

Appendix

Oyster Bay Focus Group Meetings, March 14 2008

Event Organizers: Joan Mahon, Isaac Kremer, Bill Sheeline, Bill Von Novak

What outcome?

- Community is united on this project, as united as the railroad museum project. Issues here are greater, but the importance and a good public process was supportive of people.
- Critical point in development of the Hamlet, and we want this to help smooth out the details of what people want and need to work out solutions
- Much clearer understanding of the proposal. We did not have enough facts earlier. We need to know if this project will work in this site. If it does not work, I am still hopeful that we will come up with an alternative site that will work. Our preference is to have a village location.
- Uniting the community is an essential piece. We want many people to become informed, to know what the message is and to broaden the message.
- The negative voice is often more powerful than the positive voice
- In the village an idea has to be so compelling that it has to create a “want” The distinction needs to be made between what a good idea and a great supportive idea
- The village lacks a vision of what it is and where it is going
- Hopefully this will help us come up with a vision and a means to unite on action on many things
- Value of the work of the facilitator as a “chief synthesizer” is important to us
- Out of the 20-40 issues to identify where we are together, and to then have a organizing group that remains in place to oversee
- What are the main sticking points are they real, can we work through them, and do we have the correct information? Can we bring all of the groups together with a common vision?
- We need to respond to the perceptions, things that are real, things that are not, and to know how to distinguish between them.
- We are looking for a way to come together on this important issue. To separate noise from real issues that must be addressed.
- We are all pretty much on the same page, and I feel that the above comments really are the outcomes that we seek in this process.

What barriers?

- People are afraid of the site for a variety of reasons, either keeping current uses, or an environmental issue, or a protection, or an outsider influencing the land, or not wanting “outsider” to discover the waterfront.
- There may be a selfish undercurrent, wanting to remain isolated and unknown, and not wanting to share what we have
- There may be a fear of change
- There may be a desire to stay the way we are
- In the summer many immigrant families come and visit by train, to see where Theodore Roosevelt spent special time.
- Is it possible to have, to protect and to preserve “my town” and to share it with others.
- There are times when folks don’t want an important change, an accomplishment, simply because it would bring a new condition
- People move to this community because they do not want a “drive through” community, it is beautiful, bucolic People enjoy walking here, enjoying the size and tranquility of life here.
- I have been here for six years. My observation is that we have not offered anyone anything to look at, to dream about, and to achieve. We are seeing a number of conditions become problems because we are not taking care of our properties ... a building not being cared for, we need a compelling vision.
- We need to use this project as a way to get people to unite around a common cause, to see how much fun it can be to work together.
- There are a number of people who do not want the merchants to dominate decision making for change ... in that it is in their “best interest” ... and this can get many property owners (merchants) to make the changes that they need to make.
- Sustainability and good places to visit ... there needs to be something that can be seen as the right scale for what we are A place to live and a place for some others to enjoy ... there will always be a block of people who prefer that no one come to visit.
- The critical element for this idea is the scale. It is not just the parking, it is about being overwhelmed by something too large, too attractive, too “successful” that we lose our identity and uniqueness.
- There are many unknowns at this point ... largely because we do not have a vision.
- People are quite provincial on Long Island

- Young people are leaving at a great rate; there is no cool place to live, apartments are in people's basements, the Rauch Foundation provides a lot of research on this.
- There is a lot of hostility and lack of understanding on new development of any kind
- As an example, the new town houses were put up by Renaissance Properties, beautiful on the inside, but people say they are too many, too close to the road.
- Important to not to link the museum to other sites ... this whole issue needs to focus on this field as the opportunity site, and to not speculate on other properties

Main Street and Chamber groups

We want to understand the site, and be aware of the greater issues. What are some of the good things happening? What are the hamlet achievements, sources of pride?

