

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 22, 2000

TO: Orangetown Comprehensive Plan Committee

FROM: Saccardi & Schiff, Inc.

RE: Town of Orangetown Community Facilities and Services: Initial Inventory and Identification of Some Items for Discussion

The presence of a full array of community facilities and services is an integral part of a thriving town. This memorandum outlines the facilities and services that are presently serving the citizens of Orangetown¹; subsequent memoranda will identify and recommend any changes that may be necessary for the improved provision of these services, consistent with other comprehensive plan proposals. Orangetown, for the purpose of this report, includes the 8 unincorporated places, or hamlets, within the Town, not the 4 incorporated villages. The community facilities and services that solely serve the incorporated villages within the Town of Orangetown will not be discussed in depth.²

EXISTING FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The Town of Orangetown has a plethora of existing facilities and services meant to enhance or assist the lives of its citizens. These services can be broken into discrete categories, and the location of the various existing facilities is shown on the Community Facilities map. Churches and synagogues (as illustrated on the map) will not be discussed in this report. However, it is important to be aware of their presence in the Town, and it is especially interesting to note the high concentration of religious facilities in the Pearl River area.

¹ Information based on the Rockland County 1994 Data Book and correspondence recorded to date with a variety of community service providers, including school, library, police, fire, and ambulance representatives. Additional information is anticipated, particularly relating to schools and fire protection services.

² The facilities and services of Orangetown's Parks and Recreation Department are addressed in a separate report.

A. Administrative

The Town Board consists of five members, including the Town Supervisor, and is the legislative body for the Town. The Town Supervisor is both the chief executive officer and chief financial officer, and oversees all Town departments. The Director of Finance is appointed by the Town Supervisor, while the Town Board collectively appoints a Town Assessor, Town Attorney, and Town Engineer.³ Other boards include the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), the Architecture and Community Appearance Board, and the Historic Areas Board of Review.

The Superintendent of Highways, Town Clerk, Receiver of Taxes, and the Town Justices are elected positions. Other municipal departments and positions that serve the Town include the Personnel Department, the Highway Department, the Department of Environmental Management and Engineering (also known as the Sewer Department), the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Office of Building, Zoning, and Planning Administration and Enforcement. The latter three (Engineering, Parks, and Planning) have a major role in formulating comprehensive plan recommendations, along with the Town Board, the Planning Board, and to a lesser extent the ZBA, the Architecture and Community Appearance Board, and the Historic Areas Board of Review. There are also committees and advisory boards that work in conjunction with the above, including those focusing on open space and recreation. Local government services can be found throughout the Town, although most are centralized at the Town Hall in Orangeburg.

Orangetown is serviced by United Water New York (United Water Resources is the parent company). Orange and Rockland Utilities supplies electricity and natural gas to all of Rockland County. The Town has its own sewer district, with a treatment plant located in Orangeburg, adjacent to the Rockland County plant. The Orangetown Sewer Department operates and maintains a wastewater collection and treatment facility for the Town, in addition to transporting and treating wastewater from the Villages of Nyack, Upper Nyack, South Nyack, Grand View, and Piermont. The facility also transports and treats sewerage from portions of the boroughs of Rockleigh and Old Tappan in New Jersey.⁴ Infrastructure issues will be addressed in a separate memorandum, prepared by M.G. McLaren PC Consulting Engineers.

³ Town of Orangetown Official Statement, General Obligation Serial Bonds Document, December 2000.

⁴ Information from the Town of Orangetown's website (www.orangetown.com).

B. Public Safety

A vital component in community service, public safety departments have a strong presence in all the hamlets of Orangetown. An inventory of specific districts and the areas they serve is provided below.

1. Police

The entire Town is served by the Orangetown Police Department, and to some extent, by the Orangetown Auxiliary Police (unpaid volunteers used mainly for traffic detail, but who also perform other duties, such as vacant house checks), the Rockland County Sheriff's Office, the Palisades Interstate Park Police, and the New York State Police. The current police force consists of 90 sworn officers, 8 civilian dispatchers, 5 civilian clerk/stenographers and about 40 auxiliary police officers.⁵ The Orangetown Police Department, in conjunction with the Clarkstown Police Department, also serves the Village of Nyack; the Department maintains a substation in Nyack. The Town Police Department is located in Town Hall in Orangeburg, and there is also a police booth in Pearl River. The locations of the three stations are shown on the Community Facilities map.

2. Fire Districts

As shown on the Service Districts map, there are five fire districts within the unincorporated Town. Each hamlet has its own fire service, except for Palisades and Sparkill, that share one fire company. The hamlet of Upper Grand View is within the Nyack fire district, and so is served by its fire company. All the companies listed below are volunteer fire companies.

Pearl River

The fire companies that serve the hamlet of Pearl River are the Pearl River Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 and the Excelsior Fire Engine Company.

Orangeburg

Orangeburg is serviced by the Orangeburg Volunteer Fire Association and the Orangeburg Fire Department.

