

February 18, 2022

Greetings Town Board Members,

I am reaching out to you today to introduce a “citizens engagement” initiative I have just launched in our community. I’ve named it “Build.In.Kind/East Hampton.”

I had a letter to the editor in yesterday’s edition of the East Hampton Star about it, and I have also “gone live” with an information website www.buildinkind.com if any of you are interested in more information about the goals and objectives.

As I think most of you know, I have serious concerns about the impact of the ongoing increase in pace and scale of development and redevelopment in our Town. Many of the comments I make before you at public Town Board sessions reflect this issue. Moreover, I have penned about half a dozen other letters to the Star since the second half of 2021 to express my views, address the concerns and to build some awareness among other citizens.

Mr. Supervisor, you’ve also heard me in my role on the Amagansett Citizens Advisory Committee brief the group monthly about specific development projects and trends in our Hamlet. (To be clear, the work I am doing on Build.In.Kind is as an individual citizen and not in any way a part of or representing ACAC.)

Over the last year+ I have “geeked out” and watched nearly every EH Town Board meeting as well as all public sessions of the ZBA, Planning Board, and Architectural Review Board—and a number EH Trustee and EH Village Board meetings for good measure. And I am working my way through building a basic understanding of Town Code Chapter 255.

I, like so many other residents, have concerns about the airport and the effects of its maddening, soul-crushing, non-stop “in season” traffic, as well as about the yawning deficit of affordable housing options for residents, challenges to public beach access, environmental/sustainability challenges, water quality, traffic, loss of rural authenticity and other quality of life issues.

I know the Board is working hard and in good faith to tackle these individual issues and more. But a “first principles” analysis tell us that really, these are not “individual” issues or singular, stand-alone problems—none of them have sprung up in a vacuum. All of them trace back to the root cause of overdevelopment...the pace and scope of what has been done, over the last five years especially, and what continues unabated is the cause and/or the primary compounding factor common to all of them.

It is my view that though we might find and implement some “fixes” for our problems, ultimately, we won’t resolve them sustainably and in whole without finding a way to re-envision and evolve how land is developed and used across East Hampton.

So now that I have read and watched and written and commented, I am inspired to act.

First off, this action involves forming a working group of individuals drawn from all our Hamlets to (a) help to rethink Town zoning code strategically and tactically in a way that builds upon its historical validity and addresses the new reality, and to deliver a related set of tangible recommendations; and (b) engage and educate as well as advocate and advise appropriately our town boards, committees, and departments as well as citizens, homeowners, and visitors.

In this note to you all, in addition to simply introducing this initiative, I want to reiterate that my aim here is to be thoughtful and constructive and that this group will work with –and not in conflict or opposition to – all our committed and hardworking town boards, departments and committees. Also, I want to stress that this is NOT meant to be “political” in nature. My intent not only is that this group effort will enhance Town-wide awareness and dialogue, help to synthesize an array of different perspectives, and build unity around the topic of development and zoning code evolution, but also, that it will yield insightful analysis, creative thinking, and tangible problem-solving ideas for the Town to consider and implement.

I would indeed love to hear any input or questions you might have about this project. And as always, I am thankful to you for your work and appreciate the opportunity to share my views and ideas with you all.

Sincerely,
Jaine