

Barbara Borsack

Village Preservation Society of East Hampton 2020 Village Board Candidates Questionnaire 2

March 20, 2020

1. Residential neighborhoods are feeling the impact of frequent short term rentals via Air B'n'B and VRBO among other social media outlets. The Village Code regulates single family residence shortterm rentals to two two-week periods in any year. Would you use this provision to regulate Air B'n'B and VRBO? If not, why not? If so, how would you enforce this regulation?

I am also concerned about this trend, which is basically turning our residential neighborhoods into hotel zoning. I support the creation of a new position in the code enforcement department who would be focused on scanning short-term rental sites online to find residences that are being used for this purpose. I also support creating an intermunicipal agreement with the town's rental registry which would give us yet another tool to for compliance and I have been researching how other communities are dealing with the short term rental issue. I was recently in Savannah and did some research there about their process. We are not alone in trying to deal with this issue. I am going to try to find some new approaches to take to our Planning and Zoning Committee to see what else we can do to combat this new trend.

2. The Village Comprehensive Plan, which helps to guide development in the Village was adopted in 2002. As adopted, the Village agreed with a key recommendation to produce a new Comprehensive Plan by 2022. What is your position on updating the Plan? And, if so, what specific recommendations would you seek to include in this update?

I totally support updating the Comprehensive Plan that will address new challenges we face as a community. As a member of (and original chair of) the 2002 plan I know how to manage this process by involving residents and stakeholders to address important planning issues and adopt a working plan.

Any new plan must place a strong emphasis on waste water treatment and water quality issues as well as a continued focus on the delicate balance between commercial and residential needs in the village.

I believe we need to protect our residents who surround the commercial and non-conforming properties from the excessive noise, traffic, and other issues that are in evidence to all of us.

3. Deer tick bites often come with other co-infections like babesiosis, ehrlichiosis, tularemia, etc. In our area, there are more Lone Star ticks than deer ticks yielding greater numbers of the alpagal meat allergy & ehrlichiosis cases. We have more ticks than ever and Lyme is still the number one tick-borne infection in the country. What do you propose to control the tick disease epidemic?.

This past fall the Village contracted with Woods & Waves Management which runs a program which seeks to expand the currently allowed hunting under permit from us and seeks permission to hunt on private and public properties in the Village. This is for bow hunting and they use only expert bow hunters. They hope to expand the program for next year. They will be giving the village board a report in April.



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4. The Village Preservation Society has been concerned about the growing deer population in the Village and its surrounds. Deer are a scientifically accepted vector in the spread of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses. Several years ago, the Society proposed sterilization for the Village as middle ground to doing nothing or a baited cull. What do you propose to control the deer population? Do you endorse culling? Do you endorse sterilization?

I would like to see us give the new program as described in the previous answer an opportunity to work. I believe we will have positive results from this quiet way of dealing with a difficult issue as both Sagaponack and North Haven have been using this program and are very pleased with the result after a few years. They have seen a significant reduction in the deer population. We are optimistic that we will see similar results.

5. Aircraft noise is a big quality of life issue for Village residents, as well as communities all over the East End. How do you propose to address aircraft noise impacts on Village residents? When legally possible, what is your position on closing the airport?

Noise from helicopter and jet traffic is having a significant negative impact on many residents of the village and is threatening many residents' peaceful enjoyment of their homes. Since the airport is owned by the Town of East Hampton and regulated by the FAA, the Village can advocate for changes that mitigate these negative impacts. I am also concerned about the impact closing the airport would have on village residents who utilize it, but would not rule out supporting its closure if the noise cannot be significantly reduced.,

6. What role, if any, does local zoning play in relationship to nitrogen loading and other challenges to ground and surface water purity? What will you do to monitor and protect our water resources? What is your position on dredging Town Pond?

I am happy to say that we are on schedule to dredge Town Pond this fall (2020) after putting together a very good plan to accomplish this and securing the necessary permits to do so. The removal of sediment along with the new bioswale installed by the Village along the village green will effectively reduce nitrogen and phosphorous runoff and improve water quality in Town Pond and Hook Pond.

We continue to monitor our ponds and work with the Town Trustees and the Friends of Georgica Pond Foundation to improve water quality. We have already installed filters for storm water runoff and installed signs and pet waste disposal gloves for the use around the ponds. We have legislated a stricter code than the town's for the requirement to install new IA nitrogen reducing systems for all new construction, including significant additions of 25% or more to existing buildings. I would like to see additional legislation to control landscaping and fertilization surrounding the ponds as well.

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7. The Village has long served as the cultural, commercial, educational and religious center of Town. The congestion these uses create can have a negative impact on the quality of life for Village residents. What steps would you take to mitigate this problem?

I recently began the process of creating a Joint Village/Town Traffic Task Force to look at ways that we can work regionally to deal with traffic. This task force will be looking at potential public transportation systems for the heavily trafficked months, as well as looking at various intersections and bottlenecks around the area. The recent work done at Buell Lane-Route 114-Toilsome Lane is a great example of what municipalities can achieve when working together to solve some of the most difficult problems areas.

The Village Board recently approached the NYSDOT requesting a speed reduction on Main Street and we were denied. However I would like to work with our assemblyman's office to see how we can further pressure the state to lower the speed on that corridor, which is controlled by the state. I have a good working relationship with Fred Thiele and I work best when problem solving with a group of dedicated people.

