richfield and Richfield Springs are dealing with today?

- Leadership within the community need to work for the good of all by listening, feeling respected and validated.
- We need to work together.
- Private agendas need to put aside.
- Poverty is an issue
- Lack of work ethic among lower income.

What are some of the future opportunities you see for Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- Bringing entrepreneurs with creative ideas
- Community center 2008 started by Jackie and her husband.
- \_\_\_\_Pickers – Rec Commission

What are the obstacles you see for the future of Richfield and Richfield Springs?

- School needs to improve. RS was on focus list.
- Transportation is an issue (Otsego Express)
- Job opportunities
- Communication about goings-on, events is needed.

Anything else?

- We have a lot to offer.
- Recreation department should be formed.