

November 2016 Village Update

Perspectives



Office of the Mayor

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Mayor's Newsletter

Village update, things going on, some simple perspectives

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November 16, 2016



Colors of Fall Dobbs Ferry Aqueduct Trail November 2016

Dear Residents,

Here's an update on things going on in our wonderful village, some action taken, and a look ahead at some matters village government will be looking at and discussing with the Public.

As Mayor I've received a lot of communication this past week from residents - adults and youth - expressing concerns about the Presidential election and the future. While it is outside of our normal scope and local focus, at the end of this Newsletter I've added some mayoral perspective - simple things we see in our little community everyday which make a powerful difference in the process,

and may be make you feel better about yourself, and the world around you.

To begin, we want to **Thank Everyone** who made this year's **Veteran's Day Breakfast** such a big success. Over 80 people attended the event - including many current and former members of the armed services. The village is so proud of every Veteran, especially our very own; these men and women, and the families who support them, deserve our deepest gratitude for their commitment and service to our country, keeping us safe and free.



Seniors and Veterans enjoying a delicious breakfast cooked and served by volunteers from all over the community. The Mayor, Police Chief Betsy Gelardi, Commander Bill Florin, and Liz Dreaper, Village Clerk and 'Proud Marine' on hand for the Veterans Day Program and Breakfast

The Village says '**Thank You**' to everyone who helped make the Veterans Day Breakfast such a wonderful event:

To begin, **Commander Bill Florin** and members of **American Legion Post 1048** and **Auxiliary**, who always lead us in honoring the memory of the many Americans and events that have helped make our country great and strong. From the village, **Chief Betsy Gelardi** and **all the DFPD Officers**, and Village Clerk and *Proud Marine* **Liz Dreaper**; also **Mike Dominici** and **Sandy Rooney** from the Recreation Department. We especially want to thank the **Dobbs Ferry Fire Chief** and **all the volunteer members of the DFFD** for

hosting the breakfast at the Village Hall Fire House; for all the support they have provided to the seniors program over the past few months while the Embassy Community Center is closed for engineering and renovation assessments. Thanks to **Jim Trezza** and '**Big Joe**' **Giuliano** for cooking up such a great breakfast; and to all of the **Breakfast Helpers**: **Roz Navarro**, **Tony Losee**, **Helen Kendra**, **Noreen Ruggiero**, and **Ellen Tessitore**; the **Mercy College** students who helped serve, and last but not least, **Pierrette Rissland** and **Abby Connett** who do an amazing job running the Senior Program. All of these residents are incredible '*doers*', helping to improve the life of seniors and veterans, and making Dobbs Ferry a better place for everyone. *Thank you.*



A Great Group Of Dobbs Ferry Volunteers

Norreen, Ellen, 'Big Joe', Roz, Jimmy (staff), Mike (staff), and Helen
Dobbs Ferry Veterans Day Breakfast 2016



Speaking of events ... here are some scenes from
the 2016 **Downtown Halloween Trick or Treat**
Walk.







Congratulations to the Dobbs Ferry Eagles High School Varsity Football Program

The Village of Dobbs Ferry **congratulates** the players, coaches cheerleaders, managers and water boys, parents, board of education and supporters of the high school football program for reaching the New York State Class C Quarterfinal round. While the team fell just 1 point short, they should all feel great about their tremendous accomplishments this season.

Students at all levels of the District represent the community in so many incredible ways - Scholastically, the Arts, Volunteer Organizations, and Athletics - and **the village is proud of each and every one of you.**

Here are some updates on Village matters ..



UPDATE: BAN THE BARGES

As reported in previous Newsletters and with *Action* taken, Dobbs Ferry is strongly opposed to the US Coast Guards proposal to extend barge anchorage sites in the Hudson River from Yonkers stretching 70 miles upward to Kingston, NY.

Dobbs Ferry, along with other Hudson River and New York communities have taken action to fight this proposal, including formation of the **Hudson River Waterfront Alliance ('HRWA')**.

Here is a quick update of the HRWA meeting this week:

The meeting was well attended. Including officials from Dobbs Ferry (Trustee Cassell and the Village Administrator); as well representatives of other Hudson

River communities, the Westchester County Legislature, NY Senator's office, and the US Senator's office.

Two specialized law firms have been retained to provide legal support for the opposition's efforts - Sive, Paget, and Riesel, PC. (*by Yonkers on behalf of the HRWA*), and Blanchard & Wilson (*by Scenic Hudson River*). Among several legal strategies, there will be a keen focus on how provisions within the region's various **Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs ('LWRP')** - including Dobbs Ferry's LWRP - could aid in the efforts to 'ban the barges'.

The review of the barge proposal is still at the beginning of the review process; and the public comment period has been extended to December 6th. Everyone is encouraged to sign the petition on Ban the Barges site and also to submit comments on the web site.

Petition Link: <https://www.change.org/p/craig-d-lapiejko-uscg-mil-ban-the-barges-protect-our-hudson>

Submit Public Comments: <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=USCG-2016-0132-0001>

HRWA (and Dobbs Ferry as a member!) will continue to remain proactive up to and beyond the public comment period to do everything it can to prevent the expansion of anchorage sites on the Hudson River. We will keep everyone posted on any new development or information.

