

# The HIGHLANDS Current



Hollywood Does Philipstown  
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## Putnam Visitors' Bureau Disappears

*County considers hiring its own tourism director*

By Chip Rowe

The Putnam County Visitors' Bureau unexpectedly shut down earlier this month after the county placed an ad for a new executive director — allegedly without telling the bureau it was looking for one.

County Attorney Jennifer Bumgarner on July 10 told legislators that she had been notified by the state that the Visitors' Bureau had attempted to return \$68,000 in grant money and said in its cover letter it was closing shop.

Further, Bumgarner said, the website at [visitputnam.org](http://visitputnam.org) was taken offline (the

bureau's social media accounts remain, with a post to Facebook as recently as July 3); an email sent to Executive Director Bruce Conklin bounced; and, when she walked over to the agency's office on the third floor of the county office building in Carmel, she found it had been cleared out and the keys left on a desk.

"There's been no formal notification to anyone that this is what they were doing," she said.

On Monday (July 15), Kevin Callahan, the chair of the board that oversaw the nonprofit agency, issued a statement on

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**FREEDOM FIGHTERS** — More than 350 Revolutionary War re-enactors descended on the Stony Point battlefield on July 13 and 14 to commemorate the July 16, 1779, taking of the garrison from the British by colonial troops armed only with bayonets. For more photos, see Page 19. Photo by Ross Corsair

## A Tight Squeeze

*Beacon council to address parking, congestion on Main*

By Jeff Simms

With success often come challenges and, in Beacon, that may be evident on Main Street more than anywhere else.

It's on Main — the city's mile-long major artery — that business is thriving,

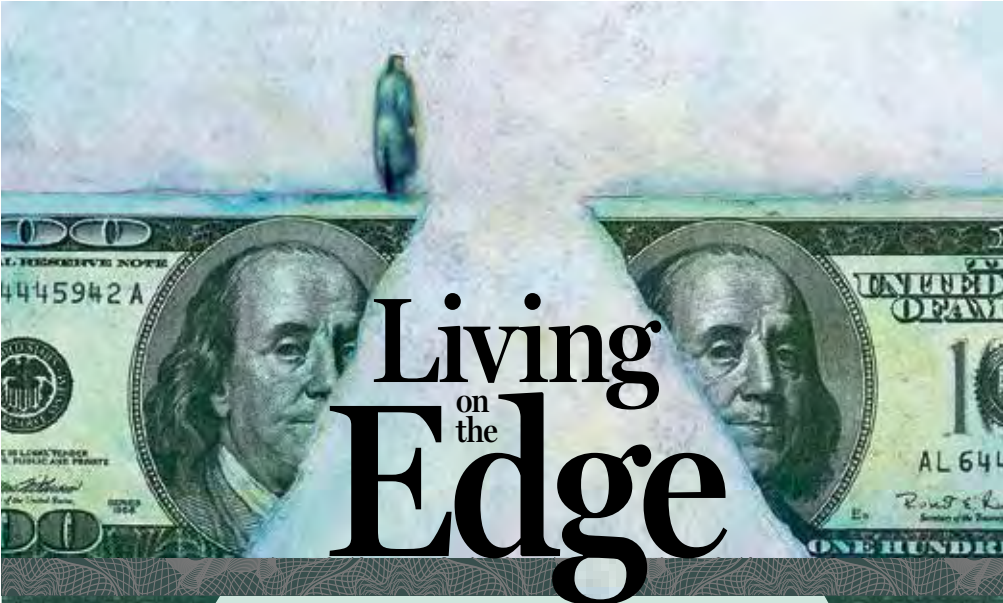
for the most part, although some shops have closed in recent months and the owners of some that remain open say rents are becoming unsustainable.

But on most weekends, and increasingly during the week, customer traffic is up considerably from a few years ago. That, too, has led to challenges.

Parking can be scarce and, with cars on both sides of the street, there's not a lot of room — 32 to 34 feet — for two lanes of traffic, bikers, pedestrians, city buses and delivery trucks.

The City Council has Main Street on its

(Continued on Page 6)



Your car broke down.  
You're short on rent.  
You need \$400.  
Do you have it?  
In Beacon and Cold Spring,  
2 of every 5 people don't.