8. Widening the Stephen Hands Path trestle, has long been on the VPS LIRR wish list. Renovating that trestle would route truck traffic around the Village, particularly as trucks heading north on both North Main St and Accabonac Rd, are headed into the northern reaches of Town. What will you do to address this issue for Village residents?

This issue has also been broached a number of times by the Village and the Town and the answer is always that there are no bridge strikes/accidents there (or very few) and because of the curvature of the road in that area it would be an expensive project. I don't believe it's impossible (based on discussions with qualified people) and would like to continue putting pressure on the MTA (in conjunction with town and state officials) to accomplish the widening of the road there and the raising of the bridge. This is a matter of money to the MTA and I feel that will all the MTA taxes we pay on the east end we get little in return. We deserve more.

9. Our communities are particularly vulnerable to coastal erosion, sea level rise and extreme weather events. While Village beaches are included in the Town-wide coastal area resiliency study, we are very much an add-on. Would you have the Village fund a study of Village dunes and beaches to assess their condition? What use would you make of the results of such a study?

The Town's coastal erosion resiliency study includes both private and public property and the entire village-wide shoreline. It will do a village-wide assessment, looking at village codes and regulations and the vulnerability of village assets. This is the perfect example of the type of "shared services" we want to collaborate with the Town on. The town is paying \$200,000 for this study and our portion is only \$13,000. This is a well planned exercise and should produce good results for us. While the shoreline within the village has been relatively stable, this will change in the future as sea levels rise. The village and Stony Brook University monitor storm surges from gauges along the oceanfront. The Village supports the Town Trustees dredging at Georgica Pond and the reuse of the dredged sand being placed along the village oceanfront.

Once the study is complete we will be able to use the results to address deficiencies in the code as it stands now to further protect our shoreline through zoning and other legislation.



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10. With McMansions scattered in neighborhoods with more modest homes, how should neighborhood character be treated within the zoning code? Is it desirable to achieve a balance and how would you do so under zoning?

I believe that we need to protect our residential neighborhoods and preserve their unique character. We have made a number of changes in the past few years to address this issue but I agree that more needs to be done. I think increasing set-backs and addressing height issues may be part of this solution and look forward to working with our Village Planner to see how we can do that.

11. What businesses do you think contribute the most to the economy of the Village? What steps would you take to encourage these businesses?

We would all love to see old-fashioned Mom & Pop stores return to our village business district. Businesses that provide goods and services to our local community are essential. However, high rents, the availability of easy online shopping and big box stores make it very difficult for small business owners to survive. As someone who owns commercial property in the village I see first hand how difficult it is to find tenants even with reasonable rents. This is not a problem unique to East Hampton - every other community is struggling with the same issue.

I will look to find a way to incentivize businesses to stay open all year and have spent a good deal of time discussing this issue with other people to try to find solutions. We as a municipality cannot control rents. But again, now that we have a full time planner on staff I look forward to working with him and along with our village lawyer (both these former part-time positions were made full-time under my tenure) to continue to explore the ways that other communities are dealing with the issue.

12. Village residents remain concerned about the way PSEG-LI commandeered the public right of way to replace utility poles with larger, more toxic versions of what had been there for 60 years, allegedly to strengthen storm resistance, when it is clear that burying the lines is the proper solution. How will you negotiate the 'monster pole' issue? Please be specific.

Unfortunately public utilities were given rights when they first came into East Hampton, long before any of us were around. They own certain right-of-ways and we are limited in terms of what we can and can't do. I asked our village attorney last year if we couldn't legislate that any future upgrading or significant repair work on utilities would require them to be buried. I was advised that this would probably not stand up in court but I am still willing to take that chance and take the stand that our neighborhoods have had enough. I personally look out onto some of the largest utility poles in the village and I know how ugly they are. Our former mayor was not interested in this fight but I am and will continue to do my best to protect all my neighbors from this blight.

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12. Enforcement of laws that govern inappropriate signage, contractor parking on roadsides that rut the grasses and kill native plants, have a direct impact on Village residential life. How will your administration work to better enforce existing regulations to prevent this type of degradation to neighborhood character? What will you do to ensure that the Public Works Department is responsive to repairing this damage?

This points back to the issue of enforcement and as I referenced in my prior answer I would like to see our code enforcement department increased to handle short term rentals and this would be another of their specific charges. I know that our lack of office space is an issue but I agree that code enforcement is a priority and will continue to work on this. Our DPW can also use additional man-power.

That said, this year, under our current circumstances may not be the year for the budget to take on new salaried positions. Until we see how our present shut-downs are going to affect our income we cannot over-extend ourselves and must be fiscally smart. As the months go by we shall see what happens and if the money is there we can make these decisions even after the budget is approved in June. The Village fiscal year begins in August so we are carefully monitoring things at this point. I don't want to promise something I can't deliver immediately. But I will tell you this has been one of my priorities.

13. Many Village streets have very poor drainage, especially in the western area. What will you do to address this?

Our Highway Superintendent is addressing that presently. Many drains have been filling up and are at capacity with debris and therefore not taking care of run off appropriately. They expect to have all the storm drains cleaned out and working to capacity this spring.

Unfortunately the State has not been maintaining their drains and that is contributing to the problem. But our drains will be clean and we will continue to put pressure on the state to take care of theirs as soon as possible. We will see a difference this year.

14. What is your approach to public participation in government?

I have always been a consensus builder and working with committees and stakeholder groups is one of my strongest attributes. I am most effective when I can problem solve with others and believe strongly in a resident-driven government.