
NEWSLETTER

Rochester Residents Association, Inc.

Spring 2002

We're pleased to provide you with a copy of the first newsletter of the Rochester Residents Association for 2002.

We have been very pleased with the response rate to our first newsletter, which was distributed in late 2001, and the initiation of our membership drive. We've recruited many new members in the past six months and encourage you to spread the word about the Rochester Residents Association.

We hope that you enjoy this publication, and invite you to visit our website, which is accessible through www.accord-kerhonkson.com. The site contains information on local news, businesses, organizations, and government in an easily accessible format.

If you would like to receive periodic updates of news about the Town of Rochester, please send your email address to:
TownCrier@Accord-Kerhonkson.com

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**Rochester Residents Association
Survey Results**

The results of the Rochester Residents Association survey conducted in October 2001 have been tabulated. They indicate that a majority of respondents favor slow to moderate controlled growth in the town's population and commercial activity.

Route 209 is the town's principal roadway and provides visitors with a first and lasting impression of our community. Yet, the majority of respondents believe that the appearance of the Route 209 corridor is poor to satisfactory. Only 26% of respondents thought that Route 209 looked "good" or "excellent".

Of the types of economic development that are most favored by respondents, agriculture, arts & culture, and small retail stores topped the list, followed closely by tourism and second homes. Among the least popular types are large retail stores, strip malls, trailer parks, gravel banks & mines, and log yards.

Nearly 60% of respondents indicated that local government should develop a long-range plan to increase job and tax revenues, while 21% believe this should be left solely to economic forces.

A full 83% of respondents believed that it was very important to preserve the current historical layout of small hamlets and open farm and woodland areas. On a similar note, 88% of respondents believe that future development in these hamlets should be carefully planned for in the town's Comprehensive Plan. On the subject of regulating the size and exterior appearance of commercial buildings, 88% believe that this is important.

A strong majority (at least 80%) of respondents stated that they favor the preservation of wetlands, historic areas, open spaces, improved commercial building design and the preservation of residential neighborhood qualities.

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More than half of the respondents support municipal regulations on groundwater protection, commercial development, excessive noise, commercial signs/billboards, excessive junk & trash, excessive floodlighting, and the preservation of views. The only area where respondents believe less regulation is necessary or desirable is home occupations.

An overwhelming 91% of respondents indicated that they favor zoning, and 38% indicated that they would support an industrial park in town. Only 29% of respondents indicated that they would favor garden apartments or condominiums in town. Overall, 90% of respondents indicated that they favor efforts to retain the present rural and small town character of our town.

In addition, we asked some open-ended questions. When asked what attributes made Rochester a good place to live, the most popular answers by far relate to natural beauty, peace, quiet, open space and the easy access to outdoor activities. Answers of this nature were closely followed by answers referring to neighbors, sense of community, friends and the small town rural atmosphere.

The least favored attributes were the lack of planning and zoning, local government and politics, excessive trash/junk, high taxes, trailers, and inconvenient proximity to stores and services.

Conclusions

Overall, the results of the October 2001 survey are not dissimilar to those of a similar survey conducted by the Town of Rochester in April 1989. Respondents in both surveys valued the rural small town atmosphere and the natural beauty of our surroundings. Respondents in both surveys were against the trend of turning the Route 209 corridor into a commercial strip.

While surveys identify certain trends relating to the attributes of our community that are most valued, it is clear that a continuing open discourse on the state and future of our community is needed to address the concerns and fears of our town's stakeholders.

How the survey was conducted:

In October 2001, a questionnaire was mailed to all known property owners in the Town of Rochester. This was sent to both full- and part-time residents and to owners of properties where homes exist, commercial properties, and to owners of vacant land. The response rate to the survey was better than expected, with a response rate of about 10%. According to direct mail benchmarks, a response rate of 5% should be considered excellent.

Survey respondents were given the option of identifying themselves or remaining anonymous. More than 200 respondents chose to identify themselves. Collectively, the identified respondents owned approximately 2,500 acres of land in the Town of Rochester, with a total assessed valuation as of July 1, 2001 of more than \$19 million.

