



THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE NEW YORK

PUBLIC HEARING

Tuesday, June 21, 2022 6:00 p.m.

Common Council Chambers

Welcome to the scheduled meeting of the Public Hearing in the City of Poughkeepsie. The date is June 21, 2022 and the time is 6:00 pm.

THIS HEARING IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING COMMENTS ON THE draft,
Comprehensive Plan PK4Keeps: A Comprehensive Plan for Poughkeepsie.

Councilmember-At-Large Salem called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

I. WELCOME

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

1. Jeff Aman – submitted written comments
2. Vincent Pedi
3. Naomi Brooks – S. Grand Ave. – submitted written comments
4. John Rath – 154 Mill St.
5. Elizabeth M. O’Raffity
6. Mary Linge
7. Laurie Sandow – S. Grand Ave. – submitted written comments
8. Harvey Flad
9. Constantine (Gus) Kazolias – Noxon Rd.
10. Mike Decorvado

Jeff Aman

Re: City of Poughkeepsie Comprehensive Plan Draft

44/55 Arterials

Pulling our City together as a community will not be possible until we totally demolish the 44/55 arterials, converting both of them to a single lane in each direction and slowing traffic down considerably. The arterials are a major divide and are merely an urban racetrack, and traffic volumes don't justify this major rift and danger to our community. Traffic can be handled by three two-lane routes, Church, Main, and Mill, safely slowing traffic as done in Wappinger, Hyde Park, Rhinebeck, and Red Hook.

Main Street Corridor

The Main Street corridor in its entirety, including the Middle Main area, must be transformed into an "Urban Neighborhood" that is livable, supporting the residents. We have not had a Central Business District in decades and never will have one again. All of our significant arts and culture venues reside in this area and should be supported by our City and promoted, and local business growth should be nourished and even funded by the City. An inviting urban residential neighborhood with local businesses would encourage venue visitors to linger and spend money locally.

Dutchess County and Westchester Medical

A huge detriment to our City is the treatment of the homeless and people with mental and/or addiction problems. I filed a fraud complain with the New York State Comptrollers office against Westchester Medical for their "business decision" to transport people for treatment to Poughkeepsie from Orange and Ulster Counties, and then "dumping" them on the streets of Poughkeepsie by releasing them with no way home and no treatment followup plans. Similarly legal action should be filed against Dutchess County with the New York State Attorney General and the ACLU for their racist actions of dumping all of the problems in Dutchess County within the City of Poughkeepsie to keep the rest of Dutchess County all white and clean.

Arts and Culture

While the Comprehensive Plan Draft does address many important issues in our neighborhoods it does totally ignore means by which our divided City can be unified as a whole. Our strong arts and culture communities are the primary means by which we can bring people together, share our values, and share our diversity. Focus on individual neighborhood revitalization is a good thing, however specific actions are needed to unite our neighborhoods and to build a sense of community with the Poughkeepsie City School District.

Tourism and Economic Growth

Means by which long term economic growth of our City are void in the draft plan. We have valuable assets in our City that can be developed and exploited to attract tourism revenue, while at the same time informing our residents of the rich history and diversity of our City that can make us proud of where we live.

June 21, 2022
PK4Keeps Public Meeting

Naomi Brooks
South Grand Avenue

I think of a city's comprehensive plan as a combination of mission statement and road map. An overview of such a plan should provide us with a quick glance of who we are, what matters to us, where we want to go, and how we plan on getting there. The draft plan covers almost all of that, and I hope it will be able to guide future policy, planning, and decision-making. It should make any question of "does this fit with Poughkeepsie's plan?" an easier one to answer.

I know CZB, Ingalls, and city staff did a lot of research and listening, but I feel the problems, priorities, and solutions they uncovered could describe many cities of similar size as ours. What's missing for me is what makes Poughkeepsie unique. What makes Poughkeepsie unique is its geography – set on the wonderful Hudson River, with all the Hudson Valley at its doorstep. What makes Poughkeepsie unique are the remarkably large number of people who have lived, and currently live here and their major contributions to art, industry, and social justice. What makes Poughkeepsie unique are the hundreds of architectural gems and their sparkling details.

These unique qualities – the markers that you are in Poughkeepsie, specifically - are missing from this document. Having them celebrated, preserved, and protected would only enhance every other goal within this document. I would like to see language - that reminds us these assets are crucial to our uniqueness - be incorporated in planning and decision-making, and in specific improvement efforts. Without embedding recognition of those unique assets into our plan, we can lose sight of the power of the river, the charms of the architecture, and the influence of the people. Please acknowledge their importance by adding them into any equation.

I'll start my comments by making note of the missing councilmembers—consistent behavior on the part of councilmembers who don't show up for public hearings but who then are going to vote anyway, not considering or caring what the public had to say. Returning to where I'd intended to begin my comments:

1—What magician can address the contents of a 94-page document in 5 minutes?

And 2—by naming names. Let's see if you can figure out what the following names have in common:

Shane Bartholomew, Russell Beck, Azia Brown, Ariel Cordova, Alana Daly, Yvonne Flowers, Debra Gause, Andrew Gori, Madeline Henriquez, Ambre Kelley, Mary Linge, Debra Long, Tim Massie, Tim McQueen, Evan Menist, Don Minichino, Kyle Neiswender, Ovid Reichelt, Kari Rieser, Melaine Rottkamp, Kellyann Royce-Giron, Sarah Salem, and Brandon Walker.