- New trees, mulch, will purchase hanging baskets, Spring fund raiser. Other beautification projects
- Most properties are owned by two residents. It's a good thing in being able to set controls, but can be problematic too. Improved buildings look good and great. Rents are too high, so many properties go unoccupied. Highest percentage of unoccupied buildings in Nassau County. By tax incentives it is "profitable" for him to not keep them all occupied.
- A vibrant economy, an engine is needed to help activate the downtown
- Hamlet has the town offices, and this eats up a lot of parking spaces (two large properties)
- Many merchants left because parking is so scarce
- This building we are sitting in used to generate 12-14,000 parking uses per day
- Waterfront is our jewel
- Teddy Roosevelt is our history But we also have a strong Revolutionary War history
- Mill Pond is a celebrated place ... it used to be a community gathering place, and now it is a federally protected wildlife area
- TR Park requires a resident sticker, walk in entrance, everyone gets confused and ends up at the Yacht club, good picnic facilities, a wonderful beach, once there were flowers throughout the park.
- The carousel project would have brought in funds to add beauty back to the park, to restore and replant
- Park has lighting for ball parks, but not the tennis courts
- We know we need to make a better connection with the waterfront
- We need a better way to provide wayfinding

- The train station has very little use. It takes nearly 2 hours to get to the city. Only 30 cars use the rail station each day. The winding tracks cause the train to travel at 30 mph.
- Antique car show is a highlight, as is the Oyster festival, Harbor Day, Bay Day, 4th of July with hundreds of boats.
- People who genuinely care about their community is a plus
- Many steps have been taken to restore the historic landmark RR station building, restoration of the turntable, rolling stock, plaza, access to the waterfront
- If we use the Fireman's Field we don't want to improve the line, since they would dump their car during the day,
- What is there now is not beautiful, and needs to be improved.
- A jitney is being proposed
- Museum and RR museum and jitney will tie in together
- The reason people support the RR museum is that it already exists, it is not new

What are the obstacles?

- Chamber issues Economic impact
- Looking for foot traffic, ways to funnel visitors to downtown
- Size, traffic, location
- Location needs to positively impact the business district
- Years ago we had a toy store, many other stores for town ... now they are gone. We have an imbalance and a loss of core businesses.
- You need an anchor, park once then go to 3 or more places
- Loss of Food Town dried up a lot of other businesses
- We need more retailers
- We have concerns of traffic. Living on Lexington Avenue, 4-corners is always congested. When you add the additional traffic from a new feature there may be a concern.
- We did the math on the 12-14,000 vehicle trips to Food Town versus a museum which will have far less traffic volume and will be off peak. We need the education on what the impacts will be.
- Many folks bring up the other uses of the field ... this will need to be addressed, so we have to "save the field" It turns out that all of these other users support the museum.
- The waterfront is also used for the Oysterfest.
- The original proposal was much too big. The new proposal is a more appropriate scale.
- A nice landscaping project can make the field and its environs more attractive

- Newspapers are tagging “this group” as being greedy. There have been obstacles on past projects. “Keep our Children Safe”an issue raised. Most of us want to see the community move toward the future.
- Each parking space currently on a brown field, not being used, and put into a more valuable space and use so that its full benefit can be realized
- Genuine concerns by members of the community, but when a new idea comes up it becomes “open season” on the new idea. We need to separate a new opportunity from the myriad of other topics and issues.... Address each need on its own terms.
- A SEA fund can be applied to environmental issues Some of these funds can and should be used for the field ... but other locations need these funds as well.
- Downtowns on Long Island are the key to the future of populations and the long term value of properties. As noted in annual *Long Island Index*.
- More and more young families are selecting Oyster Bay as a place of choice because they want to be part of a community ... neighborly, a place to know people.
- People want to avoid the strip malls. People want the arts. We now have 2 art galleries. This is an ideal town for history, art, culture.

TR Sanctuary, Youngs Cemetery, Historical Society, Sagamore Hill

We want to understand the site, and the greater issues. What are some of the good things happening? What problems need to be addressed? What issues must we know about? What are the achievements, sources of pride, visions?

