



## ALEXANDRIA BAY

# STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS SUMMARY

<b>Purpose:</b>	Stakeholder Meetings
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>	May 28, 2024, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
<b>Location:</b>	Community Meeting Room, 110 Walton Street, Alexandria Bay

### Community Organizations

#### Discussion

The discussion focused on the needs of business and tourism downtown. It began with a description of the NY Forward program and project selection process. Other topics and issues that came up include the following:

**School Information:**

- Approximately 450 students are enrolled
- School has clubs but lacks supervision for afterschool programs.
- Truancy in school is a major issue.
- Would like to see a basketball court, more recreation for kids but there’s limited space
- After college graduation there are no job opportunities in Alex Bay.

**Library Information:**

- Library is close to senior housing, so it attracts many senior citizens
- The library gets an increase in visitors in the summer due to an increase in traffic Downtown. The library is located next to the Village Hall and school, away from the waterfront.
- Offers various programs for the public but is limited in space. Larger programs require the Community Meeting room.
- Some programs are with the school, and the library wants to increase such programs.

**Housing:**

- There has been a drop in lower to middle income housing, the Village loses 2<sup>nd</sup> household earners and young adults looking for employment.

## Community Organizations

### Discussion

- Need for housing to hire and retain teachers
- Solution- more affordable housing, expand Village, upper floor housing in Downtown
- Homes are being bought by seasonal residents
- According to the library, older folks are searching for affordable year-round housing.
  - A similar situation for teachers in the area
  - A generational problem
- There are 10-month rentals that are not available during the summer
- Most employees live outside Village

### Year-Round Activity

- Winter- hard to market the Village and attract visitors
- How do we have a winter attraction? Use the river?
- Need a draw – reason to visit and a place to stay

### Downtown Challenges

- Aged buildings/ lacking insulation, limits year-round businesses due to fueling expenses
- Elderly don't come in summer due to traffic and parking

### Downtown Opportunities

- Pavilion is underutilized
- Pavilion for art performance and exhibits.
- Walking trails advertised by businesses
- Some seasonal residents sometimes get involved with the Village for events

## Community Organizations

### Attendance

- Amy Hillanbrand, MacSherry Library
- Robert Fountain, Alexandria Central School
- Alan Taylor, Alex Bay Rotary
- Marty Torry, Captain Consulting
- Jaclyn Hakes, MJ Engineering
- Melia Hema, MJ Engineering

# Business & Tourism

## Discussion

The discussion focused on the needs of business and tourism downtown. It began with a description of the NY Forward program and project selection process. Other topics and issues that came up include the following:

### General Response to NY Forward Program Details

- Participants felt there was misinformation about how the money would be programmed.
- Preference for projects that benefit entire community rather than single business/property owners.

### Sidewalks and streetscaping

- Sidewalks in the Village are in poor condition – cracked, heaved, multiple surface types, narrow, feel unsafe.
  - Older adults walk in the street because of the sidewalk conditions.
  - Families have difficulties with strollers.
- Would like to see sidewalk connections to the golf course and other destinations on edge of Village.
- Currently there are no pedestrian safety features at intersections.
- Villages require property owners to maintain and replace their own sidewalks.
- Pedestrian lighting is needed for safety and aesthetics.

### Wayfinding and Tourist Amenities

- Village lacks wayfinding signage at riverfront and in downtown.
- No defined activity areas.
- Village doesn't have a central location where tourists can find information – no “welcome mat.”

### Beautification

- Would like to see planters along streets in core business area.
- Need to increase frequency of street sweeping and litter/garbage removal from streets and public spaces.
- Utility poles are eyesores.
- Support for facade and signage standards.
- Village is lacking “beauty”
- “We live in paradise; our village should reflect that.”

### General Access & Connectivity

- Being able to park your car and not get back in it is difficult because of the lack of transportation options. Also, many visitors enter the Village by boat and are unable to access everything they need on foot.
- No Uber/Lyft, taxis, or transit.
- Uncle Sam Boat Tours has a satellite/overflow parking lot on County Route 1 and shuttles customers when needed.

## Business & Tourism

### Discussion

- Need better parking management – support for satellite parking and shuttle/trolley service; replace parking meters with kiosk or pay by app; parking currently only enforced June – August.
- Would like to see more events that shut down streets to cars or pedestrianize parts or all of James Street.
- Hospital employees use public parking areas while their parking lots have lots of capacity; use pavilion lot and then public cannot park at pavilion and use park, beach, or Riverwalk.