Little White Church Cemetery



Continuing the professional restoration of historical **Little White Church Cemetery**

In 2010, the current administration initiated an important project to reclaim and renovate the village's historical property known as **Little White Church Cemetery**. The plan was part of an overall vision to promote the redevelopment and improvement of empty, dilapidated, or run-down properties within the village. The cemetery was one of those properties; overgrown and run-down from many decades of neglect; weeds and brush were so dense that the cemetery was literally unrecognizable from outside; and so thick you could not even walk into the place without tripping. Old dying trees and limbs were strewn on the ground everywhere. Old headstones, along with the village's history, were literally being destroyed.

This is what the cemetery looked like in 2010:



With a better vision for the future, the village took action on a plan to clear and renovate this important historical property ... working with the help and support of the **Historical Society** and the **Village Historian**, to begin the process of bringing the cemetery - and a big part of Dobbs Ferry's history - *'back to life'*.



Beautiful new Memorials and **Historical Plaques** have also been added, recognizing Dobbs Ferry's significant role in the American Revolution; as well members of the armed forces who are buried in the cemetery (going all the way back to the Revolutionary War!):



New trees have been planted, and recently a **professional conservator** has undertaken a new phase of work to repair and re-erect more of the historical headstones; many of which are inscribed with familiar family names that have been a part of the community for generations past:



The majority of the renovations of this historical property have been completed without the use of tax payer dollars. The current conservation is being paid with a contribution by the **Dobbs Ferry Local Development Corporation ('LDC')**; using monies generated directly from the tax-exempt institutions, the LDC is able to make significant contributions back to the community to improve the quality of life; this includes support for the preservation of historical sites like the cemetery and Meade House. Dobbs Ferry's history can be a destination point for visitors, which will help bring visitors into the village, generating positive economic activity for our merchants. That is why **it is important to protect our village's history**, and to display it in a way we can all be proud of.

75 Main Street Proposed Redevelopment Project

SITE PLAN APPROVED



The Board of Trustees approved the Site Plan (6 'ayes', 1 'abstain') for the proposed redevelopment and restoration of **75 Main Street** (the **Oceana Building**).

The approval decision completed a long and extensive review process that began with the initial application in January, 2015. After many months of review, the BOT did not vote to approve the initial project because it was too big for the property and the surrounding neighborhood. A smaller project was then submitted, including lower building height dimensions fitting the specific zoning district (before the BOT began its review of the smaller project, the applicant was granted variances by the ZBA for pre-existing set-back conditions). Following the ZBA process, the BOT then re-opened the public hearing on site plan review; taking time to understand all aspects of the newer (smaller) plan, and to hear comments and input from the community.

In the end, the BOT reached a strong consensus to approve site plan based on a number of important factors, including:

1) **A smaller down-sized project.** While there can never be a design or plan that everyone will agree, the majority of members were satisfied that the applicant had done all it could to reduce size, bulk, and the number of units (18). The smaller plan fit much better with the downtown and surrounding neighborhood.

2) **Access to public transportation.** New residents of the building will have a (very) short walk to the train station. The Bee Line bus service to all points north and south stops at or close to the building's door steps. Even so, 18 on-site parking spaces (with ability to expand) was seen as an added plus.

3) **Positive benefits to the downtown and business district merchants.** The project will bring new families to the village, and especially 'foot traffic' to the downtown area. In particular, 75 Main will help support and revitalize merchants, particularly along the lower Main Street district.

4) **Positive financial impact to village.** The newer building and improved property will have a higher assessed valuation; the project will also generate significant one-time permit fees and a contribution to the segregated recreation fund of \$180,000. This is hugely positive to the village's (and tax payers) financial bottom line.

5) **Renovation and Preservation of historical Oceana Building.** This was of course a critical factor for the board recognizing the importance of preserving the historical front portion of the building (Oceana). Provisions were included in the resolution for strict adherence to historical restoration and standards; including preservation of neo-Classical design components.

The project will now be going to the **Architectural & Historical Review Board** for final review and approval of the design and architectural components of the building.

Elections to the Board of Trustees

Congratulations to incumbents **Donna Cassell** and **Larry Taylor** for their election to the Board of Trustees. Donna will be commencing her third term as trustee. Donna brings a lot of experience, works very hard, and has been a valuable contributor to the board. As a previously appointed trustee, Larry has also worked very hard and will certainly be a great asset to the board as he enters his first full term. We also want to welcome **Nicole Sullivan** as the newest member of the board; we look forward to working with Nicole and new ideas that she will bring.

Please join in congratulating these three trustees.

Bill Flynn - Recognition to a Trustee



We want to recognize Bill Flynn, who will be stepping down from the board as a trustee. Bill has been an outstanding trustee for 2 terms; having served as Liaison to the Planning Board, AHRB, and co-Liaison to the Recreation Board. Bill also served on a number of committees, and was actively engaged in promoting youth involvement in the village, including the Eagle Scout program. Bill was always prepared, well informed, and gave a great deal of thought to all the issues and decisions before the board over the 4 years he has served.