Tappan

The Volunteer Fire Association of Tappan provides fire protection for the hamlet of Tappan.

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Information from the Orangetown Police Department's website (www.orangetownpd.com).

Sparkill

The hamlets of Palisades and Sparkill share fire protection services, and are both served by the John Paulding Engine Company No.1.

Blauvelt

The Blauvelt Volunteer Fire Company provides fire protection to the hamlet of Blauvelt.

The Blauvelt Volunteer Fire Company has provided some detailed information regarding its facilities and anticipated planning issues. The Company provides fire protection to four square miles within the hamlet of Blauvelt. This four square mile area encompasses over 1600 homes and 200 businesses, and has a population of over 5,000 people. The Company is composed of fifty-two (52) volunteer members who responded to 222 alarms last year, with an average response time of 4 to 5 minutes. The Company operates two 2,000 gallon-a-minute pumpers, a mini-attack pumper, a heavy rescue truck, and a manpower transport vehicle. The Fire Department has an impressive fire station on Western Highway in the Blauvelt hamlet center. Within the past decade the Company has experienced a drop in volunteers while concurrently responding to more alarm calls. There are award and incentive programs currently in place to attract and retain volunteers. Additional information from the fire companies that serve the other hamlets is anticipated.

3. Ambulance Districts

There are two volunteer ambulance districts that encompass the entire Town, as seen on the Service Districts map. The volunteer ambulance corps that serve the Town are the South Orangetown Ambulance Corps and the Pearl River Alumni Ambulance Corps. There is also the not-for-profit Rockland Paramedics, Inc., formed through Good Samaritan Hospital and Nyack Hospital, that provides emergency medical service to the towns of Clarkstown, Ramapo, Orangetown, and Tuxedo (in Orange County).

C. School System

Orangetown is served by four school districts: South Orangetown Central School District, Nanuet Union Free School District, Pearl River Union Free School District, and the Nyack Union Free School District. The school districts are outlined below, and the schools that are within the boundaries of the Town are shown on the Community Facilities map.

1. Public School Districts

The **South Orangetown Central School District** spans approximately 22 square miles and covers portions of the villages and hamlets of Blauvelt, Grand View, Orangeburg, Palisades, Piermont, Sparkill, and Tappan. The district is comprised of six schools: Tappan Zee High School, Tappan Zee Elementary School, South Orangetown Middle School, Cottage Lane Elementary School, William O. Schaefer Elementary School, and the

South Orangetown Early Childhood Program⁶ (formerly the Palisades School Early Childhood Program). The total district population as of October of 2000 was 3,096 students.

The **Pearl River Union Free School District** covers most of the hamlet of Pearl River and portions of Orangeburg and Tappan, and parts of the Town of Clarkstown (West Nyack and Nanuet). There are five schools within the district: Pearl River Middle School, Pearl River High School, Franklin Avenue Elementary School, Evans Park Elementary School, and Lincoln Avenue Elementary School. The total district population for the 2000/2001 school year was 2,510 students. The total budget for the district was \$35,050,000, with a per pupil expenditure of \$13,964.

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The enrollment of the Palisades School-Early Childhood Program moved to William O. Schaefer Elementary School in the 2000/2001 school year.

Afd The **Nanuet Union Free School District** is the smallest district in Rockland County. It includes portions of Pearl River and the villages and hamlets of West Nyack, Nanuet, and Spring Valley. There are four schools: George W. Miller Elementary School, Highview Elementary School, A. MacArthur Barr Middle School, and Nanuet Senior High School. The total district population for the 1999/2000 school year was 2,031 students.⁷

The **Nyack Union Free School District** contains the villages of Upper Nyack, Nyack, and South Nyack, and the hamlets of Central Nyack, Valley Cottage, and Upper Grand View. Upper Grand View is the only portion of Orangetown unincorporated covered by the district. There are five schools: Valley Cottage Elementary School, Upper Nyack Elementary School, Liberty Elementary School, Nyack Middle School, and Nyack High School. The total district population as of December 2000 was 2,974 students. The 2000-2001 budget for the district is \$46,216,409.

Initial meetings and discussions with school district officials focused on issues relating to increasing enrollments (although some see kindergarten enrollments leveling off) and related space problems, and the increasing cost of educating students given contemporary needs, state mandates, etc.

2. Colleges

For a Town of approximately 33,000 people (unincorporated), Orangetown is home to a large number of colleges and universities (as shown on the Community Facilities map), with many of them located in and around the hamlet of Orangeburg. Iona College-Rockland Campus, Dominican College, Long Island University-Rockland Campus, and the New York University School of Social Work are all in Orangeburg. Additional colleges in the unincorporated sections of the Town are the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory (part of Columbia University) in Palisades, and St. Thomas Aquinas College in Sparkill. Nyack College is partially located within the Town and partially within the Village of South Nyack.