Airport Road Motorcross Racetrack

An illegal motorcross/all terrain vehicle racetrack was recently set up on Airport Road next door to the entrance to the Town's transfer station. As the result of dozens of complaints to the Town's Planning and Zoning Office and elected town officials, the owner of the property was cited by the Town's Code Enforcement Officer. At the March 28, 2002 Town Board meeting, the Town Board unanimously approved a resolution authorizing the Town's attorney to pursue any and all courses of litigation to enjoin the property owner from conducting racing activity on the property. Post has filed an appeal with the Zoning Board of Appeals and is expected to apply for a special use permit. Under current town law, race tracks are prohibited in R-1 residential zones. The Zoning Board of Appeals will hear the property owner's appeal on Tuesday, May 14th at 7:00 pm in the Town Hall, and members of the public are encouraged to express their views.

Town Board Meetings Broadcast on Time Warner Cable

RRA volunteers have been videotaping Town Board, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings since January 1, 2002 to create a permanent video record of town government proceedings. The Town Board meetings are broadcast every Monday night at 7:00 pm on Time Warner Cable channel 23. Copies of all tapes are available for a nominal fee to defray postage and other costs. For further information, send an email to resident@accord-kerhonkson.com or write to us at PO Box 257, Accord, NY 12404.

Copies of Town Code Available

The RRA offers copies of the complete Code of the Town of Rochester for \$20.00 (includes hand delivery in the Town of Rochester, \$5.00 more for U.S. Postal Service delivery elsewhere). This code includes the chapters on subdivisions and zoning. Identical copies purchased from the Town Clerk's Office cost \$100 for the complete set. Copies of the code have been very popular in recent weeks. Copies of the town's 1969 Comprehensive Plan are also available for \$20.00.

Rochester Residents Association Helps with Earth Day Roadside Clean Up

About a dozen members of the RRA and residents of Dewitt Road assisted with the Earth Day Roadside Clean up on April 20th. Members and residents cleaned up a tire dump on Dewitt Road (160 tires!), assisted with the clean up of Queens Highway and on many other streets in town. This project was proposed to the Town of Rochester Youth Commission and the Rochester Environmental Commission with the support of the Town Board. According to organizers, participation improved and the amount of refuse collected increased significantly this year.

Town-wide over seven tons of trash and debris were picked up, along with more than three tons of metal and 450 tires. The day's work was concluded with a pot-luck barbecue for volunteers held at the new Community Center.

Calling All Artists

The RRA has recently established a webpage listing artists who live or work in the Town of Rochester. This site contains examples of local artists' work and links to their websites. Eventually, we hope to sponsor an open studio day or exhibition of Rochester artists. To visit the site, go to www.accord-kerhonkson.com and click on the link to the artists' webpage. If you know of a local artist who is not listed or if you would like to have your own listing on the site, please let us know.

Visit our Website

We invite you to visit our website at www.accord-kerhonkson.com. This site also contains links to a list of all known businesses located in the area, as well as informative pages on town government, history, and other regional links. To receive semi-monthly updates on news and events in town by email, send an email to TownCrier@accord-kerhonkson.com. If you would like to add a business listing or link, please let us know.

Gambling in our Midst?

The Ulster County Legislature recently announced a seven-year agreement with the Modoc tribe of Oklahoma to permit a casino in the Town of Warwarsing. The agreement means that the county will get some revenue if a casino is built in Ulster County, something that is not guaranteed, county officials stressed.

While the Modoc are a federally recognized tribe, they still need a viable connection to New York state to take over land here as their own. It is unclear what that connection might be. An out-of-state tribe has never won federal approval to take land in trust for a casino – especially one without a land claim in New York.

An on-line archive of articles on casino gambling is available at www.th-record.com

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Selected Survey Responses:

