One New Paltz?

New Paltz town, village Mull $50K unification grant

"It's expensive to live here," said Gerald Benjamin. "People are losing their jobs. Property values are dropping precipitously. The responsible thing to do is to take a hard look at the best options available to New Paltz."

Benjamin suggested that the grant writer create a concept summary, showing the need and desire from both boards to fund such a study.

"The application needs to be neutral as to the various alternatives that would be considered," he said. "There should also be language in there that leaves open a prospect that is not yet defined by law and not the standard 'co-terminus, consolidation, city,' but something more creative and applicable to New Paltz."

He also said that, in his experience writing these applications, the boards should have "absolutely no premise about a preferred outcome and that you (the two boards) insist on an implementation plan." Benjamin added: "There are a lot of these applications that receive funding, studies and then nothing moves forward. It's a waste. We need an implementation plan that engages the community, disseminates the facts." The CRREO director referenced Mayor Dungan's statements from last year, when he said that there was no need to "study this again."

Dungan said that he remembered passionate residents, scholars and historians coming forward and providing reports that supported the need for opposition to consolidation more than a decade and a half ago.

"But is there a public record?" asked Benjamin. "No there was not," Dungan said.

"That's irresponsible," responded Benjamin. "Let's be honest. It's expensive to live here. People are losing their jobs. Property values are dropping precipitously. The responsible thing to do is to take a hard look at the best options available to New Paltz - both economically and in terms of best planning for and preserving our community."

The following week, Councilwoman Kitty Brown, Supervisor Hokanson along with the grant writer, representatives of CRREO and members of the Village Board followed upon the previous meeting. They determined to have each board move forward with a resolution supporting the grant and for the town to be lead agency.

"It was a very productive meeting," Brown said. "I'm excited that we are moving in this direction. We have to each pass a resolution, vet the concept statement and then make sure we have our application in the mail by March 11." She and Benjamin were cautious to note that the town claiming lead agency was a formality and that it would mean only that "we are the administrative body for the financing of the grant."

"We're who the state would send checks to and who would then send the matching portion of the grant to the state," Brown added.

"Typically the town is always lead agency because they generally have the largest population," Benjamin said.

The grant, if awarded, could offer up to $50,000 for study and implementation. The town-village matching portion of the grant would be 10 percent.

- Erin Quinn