- The TR Sanctuary is the first Audubon site in the nation. The hamlet has great bones, many people here have worked hard to make the place more vibrant
- There is no common thing that brings people together. We have a number of small museums that go unrecognized.
- Marie’s toys was a great spot, but moved out because there was no foot traffic.
- The area is slowly declining, and has declined since Dan was here the first time (2001)
- There is a fear of traffic that could come to the hamlet.
- What better anchor for the hamlet (village) than the museum.
- Food Town was an anchor ... thirty years ago
- There needs to be a reason to come here The hamlet needs to be a destination
- This area is surrounded by many of the most wealthy communities on Long Island
- There is tremendous opportunity, but there needs to be a focus, a reason to celebrate this community

- What this museum wants to be is so special and unique that it would be an asset to our children. The museum would tie many of the other “parts” together ... we need the anchor.
- God has given us something to create a museum in our community
- Youngs memorial cemetery wants to see the museum come as an asset to the hamlet. This will be the lowest impact new thing to make the town a destination
- Food Town was taking up parking spaces Then when they left the Town Hall was taking up all of the parking spaces.
- The Firemen’s Field is an ideal location, allowing people to see and make use of the villages services and to tie into other adjacent services.
- We have not focused enough on the history of Oyster Bay. We are concerned a bit with the scale, but it is a perfect use of the area. There is no place currently to celebrate the life of Teddy Roosevelt. This museum will fill that role.
- If the goal is to revitalize the hamlet then you need something in the hamlet. A museum of this stature is above what you could pay people to do.
- Teddy Roosevelt was a “green” president, and it is appropriate to bring this concept forward
- As an urban planner it is exciting to see the TR support and the community desire to revitalize this special place.
- Speaking to the TR home I have been here since January, following this project. When I first heard of 100,000 square feet I was taken back ... but at the same time excited, knowing how a good museum can improve quality of life for a community.
- Many people don’t think about the size of the entire site And knowing how the full layout, and especially the open space as a working farm is to the success, the feeling of this space.
- The importance of the cultural landscape is important. It is important to understand that if 100,000 feet is placed then the entire infrastructure would overpower the site. It is important to achieve the right scale. We could not handle this size of museum on our site, and TR is not interested.
- This museum would not compete with our heritage site, it would only compliment the visitation
- The Firemen’s Field site is a near perfect location
- An anchor museum would make the Jitney operation more successful for us
- We currently have 100 parking spaces on our site
- It would be better for us if there is a downtown parking location
- We will not add more parking on our site

- This is a great economic opportunity for the entire county ... people do not want change, but it is necessary to have appropriate change to have a successful place to live. Having all museums upgrade at a similar time can have a great impact
- This opportunity will only come once in a lifetime
- Because so many issues in this town are divisive we have chosen to not choose a position
- We do see that this museum can benefit all museums
- We should be joining as a larger entity to support one another
- Oyster Bay could be the cultural draw on Long Island
- People here want change and they do not want change. If we do not do something we will continue to die.
- The museum is a great start, but the town is not being taken care of ... many buildings need to be restored to be attractive to all of us

Friends of the Bay

We want to understand the site, and the greater issues. What are some of the good things happening. What problems need to be addressed? What issues must we know about? What are the achievements, sources of pride, visions?

- We are keeping the Oyster in Oyster Bay
- The Oyster is the canary in the coal mine, our indicator on how healthy the Bay is today
- There are 50 people (plus 40 others) making their living off of our clams
- We protect the watershed and have extensive water quality monitoring equipment
- We are doing a state of the watershed study currently, and will come up with ways to protect the waterfront.
- What struck me in moving to Oyster Bay is the incredible effort people have made to support a successful commercial Oyster business. Ninety percent of Oysters in New York come from this bay.
- The water, clean water is part of the heritage we need to restore, protect and preserve
- When you go to the waterfront and see the beautiful panorama, the cultural events, museums, and other environmental beauty is important, but too often taken for granted.
- Many of the boats are antiques, a part of history, the maritime history and use is taken for granted too much, too often.
- This is a unique community. We have been the benefactor of these qualities, and we are now at a point where we must make an investment in protecting and advancing the important things
- We are a very walkable space, everything is compact, the smallness is the best that Oyster Bay has to celebrate.

- When our organization began we were the only group, now there are many organizations, interest and support to that interest. We started strong because this community has a strong identity and a desire to keep the town whole.

What are some of the obstacles?

