

Official Minutes of the Public Hearing of January 18, 2022 for the purpose of receiving comments on the proposed introductory Local Law, entitled "Local Law Amending Section 18 1/2 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Poughkeepsie, New York"; Local Waterfront Redevelopment Program.



THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE NEW YORK

PUBLIC HEARING

Tuesday, January 18, 2022 6:00 p.m.

Virtual

Welcome to the scheduled meeting of the Public Hearing in the City of Poughkeepsie. The date is January 18, 2022 and the time is 6:01 pm.

THIS HEARING IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING COMMENTS ON THE proposed introductory Local Law, entitled "Local Law Amending Section 18 1/2 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Poughkeepsie, New York"; Local Waterfront Redevelopment Program.

Councilmember-At-Large Salem called the meeting to order at 5:48 p.m.

I. WELCOME

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Five (5) minutes per person public comment.

1. Joan Mandle
2. Laurie Sandow – submitted written comments

In this City, the reality is that decisions on every level are made behind closed doors, and by breaking laws under cover of darkness and under cover of pandemic. This applies to the Administration, as well as to the Common Council. If you'd like to hear more on that subject, I encourage you to stick around for the Council meeting that follows.

But back to tonight's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) public hearing:

The fact is that Sarah Salem, Sarah Brannen and Evan Menist were so opposed to the possibility of tonight's public hearing that Salem refused to put R-21-94 on the agenda for the December 20, 2021, Common Council meeting. Then, when the Resolution was walked-on, the three puppeteers tried to shut it down with an adjournment stunt.

Tonight, not only will we be hearing from some very well-informed and legitimately concerned members of the public, we'll also be hearing from many speakers who've never shown interest or concern for the waterfront, or attended waterfront-related meetings. They'll be speaking because they received correspondence from Sarah Brannen that included a 40-page talking points memo. *(And as it turned out, the public did NOT hear from all registered speakers, because once again, Salem deprived the public of their voice by scheduling the public hearing for termination after only 1/2-hour, introducing yet another delay and forcing the remaining speakers to show up at a February public hearing that will be held in a vacuum. A Freedom of Information request has been submitted to discover time-stamped requests to speak, and whether Salem manipulated the order of speakers.)*

With half the Council being brand new to their seats, I'm not sure you'll yet have enough knowledge to distinguish those who have been involved, from those who only rally when Brannen, Salem, and Menist sound the alarm. Hopefully, the Council will begin to recognize the Greek Chorus taking their talking points from Brannen's 40-page memo, rather than from their own knowledge and experience. Oddly—but not really—for someone pretending to be seeking a waterfront solution, Brannen intentionally withheld her memo from members of this City's Waterfront Advisory Committee, while blasting the document to the Common Council as well as to members of the Brannen/Salem/Menist pipeline.

Here's a little actual history. First, in order to destroy the institutional memory of the Waterfront Advisory committee (the WAC), in May of 2018 the Council replaced Arnie Serotsky, the long-time chair of the WAC, with a chair Terricena Brown, a member of the Exempt Fireman's Association, and a person with neither knowledge, nor prior interest in the work of the WAC. As chair, Brown, on more than one occasion was absent at the beginning of WAC meetings, requiring a phone call to ask whether she'd be attending the meeting.

When the WAC's draft LWRP was issued in December 2019, rather than work in partnership with the WAC, the Council instead created their own secretive committee, which never met in public and never released a report. Let me read an excerpt to you from an August 24, 2020 letter that Sarah Salem wrote to the WAC (see attached):

"Despite some good work to draft the LWRP, we identified a number of deficiencies...To address these shortcomings, we have taken a number of steps. First, we formed an advisory group consisting of two WAC members, Europa McGovern and Lia Harris; Nathan Shook of the zoning board of appeals and industrial development agency; Randall Johnson, County legislator and member of the industrial development agency; and Jen Benson and Dan Shapley of Riverkeeper. All Council members were invited to join this group and two—Evan Menist and Sarah Brannen—volunteered....Our aspiration is to complete the draft within existing resources, appropriated in the 2020 Council budget, and within the coming few months."

Nearly 17 months have passed since Salem's letter to the WAC. Did the Council's secret committee ever open their meetings to the public, release meeting minutes, and most importantly, release THEIR complete draft before the end of 2020? No, of course not. And to worsen an already bad situation, the Council's backroom conniving not only obstructed protection for a much larger, expanded waterfront boundary that included the Fallkill, the Council's obstruction also allowed the City to pretend that they couldn't produce a Comprehensive Plan until the Council's LWRP committee had completed its work.