### Long-term Business Viability

- The chip plant (Micron) in Syracuse area could benefit Alexandria Bay.
- Recent increase in wealthy residents moving to area.
- The season is too short and weather-dependent but other nearby communities, like Clayton, seem to have a busy off-season. Business owners would like to lengthen the season in Alexandria Bay.
- Difficult to find seasonal workers.
- Besides the hospital, no anchor employer or other good-paying jobs to sustain year-round residents.
- There are very few vacant storefronts.
- Basic goods and services are only available seasonally, or not downtown at all, such as groceries and beer.
- Businesses close early, including convenience stores and gas stations (cannot get gas in Village after 9pm)
- Very dependent on the weather, which is too unpredictable to plan around.
- IJC (International Joint Commission) drops water level in the St. Lawrence River in fall, which limits boats access to the Village.
- Fishing/hunting, sightseeing is not enough.
- The Ledges stayed open year-round last year and lost money.

### Docks

- The Village has 3 community docks, but most people only know about 1 of them.
- Some businesses have docks, but people don't know about them, or they are difficult to get to (need to go under low bridges).

### Housing

- No riverfront property available.
- Business owners have made existing properties and purchased new properties for Airbnb's.
- All available rental housing has become short-term rental.
- The Village lacks middle-income/workforce housing.
- Existing rental housing is rundown.
- There is only 1 apartment complex in Alexandria Bay, and it doesn't have a good reputation.
- Employers often find or arrange housing for employees.

# Business & Tourism

## Discussion

- No rental housing available for college students anymore.

### Programming and Activities

- There are no activities or attractions for families with children, other than Pirate Days.
- Families go to Clayton for all of their sports and extracurricular activities.
- Would like to see year-round ice available for skating (mainly hockey which was mentioned frequently).
- Nothing to do on Casino Island.
- The pavilion at River View Park is underutilized, information on how to reserve it for an event is confusing. It takes up a lot of space and if it's not used, need to rethink what is going on there.
- Generally, no programming other than a few music concerts downtown and at Riverfront.
- A participant suggested a "Summerween" event to attract families with kids.
- Other than the playground at River View Park (which people seemed unimpressed by), the only other playground was "too far away" from the Village and not inviting.
- A participant feared that programming pavilion or Casino Island wouldn't translate to "money in cash registers," which was primary objective of Tourism Council.

### Project Ideas

- Move public bathroom to a better location.
- Community-wide wayfinding and interpretive signage.
- Downtown streetscaping and sidewalk improvements.
- Pedestrianize Upper James Street.
- Build apartments above retail/restaurants downtown.
- Heated pickleball courts, or finish building pickle ball courts at golf course – for year-round residents (feeling that seasonal residents play tennis, but year-round residents play pickleball).
- Downtown Farmers Market

### Thoughts on Implementation of Projects & Improvements

- The business community lacks unity, no project or issue for them to rally around.
- In the past, good projects have been blocked because of a minority of people and other projects have been watered down (ex. Riverwalk).
- "Hard relationships" in Village.
- Need education about how investments can help improve overall community.
- Need to work on creating buy-ins from residents and business owners.

## Business & Tourism

### Attendance

- Dave Roberts, The Korner, Skiffs, 1864
- Desiree Robert, The Korner, Skiffs, 1864
- Benjamin Walldroff, The Korner, Skiffs, 1864
- Kylie Peck, NYSDOS
- Corey Fram, 1000 Islands International Tourism Council
- Nicholas Schaefer, The Ledges Resort / Seaway Mercantile
- Amy Shrinel, The Ledges Resort / Seaway Mercantile
- Pam Staub Johnson, Carnegie Bay Marina
- Alan Taylor, Old Homestead Restaurant, Lil' River Fudge Co
- Judy Fulmer, LPC Co-Chair
- Jennifer Ceponis, MJ Engineering
- Kevin Schwenzfeier, MJ Engineering

This meeting summary conveys our understanding of the items discussed and agreements reached at this meeting. Please forward any additions, corrections and/or questions to my attention.

Submitted by:

Melia Hema, MJ Engineering and Land Surveying, P.C.

cc: Consultant Team, State Team, Local Planning Committee