- There is not a unified vision?
- Too many developments are only considered on their own
- The waterfront needs to be celebrated more
- On the civic level it is great that there is a lot of interest, but groups need to work together better. Each group is looking at what is best on their own, and not for the community.
- We need to work together with our marketing.
- Our downtown is not well kept. We need a thriving downtown
- We had a thriving downtown when I was a kid, we have suffered a loss. We are not alone in this ... many downtowns have problems
- We have gotten away too long with not having a plan
- Many of our tracts of undeveloped land are not going forward with good decision making
- As you create more density you are going to have more impact on the Bay
- There are many large open tracks of estate land that buffer the Bay, and this helps us.
- Let's not look at projects piecemeal
- We support measures to protect and preserve land
- We are concerned with runoff, level of development
- An earlier condo and marina development threatened to take away the quality of the Bay
- We are concerned with storm water runoff, but we have little to go on right now
- We need to ensure that water quality is not impacted
- We are using EPA standards to measure oxygen levels, level of nutrients, and other problems
- Some problems exist with current parking lots, fertilizers on ball fields ... but we lack any before measurements
- There needs to be a new interpretive center on how the Bay, fishing and other things work and work together.

Oyster Bay and East Norwich Civic Association(s)

We want to understand the site, and the greater issues. What are some of the good things happening? What problems need to be addressed? What issues must we know about? What are the achievements, sources of pride, visions?

- The harbor, Teddy Roosevelt, revolutionary history, oyster farming, laid back life, free of heavy traffic, everybody knows everybody. We are quiet, quaint, charming.
- Where is the nearest farm We are farming in the Bay
- Each oyster filters 40 gallons of water each day
- We have always kept a very passive type of atmosphere, quiet
- We want our town to thrive, but not to have massive numbers of people
- We are a tight, close community, we are very successful
- We respect and understand that the downtown needs a shot in the arm
- Our retailers are our friends and neighbors
- We don't want our quiet to go out of whack
- The previous anchor (grocer) served our community
- The (museum) will not serve the community
- I came from Queens and am willing to pay six times more to live in this quieter place
- This is a very polarizing issue. Good friends of ours have been in screaming sessions with us on this topic
- People are willing to speak out on this because it is such a heart nerve
- We have been in rooms who were six months ago their friends, who no longer are friends
- Our government has not addressed our issues fully. We have slum lords. Things as simple as garbage are not being collected on Main Street.
- We need to pay attention to what this town could be
- Some of the abandoned store fronts have hurt our town, not allowing us to be beautiful
- We want the downtown to be able to build, because we benefit from that
- But this revitalization needs to be balanced
- Parking issues are one of our largest topics of discussion, and will be important with this issue.
- Everything seems to be regionally effected
- We collect and distribute information, but have not taken any positions
- East Norwich and Oyster Bay are one community, but we have two separate postal addresses
- Hamlet plan has not been implemented
- We need lighting, that has been brought out, but not addressed, no one cares

- The Town officials have the most say and position to implement a lot of things we need
- The museum planning did not go through a good internal community process. Figures of up to 500,000 visitors was tossed out.
- All of us without question support honoring Teddy Roosevelt

History of process

- We had a civic meeting one night and Newsday media reports came out and stated the size of the museum (100,000 square feet)
- The bubbling up of ideas from the civic organizations was not taking place
- End of October is the first time that the joint civic associations were briefed
- We did our due diligence to get information out
- At the end of November the Town reached out to us to provide added information
- In mid-December the information flow stopped
- We are treated in a way that “if you are not fully in agreement” you are an impediment
- How can you say “yes” or “no” if you do not know what things are all about

Our concerns include

- Question to team. In your calculation how many visitors will you use in your projections?
- Based on museum hours....projected by Jim.....museum can accommodate 900 vehicles per day.
- We are concerned about the volume, how the traffic, parking, people littering can affect our lives and lifestyles
- We are concerned with how many people and how much impact a museum of a certain size will bring to our community
- We see a large amount of garbage at the Oyster Festival, and we are concerned about that impact on our community.
- Half of our retail stores are closed today. When opened again where will people park.
- Our train is slow, and if we had a fast train we would overwhelm our town
- If we had a fast train it would revitalize our community But all things need to be balanced.
- Precedent of the size/scale of this structure is a concern
- Hotels and other infrastructure is also something that is a reasonable concern
- Spillover of people, garbage into our park,
- seasonal overlap, which is at the same time as our top seasons
- Flood plain location is a concern, might be on 100 year
- Eastern waterfront alienation

