



May 4, 2020

## Greetings

Over the last several days, you may have heard or seen various concerns expressed by Sullivan County Commissioners about the building used by the State as the Superior Courthouse as well as the Newport Opera House.

The Town has been working hard to address many of the complex issues that have arisen out of decades-old agreements and practices involving our respective properties here in Newport. It has indeed been a challenge to unravel the past in a manner that will serve the future needs of our community.

While that process continues, the Town did want to address several of the topics raised by the County.

Please rest assured that the Town remains committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities have proper access to the Newport Opera House. This has been a topic of concern regularly raised by the Town. We recognize the importance of this objective to both our residents and to the many persons from Sullivan County (and beyond) that enjoy visiting our beloved Opera House.

Along these lines, the Town has always been ready and willing to fairly compensate the County for all costs associated with providing public access to the elevator. We have asked for, and are still waiting for, the County to provide the Town with specific information as to the daily costs associated with this equipment including its replacement, maintenance and ongoing operation. As we have told the County on numerous occasions, the Town would be pleased to reimburse the County for these costs proportional to its use by the Town, the Opera House or Schools.

As to the rental of the Town Hall/Opera House property, the Town's position remains unchanged: the Town would be pleased, as has been said many times, to continue the practices relating to the mutually beneficial leasing, expense and revenue-sharing that have been in place since the 90's - if that is the County's preference.

Lastly, as it relates to our collective efforts to untangle the complexities posed by old land documents, the Town remains committed to addressing those issues in a professional and equitable manner – as illustrated by our efforts over the past 2 years with direct negotiations and our initiating a mediation process. The County is right that it takes two sides to get a deal done. Given Town efforts attempting to find creative solutions that would work for both sides, our email to the County last month expressed disappointment that, based on the County's position, further mediation did not seem worthwhile. We did not, however, close the door to future discussion.

The Town continues to be committed to serving the collective best interests of our residents and looks forward to the day when these challenging issues going back decades are resolved.