



VILLAGE OF PORT CHESTER
222 Grace Church Street, Port Chester, New York 10573

City Status Committee

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE VILLAGE OF PORT CHESTER CITY STATUS COMMITTEE**

HELD: May 28, 2020

TIME AND PLACE: 5:45 PM, PC Village Hall Conference Room, 222 Grace Church Street, Port Chester, NY and over Village's WebEx platform

Chairman Frank Ferrara called to order the meeting of the Village of Port Chester City Status Committee at 5:45 PM. A motion to open the meeting was made by former Mayor Neil Pagano and seconded by Keith Morlino. The Committee approved the motion by unanimous consent.

The following members were present:

First Name	Last Name
Francis	Ferrara
Luis	Marino
Hattie	Adams
Brian A	Devaney
Gregg	Hamilton
Joseph W	Lodato
Keith	Morlino
Peter	Pascale
Neil	Pagano
Joan	Tosh

Also in attendance was Committee staff member Village Attorney Anthony Cerreto and Committee appointed consultants Kent Gardner and Patti Dwyer of CGR.

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Chairman Ferrara announced that the purpose of the meeting was to receive a presentation on consultant CGR's report that had been distributed to the Committee last week, have the opportunity to ask questions, and then to move on to a broad discussion about the report, its implications, and next steps. He suggested that this was "the end of the beginning" of the City Status process where the Committee might soon consider making a recommendation to the Village Board of Trustees (BOT) that appointed us.



APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Hattie Adams made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 23, 2019 meeting, which was seconded by Joe Lodato. The Committee approved the Minutes by unanimous consent.

PRESENTATION BY CGR ON THEIR REPORT REGARDING CITY STATUS FOR PORT CHESTER

Kent Gardner of CGR and Patti Dwyer of Sourced Solutions attended to present the report, with Mr. Gardner taking the lead.

Mr. Gardner reported on their process, that included interviews of all committee members that volunteered for the process as well as all elected officials that represent Port Chester at one level of state or local government or another outside of the Governor, along with Mayors of Villages and Supervisors of Towns that are related to Port Chester through the Town of Rye. He commented about the depth of good will that exists for the Village throughout the State given the visibility of recent Village initiatives and Mayor Falanka's high profile throughout the State as a result of his activities as Village Clerk over nearly 30 years.

His impression from the interviews was that this was a favorable time for this process, given a unique confluence of events that favored the Village.

He then presented on the advantages to the Village of City Status, highlighted by the Sales Tax windfall that if structured similarly to other cities in Westchester County would yield over \$9M more per annum than the Village currently realizes from the County pool distribution mechanism.

The Village would have to spend to upgrade its court system to State standards, but the State would be responsible for funding all Court functions, estimated to be about \$1.5M a year.

The distribution of State Aid was less clear given the lack of formulas that are used to allocate funds and the fact that aid is likely to be under pressure as the State had budget pressures even before the Covid 19 Pandemic. But what is clear is that cities get far more than villages. Even if Port Chester would be unlikely to obtain anywhere near the largest aid grant to a city in the state, the smallest would represent an additional \$2.8M over what it receives now as a Village.



DISCUSSION OF RFP SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

Chairman Ferrara opened the discussion by commenting how pleasantly surprised he was by the seeming lack of political obstacles presented in the report, when he had expected many. The report clearly states that Port Chester pre-empting the County Sales Tax pool would be a non-event for village and school district budgets throughout the County, eliminating perhaps the biggest single potential source of opposition.

And the fear on the part of the Legislature and Governor that large municipalities would demand City Status after Port Chester was in part allayed by the report's reference to the Village's unique urban density as compared to other large Villages and Towns and what the report referred to as the Village's "Unique Latino culture," which would make it the only Latino majority City in the State.

Former Mayor Neil Pagano called attention to Page 30 of the draft and the dire financial direction of the Village it suggests should conditions not change. He mentioned he had previously hoped that smart development would bring in the new revenues and growth opportunities the Village needs, but that they have not materialized quickly enough. The report goes on to suggest that without new revenues the only obvious solution for the Village would be an aggressive upzoning and potential loss of character and current residents. Given those options, Mr. Pagano suggested we have no alternative but to embrace the process and continue our quest for City Status.

Several others spoke of the fear of gentrification should the Village not be successful in its quest for City Status, but Mr. Gardner reminded the Committee that the Village as a City Status candidate is "a good product to sell," that can offer the Governor a number of objectives he would like to achieve, perhaps most prominently local government rationalization with the likely disappearance of the Town of Rye in the process. He suggested that based on their interviews we might have a willing ally in the Village of Rye Brook that might welcome being their own coterminous Town/Village, in the mode of Harrison.

DISCUSSION OF NEXT STEPS

Chairman Ferrara mentioned that the eventual goal was to accept and publish the report and pass along our recommendations to the BOT. A spirited discussion followed and while the sense of the Committee was a desire to accept the report, ultimately it was decided that given the lack of clear guidance from the State on the City Status process, the recommendation for next steps needed to be clearer in the report. Committee member Peter Pascale suggested that with at least suggested steps we would be in position to fulfill our mission.



The Committee's appointed advisor, Village Attorney Tony Cerreto, suggested that the best course of action might be for he and CGR to discuss this matter with The New York Conference of Mayors (NYCOM), with whose help we began our due diligence two years ago, and whose representatives attended and presented at our inaugural meeting.

It was agreed that NYCOM would be approached to achieve a consensus on procedure and that the committee would reconvene at the earliest time to review a redlined draft, and reconsider acceptance and recommendations to the BOT.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Ferrara suggested that Committee Staff and CGR would aggressively move to clarify the outstanding issues and hold the next meeting within a few weeks' time. He felt it would be a brief meeting given the ground that was covered this evening and he thanked the Committee members for their continued time and attention to the Committee's mission.

ADJOURNMENT

On the motion of Hattie Adams and seconded by Peter Pascale, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at approximately 6:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Frank Ferrara, Chairman



Minutes

Kent

He scoped out the advantages

I mentioned the lack of political obstacles

Neil page 30

PC bankrupcy

He thought we could solve that through the IDA

Without new revenues the only obvious solution is upzoning and effective character

Latino is the way to go – opens doors

Development will lock out current residents

PC just layed off over 30 people – are we oly gong to be police fire and dpw?

With have no alternative but to go down this road

Joe Lodato

Does thinking change with covid

Nothing has gotten easier

Aid is likely to conitinue to decline

Kent – you have a good product to sell

Form based code can upzone areas without changing the character

Joe Lodato – people are coming out of NYC and will come here – here comes gentrification

Kent – governor has two cookies

Latino city

TOR gone

Keith – what does TOR look like

Kent – you don't need to take that fight on by yourselves

And it could take some time – need to be persistent

Neil what are next stes

Me – Charter

Kent suggests maybe not

Tony – uncertain path

But cannot be an advisory referendum

Hstty and Joe on minutes

Tony N and Joe C



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Peter Pascale

Path forward – would be helpful if we have at least suggested steps

Hattie Peter adjourn