



1.1.2021

Dear Pine Plains,

On the 7th of January at 7pm, the Town Board will hold its annual **Re-Organization** Meeting, lovingly called the “Re-Org”. In Dutchess County, we will join 22 other towns, villages, and cities in naming committee members, new and old, setting salaries for the year, and holidays, and reflecting on all we accomplished in the year before.

Because moving forward always requires looking back. And after a year like 2020, I confess that all work we have done to reach this moment feels more like a question than a statement, and the question is: can we do this? Can we find the funding to build a new Town Hall right in town, as per our Town Hall Plan? Can we find the funding to revitalize the hamlet so that small businesses can afford to open here and thrive, as per our Revitalization Plan? Can we build the sidewalks in our Sidewalk Plan, fix the ballfields in our Recreation Plan, attract affordable housing as per the Tri-Town Coalition, and what about the Broadband Study and what about a way to provide sufficient central sewer/septic service to the hamlet as outlined in our Sewer Feasibility Study?

Perhaps you see a pattern here: over a number of years we have won grants to study our problems and create plans to solve them, and the plans are beautiful—they are on the walls all over Town Hall and stuck in corners of the Town Supervisor's office. I discover them in odd places—did you know that we have a plan for a gorgeous Indoor Recreation Facility?—I move them around to clean. But where implementation is concerned, the buck literally stops.

For my first two years in office, there existed a grant called the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. The State would award a winner in each region \$10,000,000 to build or fix or change their village/city/town significantly. I wrote that 40-page grant each year, pulling together all the dreams people had for Pine Plains, and showing the State the folly in giving that much money to a city, where no one would notice it, when they could give it to Pine Plains, a town of 2504, where it would allow us to completely fix our infrastructure and re-build a sustainable, rural, self-sustaining community. I had flashy new language for the third attempt at this grant when the pandemic hit and all the money went away.

Can we do this? is a question that begs another question: is it even worthwhile to dream? Because all those plans we have at Town Hall are about dreams for Pine Plains. Why have we continuously made plans all these years only to reach a barrier each time in being able to implement them?

Well, it's dream or die. To that end we will begin the New Year revising our zoning so that the people who love Pine Plains can sustain living here, and new business can open here, and open, generous hearts can be protected here. It requires a committee and a lot of work and that work will be what we can do. We can do that.

Happy New Year, Pine Plains!

Darrah Cloud

And PS: tune in to the Re-Org next Thursday at 7pm on YouTube, Town of Pine Plains for The Year in Review!