1. Do you favor continued growth in the size of the town's population?

48% Yes 28% No
24% Not sure

2. If you favor continued growth in the town's population, how fast should that population grow?

48% Slowly 42% Moderately
2% Rapidly 8% Not Sure

3. Rate the general appearance of the Route 209 corridor.

4% Excellent 22% Good
34% Satisfactory 38% Poor
2% Not Sure

4. What do you consider to be most appealing about living in Rochester? [Various answers]

5. What do you consider to be the least appealing about living in Rochester? (Various Answers]

6. During the next ten years, would you like to see economic activity in the town:

13% Not Increase
67% Moderately Increase
15% Significantly Increase
4% Not Sure

7. Would you like to see future commercial development (retail and service businesses)

50% Expand
34% Stay the Same
16% Not Sure

8. What type of economic development should be encouraged?

	Not Yes No Maybe Sure			
Agriculture	88%	2%	6%	3%
Arts & Culture	89%	2%	7%	1%
Light Industry (industrial park)	20%	53%	19%	8%
Small Retail/Service Stores	81%	7%	12%	0%
Large Retail/Service Stores	17%	74%	6%	3%
Retirement Housing	45%	16%	31%	8%
Second/Vacation Homes	61%	17%	17%	5%
Senior Citizen Housing	51%	9%	37%	4%
Strip Mall Developments	8%	83%	5%	3%
Logging/Log Yards	9%	64%	17%	10%
Mining/Gravel Banks	7%	74%	12%	7%
Tourism	71%	12%	15%	2%
Trailer Parks	5%	76%	15%	5%
Affordable Housing	45%	22%	28%	6%

9. If you believe retail and services businesses should expand what types of retail and service shops would you prefer? [Various answers]

10. Do you believe that local government should develop a long-range plan to increase job and tax revenues or should economic and market forces determine its future?

59% Long Range Plan
21% Economic Forces
21% Not Sure

11. Regardless of the type of economic development that may occur in Rochester, how important is it to you that the current historical layout of small hamlets and open farm and woodland spaces be preserved?

83% Very important
9% Important
6% Somewhat Important
2% Not Important
0% Not Sure

12. Should future development in these hamlets be carefully planned for in the town's Comprehensive Plan?

70% Strongly Agree
18% Agree
5% Disagree
6% Not Sure

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13. Do you believe it is important to regulate the exterior appearance and size of commercial buildings so they will reflect the historical and rural character of Rochester?

69% Strongly Agree
19% Agree
8% Disagree
5% Not Sure

14. Do you favor including more detailed standards and guidelines in the subdivision and zoning regulations to achieve the following objectives:

	Favor	Maybe	Against
Preservation of Wetlands	82%	11%	6%
Historical Preservation	87%	9%	4%
Preservation of Open Spaces	88%	8%	4%
Better Design in Commercial Buildings	82%	12%	6%
Preservation of Residential Neighborhood Qualities	82%	12%	6%

15. Do you favor municipal regulations that include: (more regulation, stay the same, less regulation)

	More	Same	Less
Protection of Ground Water	81%	18%	1%
Commercial Development	71%	21%	8%
Commercial Signs/ Billboards	74%	18%	8%
Excessive Noise	73%	19%	8%
Forestry Practices	65%	30%	5%
Home Occupations	40%	45%	16%
Excessive Junk, Debris, Trash	79%	11%	10%
Excessive Floodlighting	69%	19%	12%
Preservation of Views	80%	18%	2%

16. Are you in favor of zoning? The purpose of zoning is to divide the town into designated sections such as agricultural, residential, industrial, etc., so that the normal business and social activities of one group do not impose intolerable living conditions on another.

91% Yes 9% No

17. Are you in favor of encouraging an industrial park in our Town to attract light industry? Some people think this will increase business and job opportunities and help carry the tax load. Some say it will destroy the Town's rural character.

38% Favor 51% Oppose
11% No opinion

18. How far is your home from your place of employment? [Various responses]

19. What recreational facilities do you feel the town should provide? (Please circle)

Ballfields
 Swimming Areas
 Picnic areas
 Skating
 Other: _____

20. Are you in favor of two story garden apartments or condominium developments in Town?

29% Yes 42% No
29% Not sure

21. Realizing that the town's population is going to increase, would you favor efforts:

90% To retain as much as possible the present character of the town
10% Become more (sub)urbanized

How You Can Help

The Rochester Residents Association is looking for volunteers to assist with research, publications, mailings and video-taping meetings of town government.

Volunteers with computer and database management experience are especially needed.

If you are interested in helping, please call 845-626-3285 or send an email to resident@accord-kerhonkson.com.

Rochester Residents Association, Inc.
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To receive periodic news about the events in the Town of Rochester by e-mail, please send your email address to:
resident@accord-kerhonkson.com

To join the Rochester Residents Association, complete this form and mail it with a check to PO Box 257, Accord, NY 12404

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Individual- \$15.00 Family - \$20.00 Other

The Rochester Residents Association, Inc. is a tax-exempt organization recognized under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.