Bill will be missed and we wish him and his family all the very best.

Bill's last meeting will be the next BOT meeting on

Here are some issues the board of trustees will be considering going forward:

Historical Districts

At the October BOT meeting, the board took an **important Action-step** on an initiative to consider Historical Districts in the Village of Dobbs Ferry. **The Historical District Task Force** - established by the Mayor in 2015 - has done a tremendous amount of work preparing a comprehensive document specifically detailing the creation and application of Historical Districts In the village of Dobbs Ferry. There is a lot involved; *historical background, siting of districts, consent procedures, law and governing authority, certification, code and legislative changes.*

The board of trustees has recognized the work so-far completed by the Task Force - including the document which has been presented - and has formally notified the Planning Board to commence a full review of the Historical District documents, as required by law and by the village code. This process will take some time and will be conducted in Public meetings. The board of trustees will be paying attention with interest, and ultimately looks forward to the recommendations of the Planning board once they have completed their independent review.

This is a very exciting initiative and we are looking forward to continued progress. We want to especially thank the **Historical District Task Force**, **Sonya Terjanian**, Chairperson, and **all of the volunteer members** who have been working very hard on this project; also Trustee **Anna Lisa Coralles** who is Liaison to the Board; and Village Attorney **Darius Chafizadeh** who has been lending a lot of legal support and helpful guidance for the Task Force.

Village Zoning Code

At the upcoming BOT meeting on November 22, a **special presentation** will be given to explain certain provisions of the **village code** which have been under review by the ad hoc Review Committee and the Planning Board. This review, which was undertaken some 2 years ago independently from the BOT, takes a look at some areas of the code which the Review Committee and Planning Board have determined could be considered to improve the overall application and review/approval process. This will be the first time the BOT have formally been presented with a comprehensive outline of the recommendations presented - with specific information on the difference(s) between the current code and the considered recommendations. Following the presentation, the board will take some time to ask questions and discuss; then set a tentative schedule to begin public meetings and sessions for residents to learn more, and to be fully involved in the process.

Embassy Community Center Building

Good progress is being made on the engineering and renovation for the Embassy Center building. In the short-term, the BOT anticipates taking action shortly to approve an engineering plan to shore-up and permanently fix the structural issues with the north wall. The Building Department has received detailed plans from several engineering firms which are being evaluated by the village professionals. Once the evaluation is complete, the board will communicate and consider acting on the recommended plan. Longer-term, The **Recreation Committee** and **ad hoc Facilities Committee**, are working with a professional design and architectural firm on the renovation/upgrade of the building; this includes redesign and expansion of interior space, improved facilities and upgrades to fixtures (including solar as an energy alternative), installation of high-tech/multi-purpose flooring, enhancements to the exterior façade, and a significant upgrade of the entire building. There is much work to be done, but the committee members and staff are doing a **great job** moving this important project forward. As the preliminary engineering work moves into

a more definitive plan, the BOT will fully communicate details to the public and for input.

Simple Post Election Persepctives from the Mayor

It has been a week since the Presidential election. I've received quite a lot of communication from residents looking for a perspective from the Mayor. Many are upset about the outcome or worried about what it means for the future. As a non-partisan Mayor, I've worked hard to keep national politics *out* of the local discussion. I feel strongly that what we do as trustees should be about Dobbs Ferry and the local issues we face as a community. But this week, I have been moved by the amount of communication sent to me from residents who are looking for something positive to move forward. Here are some of my simple thoughts:

Get involved. One of the best ways to handle frustration with the political process is to get involved. Sometimes it takes helping others to help ourselves. In Dobbs Ferry, we are lucky to have so many residents who do this in a positive way – giving their time and energy to improve or contribute to some aspect of Village life. I can say from experience that being part of the process to make positive change also gives you a more hopeful outlook. There are so many ways to get involved in this community – and the Village can always use an extra hand. Be a 'Doer' and get involved. I promise it will make you feel better. It has worked for me.

Come together. In Dobbs Ferry we have made an effort to create an environment which encourages people to come together, regardless of party affiliation or political beliefs. When we come together and work towards a common goal, we make the community a better place for everyone. Coming together doesn't mean we always agree. In fact, we haven't always agreed. But we have worked together, listened to each other, and respect the minority

view to reach consensus on decisions that benefit everyone. We are a stronger community because we have worked together.

Set a good example. It is not a stretch to say that who we are and what we do in our own community can set an example of what can be achieved in higher places. Most of us are here because we want to be part of a diverse community. Sometimes that increases the challenges, and takes extra work on all of our parts. Let's continue to set a great example – to be a diverse community of *Doers*, working together, making Dobbs Ferry the best it can be. We owe it to ourselves, and for those who will come behind us. Make the future bright.

As we approach **Thanksgiving**, looking around the world we should remember just how lucky we all are for what we have. We live in a great Country. We live in a beautiful and wonderful Village. ***We have a lot to be thankful for.***

Sincerely,

Mayor Hartley Connett
Dobbs Ferry, New York

November 16, 2016

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www.dobbsferry.com



Moon Over The Hudson

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