- Five other proposed projects that could happen ... will this item take up our other needs
- Is this over weighted?
- What if it does not perform?
- Storm water runoff
- Size and placement are our greatest concerns
- Parking is a top concern. This parking lot is an event parking lot.
- Impacts on adjacent neighbors

Save Firemen's Field

We want to understand the site, and the greater issues. What are some of the good things happening? What problems need to be addressed? What issues must we know about? What are the achievements, sources of pride, visions?

- Save Firemen's Field has groups that have shared their visions
- Values are to preserve small town look and feel

Carolyn will send electronic files (see attached) on rest of organization's issues

- Moved here to row
- Concerned with water quality for nature and all of us – water is still there
- Why do we want to add significant new building(s)
- Create a beautification committee
- Parking issues surround the Roosevelt school

Town officials and leaders of Oyster Bay

We want to understand the site, and the greater issues. What are some of the good things happening? What problems need to be addressed? What issues must we know about? What are the achievements, sources of pride, visions?

- Hamlet is a unique, quiet, know everybody culture with charm, restorations
- The waterfront is user friendly, the pier, the Bay is an incredible resource
- We have learned to treat our water and Bay with respect
- Oyster Bay and Theodore Roosevelt are synonymous There are smart people on Long Island that are not aware that Teddy lived here.
- Resurgence of interest in Oyster Bay with many people that have come together to celebrate what we have here. Many supportive organizations
- A design book and laws are in place for a unified "Oyster Bay" look
- An ongoing challenge is to better/further define what is a proper design building

What are the obstacles?

- Geographical challenge, Oyster Bay is the end point of the land
- Traffic is a big issue when people are coming here to take advantage of the beach, park and boating

- 6-8 key intersections are over stressed certain hours of the day
- Near the Roosevelt Elementary school traffic is backed up for 15-20 minutes a day
- People may not want the traffic to operate more smoothly near their house
- Victim of our own success. Many people chose to move here because it is quiet. Unless they can be overwhelmingly convinced they may prefer to not see change
- Tank farm area is not the highest and best use. More recreation and preservation land is a better use.
- Coast line is almost entirely artificial. Western waterfront is almost all fill.
- TRA, historic society have been vigilant in maintaining standards and quality
- Difficulty this town is having to craft a vision
- Part of the dilemma is that if there is no vision many or all ideas get shot down
- How far back do you go to find your historic vision?
- How do we protect and preserve, and what do we protect and preserve
- Teddy Roosevelt was very forward thinking. At the time Oyster Bay was very erudite and new and his house was one of the first on Long Island to have indoor plumbing.
- It was his idea that the park should be a park for the public
- Year's ago it was the workers that lived in the hamlet. Many workers lived on the estates.
- Railroad Avenue has been discussed as a place to serve the needs of firemen for training
- We have authorized a survey to see if this is possible.
- Greatest obstacle will be concerns of traffic
- If there is a way of regulating and calming traffic so that there is a better, smoother flow, this may address the community concerns
- People have stated or feel... "I live here, I like my town, if you can do it in such a way that my life will not be impacted at all I am for it."
- If the outcome is if we have the museum our other activities will need to be protected and preserved.

Educators/Schools

We want to understand the site, and the greater issues. What are some of the good things happening? What problems need to be addressed? What issues must we know about? What are the achievements, sources of pride, visions?

