

'Project' is needed for area's turnaround

By Todd Pascarella,
Mayor of Fleischmanns

The "Project." It's practically a four-letter word when uttered in the Catskills these days. Fifteen years after first being proposed, the Belleayre Resort saga has become the embodiment of everything that is *wrong* and *right* with modern society.

Wrong because it is another wedge issue among what seems to be an ever growing list of political wedge issues polarizing us.

Right because a true compromise was reached several years ago between the promoters and detractors which in good faith solved the problems causing the fighting and provided for a way forward.

Wrong because delay tactics and bureaucracy may yet extinguish the only solution to our region's economic woes: A very large investment in the local tourism industry.

Right because despite the 15-year stalemate, a free country with a free market system and free enterprise still appears poised to prevail and put our economic engines back at full throttle once again, if we only can get out of its way.

Let's get it moving

My opinion about the "Project" is that it should move forward as soon as possible, assuming all regulatory obligations are met. The site for this project is in one of the most well protected watersheds of the most powerful city, in one of the most environmentally responsible and strictly regulated states, in a country with some of the most stringent national environmental standards on earth.

If the developers of this project have indeed addressed the regulations of all of the different agencies, then I see no reason why at this point we as a community should not unite and rally behind its construction. In fact, what a great opportunity to share in some long-awaited regional progress this is. If we do not, in my opinion, we are tacitly allowing the economic self destruction of our area to proceed. We would have no one to blame for that but ourselves.

The current course is bleak. Put yourself in the shoes right now of someone who truly can not find adequate work locally, if of course, you're not already wearing them. Maybe this is not easy because you are retired and collecting a nice pension or are fortunate enough to have a decent job, which is well and good but really, put yourself in someone else's situation for a minute. You have to raise a young family but part-time low wage work, if you are lucky to come across it, doesn't make ends meet. There literally are no job opportunities coming, in fact, people you know are still losing their jobs. You very well may have turned to government assistance to feed your family and you are frustrated because you would rather earn that money yourself through hard work.

Not many jobs here

Any real hope of finding a job likely requires leaving the area. Would you pick up and move? Would you move a young family to here from elsewhere given the lack of jobs available? In fact most young folks do leave in search of jobs, and few move here because of the lack of work. Can you blame them?

Now picture hundreds of new job opportunities on the mountain, fully built, fully realized. Do you decide to stay now? Can you see yourself applying for a job and moving your family here from an hour away because now there is better opportunity here than anywhere around? Is it fair for you to somehow be denied this opportunity?

Do you see why we so badly need a "Project" like this to "Save" our future?