When the glow had worn off the Council's failure to produce their own LWRP draft, they instead moved onto a new obstructive process at the southern waterfront. The Councilmembers who are always first to proclaim themselves as lifelong Hudson Valley and/or Poughkeepsie residents—where were they when Delaval was alienated through an 11th hour high-speed ride to Albany? Nowhere. Where were they when Bonura's project was approved. Nowhere. Where were they when One Dutchess was discussed and approved? Nowhere.

My comments are not at all in defense or support of Bonura's projects at the waterfront. Nor are they in defense or support of abuses by the Ice House, which the Council has not addressed at all. But don't kid yourselves that Brannen's interest or her 40-page memo is about, as she claims, "protecting our precious waterfront". If the LWRP issue had not been forced through a walk-on resolution at a December 2021 council meeting, the LWRP would still remain obstructed, sitting in the Council's circular file, and tonight's public hearing would not be taking place at all.

Sarah Salem, Chairperson, Common Councilmember At-Large, City of Poughkeepsie, ssalem@cityofpoughkeepsie.com
August 24, 2020

Dear Waterfront Advisory Committee members,

We are deeply grateful for your voluntary service on the city's Waterfront Advisory Committee, an important vehicle for ensuring our shared waterfront will continue to be a vibrant place for generations to come. Additionally, we appreciate your contributions to the draft Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) over the past year and a half.

The Common Council is undertaking our review of the draft LWRP and is committed to having a document that reflects the priorities of the community and will offer clear guidelines for development and waterfront improvements for years to come. The previous LWRP was drafted in 1998 and, although it was never adopted by the state and therefore is not a recognized policy framework, it nonetheless has been used by the city for more than 20 years. One of our other main goals is therefore to ensure the LWRP is approved by the state.

We recognize the WAC's eagerness to have a new set of guidelines, especially given the ongoing development in the waterfront revitalization area. We too are eager to have an LWRP that establishes a clear vision for the city's development, priorities, and policies. There are also a number of exciting projects in the draft LWRP that would enhance the waterfront.

Despite some good work to draft the LWRP, we identified a number of deficiencies in the document that we aim to address. These include the need for a clear vision and goals; a more readable, data-driven, and cogent inventory and analysis; an intentional balance of environmental conservation and economic development; updated maps and visual aids; and community engagement that reflects the diversity of our community. To address these shortcomings, we have taken a number of steps. First, we formed an advisory group consisting of two WAC members, Europa McGovern and Lia Harris; Nathan Shook of the zoning board of appeals and industrial development agency; Randall Johnson, County legislator and member of the industrial development agency; and Jen Benson and Dan Shapley of Riverkeeper. All Council members were invited to join this group and two- Evan Menist and Sarah Brannen- volunteered.

In addition to this advisory group, the Common Council is endeavoring to hire a consultant to assist in editorial, administrative, and analytical tasks. This consultant will be critical to moving the project forward in an expeditious manner. We have also engaged a graduate student intern who has been working to summarize community engagement findings and best practices, as well as gather supplemental data to improve on the existing draft. The Council members will also be exploring the possibility of some time-bound additional community engagement in the coming weeks to address the lack of diversity in the engagement process thus far.

Our timeline for completing this review and editing of the draft LWRP hinges on the hiring of a consultant to assist the Common Council. The process to draft an LWRP and offer it for review to the Common Council has taken eight years and cost more than \$150,000. Our aspiration is to complete the draft within existing resources, appropriated in the 2020 Council budget, and within the coming few months.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me to request a meeting and we would be glad to discuss the project further with you.

Sincerely,

Sarah Salem

Chairperson, City of Poughkeepsie Common Council

cc: Sarah Brannen, 4th Ward Councilperson, LWRP Review Committee Co-Chair

Evan Menist, 2nd Ward Councilperson, LWRP Review Committee Co-Chair

Chris Petsas, 1st Ward Councilperson

Lorraine Johnson, 3rd Ward Councilperson

Yvonne Flowers, 5th Ward Councilperson

Natasha Cherry, 6th Ward Councilperson

Randall Johnson Jr., 7th Ward Councilperson

Matthew McNamara, 8th Ward Councilperson

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Sarah Salem, Chairperson
Common Councilmember At-Large
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3. Cornelia Harris
4. Naomi Brooks

Councilmember Cherry made a motion to adjourn the Public Hearing to resume on February 22, 2022 and was seconded by Councilmember Menist.

III. ADJOURNMENT:

The Public Hearing ended at 6:31pm.

Dated: January 26, 2022
Edited: January 31, 2022

I hereby certify that this true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Common Council Public Hearing held on January 18, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

Jasmin N. Davis
City Chamberlain