D. Libraries

The public libraries serving Orangetown are the Blauvelt Free Library, the Orangeburg Library, the Palisades Free Library, the Pearl River Public Library, and the Tappan Library. All of these libraries are part of the Ramapo-Catskill Library System (RCLS). This system covers a four-county area (Rockland County, Orange County, Sullivan County, and South Ulster County), and is comprised of 53 individual libraries and one reading center. A RCLS card can be used at any of the libraries within the system. The largest library in Orangetown is the Pearl River Public Library.

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This number includes special education students.

There is no library for the hamlet of Sparkill, but residents pay into the Palisades library district, and so often patronize that library. All of the Town's libraries have had either expansions or renovations within the past ten years. Their locations can be seen on the Community Facilities map.

E. Senior Services

County departments and programs for senior citizens include Meals on Wheels of Rockland County, Inc., the Rockland County Office for the Aging, the Institute for Senior Education at Rockland Community College (a service of Rockland County Office for the Aging), and various senior centers around Rockland County.

Orangetown houses the Pearl River Senior Center and Sparkill/Thorpe Senior Center (both sponsored by Meals on Wheels of Rockland County, Inc.). There are senior residences within Orangetown (but no nursing homes): Dowling Gardens in Sparkill (which shares grounds with Thorpe Village, an Assisted Living facility) is a 111 unit Assisted Living facility, and Palisades Gardens Foundations, Inc. in Palisades is a Supportive Housing facility. Both facilities house elderly residents with a wide range of ability, and provide assistance (social, medical, etc.) when they require it. In addition, a 131 unit Assisted Living facility (also known as the Claire Bridge Development) is presently being constructed in phases across from Blue Hill Plaza in Pearl River. Orangetown also has seven senior citizen clubs dispersed throughout the Town to provide easy access for many senior residents. These clubs meet for trips, speakers, and general socialization.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION, PRELIMINARY

Based upon demographic studies, the population of Orangetown is expected to remain relatively stable through the year 2020. However, a dramatic rise in the senior population is expected throughout that same time period, increasing the need for certain types of services and facilities (Rockland County Department of Planning, 1995, Saccardi & Schiff, Inc., 2000). The youth population of Orangetown is also projected to increase during that time, but the percentage is slight in comparison to the senior population's large increase. Based upon these demographic findings, the following section identifies possible issues within each area of community service.

A. Municipal

Since there will be a distinct increase in the number of seniors in the coming years, municipal services will need to adjust to this. There will be an increased demand for senior housing and services aimed at seniors, including Town and government-sponsored social and recreation programs. However, the overall level of municipal service provision may not need to be increased, since the population of the Town is projected to remain relatively stable through the early part of the twenty-first century.

B. Public Safety

Since the population of the Town is expected to remain relatively stable, this means that there will likely be little need for an increase in man-power for the police and fire departments, and ambulance corps, if the present level of service is satisfactory. However, both fire departments and ambulance corps have a need for additional volunteers, and an increase in volunteer staff would be favorable regardless of the population projection, but increasing numbers of seniors are less likely to create a significant pool of additional volunteers. It is also important to remember that the type of service provided to an older population differs from the service provided to a younger population, especially in terms of police and ambulatory needs, and this will have to be taken into consideration.

C. School System

According to both national statistics and some information provided by the school districts serving the children of Orangetown, the school-age population is expected to slow its explosive growth within the next few years. This may mean that there will be less demand placed upon the existing schools and the services they provide. Presently the school districts report that services to both students and the surrounding community are “maxed out”. Perhaps a stabilization of the school-age population will help the districts recuperate from the past years of ever-increasing enrollments. Other issues that could play an important role in the future of the Town’s schools are a diversification of the student population, the proliferation of technology, and fiscal issues and costs associated with all of the above.

The type of residential development anticipated over the next few years will directly affect the school districts. Single-family homes, the principal housing type in Orangetown, typically generates more costs than revenues for the school districts. Multi-family housing, particularly senior housing, generates few or no school-age children, and results in significant tax revenues for the schools. Non-residential development is even more beneficial from a fiscal perspective.

D. Library System

All the libraries in Orangetown have undergone either renovations or expansions within the past decade. Yet, certain branches report a need for further expansion. In terms of services, an increase in the older population does not drastically affect the library; it has been noted that older patrons prefer the more “traditional” library services, while the younger populations favor increased

technology. However, an older population does have special needs in terms of library service: there would likely be an increase in demand for large-print books, books on tape, and other library services aimed at an aging population.

E. Senior Services

Presently there are a variety of services provided, including health care, employment services, social services, and social, cultural and recreational programs. Facilities and services that may be expected to increase their level and quantity of provision due to the projected rise in senior population are utility/energy assistance programs, public transportation services (like Transport of Rockland (TOR) and TRIPS—Transportation Resources Intra-County for Physically Handicapped and Senior Citizens, Inc.—the shared ride mini-bus service), medical and long-term care programs, food assistance programs, employment and volunteer programs, housing programs, and social, cultural, and recreation services. Additional housing opportunities for seniors will also be needed.