- Parking in Oyster Bay is tight on normal days. Shoppers have difficulty finding a place to park
- Would people coming to shop be able to park in the new parking?
- Opportunity to have a museum that give children a chance to learn is exciting

- Shop keepers are dying. Some are about to close up. We will end up with more vacant buildings
- One of the things we are most proud of is the renovation of our schools
- Roosevelt school has replaced portables with a beautiful new set of classrooms
- Our board prefers to not take a position on the museum
- Memorial field and stadium is near the museum site. This can raise some issues
- Parents dropping their kids off will not park on Firemen’s Field side. The parents are double parking and creating problems on Larabee
- Are there examples of other museums located near schools
- We are open 7 days a week
- We cannot build any more on our site than what we currently have
- Many people in town, especially Hispanic, feel it is hard to get into and out of town
- Many children in town feel “stuck”
- There are not enough things in town for children to do
- If there was a bus line there would be plenty of places to go, things to do.
- If this museum could be a catalyst this could be a great thing for this town.
- Our space for events is tapped out, including our gyms.
- Many sports teams and groups have to travel long distances for activities

Centro Cultural Hispano

We want to understand the site, and the greater issues. What are some of the good things happening? What problems need to be addressed? What issues must we know about? What are the achievements, sources of pride, visions?

- We do not have enough parking in Oyster Bay
- 106 is full of traffic
- The space (of the museum) is empty, but it is very central and important to the community
- We want to make sure that there is adequate parking for people in the neighborhood
- Right now many of the people in the apartments surrounding the Firemen’s Field are parking in the Firemen’s Field
- Aerial photo shows that all cars parked taken at the time were parking closest to apartments
- Our interest is to have affordable housing so that people can live and work here
- There are many people who work here and are not “permitted” to live here
- It is not just the Spanish people that cannot afford to live here.

Additional Items from “Save the Field”

Users of Firemen’s Field Parking Lot

Below is a partial list of events, which take place in and around Firemen’s Field, whose size and / or location may require overflow parking there, both now and in the future.

Please Note: This inventory of events does not necessarily imply that the event sponsors support our position.

Long Island Railroad, Museum & Future Transportation Hub

Commuter Parking (currently approximately 30 cars each day)
Electrification of LIRR & Tourist Trolley expansion needs
Taxi & Bus Depot expansion needs
Railroad Museum parking overflow (est. 10,000-18,000 visitors per year)

Annual Festivals

St. Rocco (5 days in July) - uses entire field
Oyster Fest (2 days in October) – uses entire field

Youth Sports at Memorial Field (behind Roosevelt Elementary School)

High School Football (practice on Saturdays in the Fall) – Jr. Varsity & Varsity: games, playoff & Homecoming
Little League Football (Practice on Sundays during August – November) Home Games & their Cheerleaders, Lacrosse Festival (5,000 people during weekend of play-off games)
Other sports: baseball, softball, and soccer

Major Waterfront Dependent and Large Sports Events

Bluefish Tournament – 1,300 participants, plus their 700 supporters - July
Triathlon - 1,500 participants, plus their 500 supporters - August
Ocean to Sound Relay Race, 100 teams with 8 runners each – finish line in Firemen’s Field - September

Firemen’s Training

Weekly practice and Annual contests

Waterfront Center Events (formerly Jacobson’s Shipyard)

Bay Day (first Sunday in June)

Roosevelt Park, Beeckman Beach and Western Waterfront Events

- Launching Ramp Boat Trailer Overflow (only 100 trailer slots at TR Park)
 - Note: a new launching ramp is being built for additional NY State boaters with approx. 20 trailer spaces
- Tall Ship and Coast Guard Visits - Intermittent in summer
- Kayak Kluster "Raft Up" and "Swarm Across the Sound" (in August with motorboat safety escorts to Stamford)
- Picnic Pavilion Guest Parking (e.g. Running Club Picnic in September includes 1,000 guests)

Miscellaneous

- Overnight for 18-wheeler trucks and meet-up for LIPA and other service industry trucks
- Parade Line-up, Band Concert & Fireworks viewing overflow
- Cruise Night (Classic Car display on Audrey Avenue – every Tuesday in the summer)
- Bicycle Group Tour assembly; Individual, Team Relay and Time Trial Races (now discontinued)

Future and / or Potential Uses for Overflow Parking

- Town Hall Visitors, Local Merchants and approximately 200 Town Employees
- Roosevelt School classroom expansion (attendance has increased 10% in 10 years)
- High School Students overflow (days) and Concert Parking overflow (evening)
- Ice Skating Rink (removable) in Memorial Field (proposed for winter months)