

Belleayre Resort offers a balanced solution to community sustainability

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The downsized Belleayre Resort Project, as currently presented, offers the investment and economic growth opportunities crucial to the sustainability of our community.

I consider myself fortunate to have grown up, maintained employment, and had the opportunity to raise a family here in the Margaretville area. Having traveled both for business needs and for pleasure, there are many locations around the country that are nice to visit. However, none which provide the lure of returning back home to the Catskill Mountains. For those of us who live here year around, make this community our second home, or simply desire the Catskills as a favorite place to visit, we each share a special attraction to the natural beauty and solitude offered by the mountains.

As much as I love and appreciate this area, the depressed state of our region has certainly dampened my outlook, reduced its social vibrancy, and presented numerous financial challenges in managing a local business. Gone are the days of bustling villages with softball leagues, thriving restaurants, movie theaters, and the other amenities found in flourishing communities. Not only are we impacted by the slump in the global economy, many of the social and personal growth opportunities essential for community sustainment are rapidly disappearing.

We have been preserving the area

One of the main impediments to inviting crucial investment dollars into our region are the numerous environmental restrictions which have substantially reduced the opportunities for economic advancement and hamstrung our ability to grow and prosper. Not to be hypocritical, many of these restrictions have helped to preserve the precious resources and beauty of the region, which is a major attraction to our area. However, what is notably absent is a balanced approach to support economic development critical to insure the sustainability of our local economy, tax base, and availability of the amenities so essential to the vibrancy of our community.

The population of Delaware County has declined sharply over the past few years, which is a strong indication that the lack of employment is forcing the working class to leave our community in search of opportunities elsewhere. As our professionals and craft people leave in search of jobs, they take their families with them, resulting in a declining enrollment of children in our local schools. Referring to the vibrancy in a community, children are the livelihood in a community and their absence is a key indicator to a decaying and threatened community.

In addition to the exodus of young people, the lack of growth potential, prosperity, and the convenience of amenities found in other rural communities has dangerously impacted our ability to attract experienced people back into the region necessary to fill the few skilled job opportunities which remain. Furthermore, let's not forget the fire departments, ambulance crews, volunteer organizations, and other essential support services, which are struggling to find enough young, able-bodied people to provide many of the services for which we all depend.

Remarkable opportunity

The downsized Belleayre Resort Project as presented provides a remarkable opportunity to reverse the spiraling downturn in the economic health of our community. This significant investment will reestablish the balance needed in support of our local economy to offset the effects of our strict environmental development requirements with an environmentally friendly resort facility promoting the outdoor activities (skiing, golf, hiking, etc) already a key component to our fragile economy. In an area starved for investment and sensitive to environmental concerns, the idea of a resort facility promoting eco-friendly outdoor activities is a natural fit. Consolidating development into one area versus the past practices of breaking up farmland into five-acre lots seems far more appealing and eco-friendly to me. I am convinced that after years and years of exhaustive reviews, additional time, money, and resources spent on repetitive project reviews is a significant waste of taxpayer dollars.

The estimates for job creation at the resort itself tell only part of the story. The real benefit will be the growth in visitors to the area, which if only a small percentage wander into the neighboring communities, will have a dramatic impact on existing businesses. This in turn will facilitate new business start-ups striving to provide the amenities, which have disappeared in recent years.

For the benefit of our community, let the spirit of unselfish compromise prevail and support the Belleayre Resort Project as a critically needed economic investment opportunity essential for the overall sustainability of our community!

How do you feel
about the
Belleayre Resort?