These are the names of PK4Keeps steering committee members. If every one of these 23 members walked past you on the street, how many would you recognize by sight? how many would you know personally? how many of them have ever attended or spoken at a Common Council meeting? How many would be in this room tonight if not for Natalie Quinn sending out an S.O.S. for steering committee members to show up tonight? How many of them actually attended the very PK4Keeps steering committee meetings they were appointed to, or held the mandated kitchen table conversations? Why, in a city that is majority minority, are 2/3rds of the steering committee members white, and only 1/3rd of the steering committee members people of color?

I've asked this before, and I'm asking again: why hasn't Natalie Quinn and why haven't the four councilmembers on the steering committee—Sarah Salem, Evan Menist, Yvonne Flowers and Debra Long—ever made their own presentation as PK4Keeps steering committee members and taken questions and answers from the public? why does the city grapevine report an epic argument between C councilmember Long and Hudson River Housing Real Estate Director Mary Linge, who just spoke, yet not a peep about this argument at any Council meeting? Like so much else that happens behind closed doors in this city, did steering committee members swear an oath of “omerta”—the famous criminal code of silence—before being allowed to attend meetings? And as usual, no surprise, dead silence tonight from these councilmembers.

We live in a City with a digital divide. Recently, some residents without Email and computer asked me about the PK4Keeps draft plan. When I reached out to the Chamberlain's office, I discovered that it would cost \$11.50 to print a black and white version of the unnecessarily colorful PDF. At one local copy shop, it would cost close to \$60 for a color version. It's great that there's a copy at the Chamberlain's desk. But who can read and write notes to a 94-page document while standing at that desk? And why isn't there a Spanish-language version of the draft?

The cost of printing is not the Chamberlain's fault, it's the fault of Natalie Quinn and consultants whose own document bemoans (quote) the "Disconnection and disengagement identified as a real, if somewhat intangible, problem". And to whom do they assign blame for that disconnect? Not to themselves and their zero attempts to remedy, but to (quote) "The erosion of traditional media, the large number of renters, difficulties accessing or navigating public processes, low levels of trust, and a range of other factors". Who wouldn't have a low level of trust with the arrogance and secrecy of the PK4Keeps procedure? More than once, I mentioned to the consultants that their colored document might be a nice-looking website trophy, but would otherwise not only fail those with visual, financial and online challenges, but also fail as a series of open-ended squibs, rather than a thorough narrative.

But, of course, that was always the plan—to create a so-called "advisory committee" that would not have to answer to, or be open to the public, that would not keep minutes or attendance, that would not provide a plan in narrative form, and whose work would not subject to Freedom of Information requests—all of that in service to then-Planning Director, now Development Director Natalie Quinn being able to do anything she wanted with the final Comprehensive and Zoning Plan, just as she has been doing with the rash of spot rezonings that the Council has been approving even before the Comp Plan is finalized.

More than once, I've asked Natalie Quinn for a "heat map" of purchasers and parties behind various LLCs, so that the public has a clear idea of which parties are buying up properties throughout the City. Quinn's response?: the City Planning Division does not currently track private property sales nor LLCs or the entities that make up an LLC—therefore cannot and will not produce such a map. Quinn basically told me to look it all up myself.

Who, in their right mind, creates a comprehensive plan without having a comprehensive and real-time view of how the City's landscape and ownership is changing. Foolish question, because that would be the City of Poughkeepsie and their Planning and Development departments, who are busy failing Main Street businesses, letting squatter businesses occupy the Ice House, serving the market rate and millennial transplant crowd, the developers creating a Bermuda Triangle of grant-funded supportive housing units to satisfy the County's 26 Oakley shelter, and instituting zoning text like Natalie Quinn's Innovation District, which did not require affordable units and while laying a foundation for the City's current gentrification.

And just a last word about Hudson River Housing's Mary Linge talking about how open and available the PK4Keeps process has been. Hudson River Housing (HRH) sent a secret letter to unknown parties, the Planning Board included, willfully misquoting me about Empire State Supporting Housing Initiative (ESSHI) grant-funded housing. Hudson River Housing has a secret messaging guide that they give only to their people instructing them exactly how to respond to the public when questions are raised about the homeless at the PODs and elsewhere. Why doesn't Hudson River Housing—with their claims of an open process—release that messaging guide to the public?

A so-called public meeting with a bunch of stickies or a survey with pre-filled questions is not public input. For a project like this, Natalie Quinn can and will take whatever she wants from that "public process" and toss the rest, in just the same way Paul Hesse at one of those meetings shrugged his shoulders—his own gesture of blowing me off—when I said that it was not a public process to give people a bunch of sticky notes and colored dots and walk around a room with a bunch of pretty, pre-fabricated, filled-out posters.

Thank you.

*Official Minutes of the Public Hearing of June 21, 2022 for the purpose of receiving comments on the on the draft, Comprehensive Plan **PK4Keeps: A Comprehensive Plan for Poughkeepsie**.*

III. ADJOURNMENT:

The Public Hearing ended at 6:51 pm.

Dated: June 28, 2022

I hereby certify that this true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Common Council Public Hearing held on June 21, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

**Jasmin Nicole Davis
City Chamberlain**