By Victoria Shannon

"Maggie," who has lived in Cold Spring and Garrison for more than two decades, was a well-paid health care professional until a disability struck and left her unable to work.

She now rents a house, sharing the cost with a roommate, and says she struggles to afford to stay in the area.

"I never, ever, thought I would see the day that where I couldn't go into Foodtown and purchase what I needed, as opposed to only what I have budgeted and saved for," she said

during a Saturday morning visit to the Philipstown Food Pantry at the First Presbyterian Church in Cold Spring.

Maggie agreed to share details of her financial struggles only if her real name was not used. However, she is far from alone. According to calculations by the United Way, more than 40 percent of the households in Beacon and Cold Spring live in poverty or on a "survival" budget that does not allow them to save for emergencies or goals such as college or retirement. In Nelsonville, the figure is about 35 percent, and in Philipstown, 30 percent.

(Continued on Page 11)

First in a series



# TOP 20 NEW YORK STATE OCCUPATIONS BY WAGE

Only three of the top 20 occupations — general and operations managers, accountants and auditors, and registered nurses — pay enough to support a household survival budget for a family of four, a minimum of \$34.40 per hour.

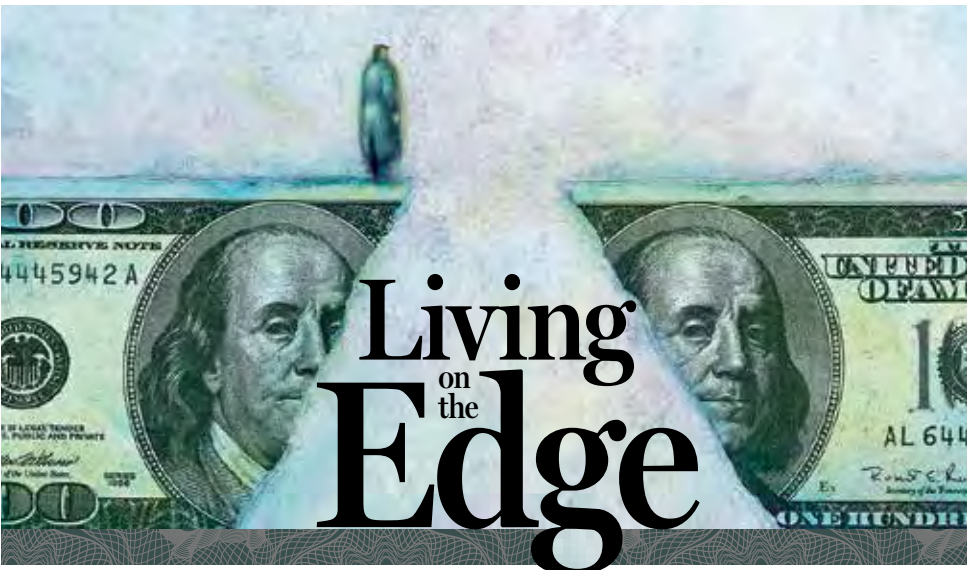
Occupation	Number of Jobs	Median Hourly Wage
Retail Salesperson	301,670	\$11.94
Personal Care Aides	199,060	\$12.49
Cashiers	197,490	\$11.46
Home Health Aides	191,820	\$11.98
Janitors and Cleaners	190,600	\$15.01
Food Prep and Service (Inc. Fast Food)	189,740	\$11.71
Office Clerks, General	189,360	\$15.70
Registered Nurses	182,490	\$41.01
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	178,520	\$19.28
Waiters and Waitresses	167,250	\$13.66
General and Operations Managers	163,250	\$62.35
Customer Service Representatives	159,010	\$18.02
Laborers and Movers, Hand	130,850	\$14.12
Teacher Assistants	123,960	\$21.76
Security Guards	118,760	\$15.40
First-Line Supervisors of Administrative Support Workers	112,510	\$31.76
Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	110,880	\$12.13
Accountants and Auditors	110,780	\$40.02
Maintenance and Repair Workers	108,050	\$20.88
Bookkeeping and Auditing Clerks	104,580	\$21.23

Source: United Way, citing Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics Wage Survey, May 2018

## HOUSEHOLD SURVIVAL BUDGETS

	PUTNAM		DUTCHESS	
	Adult	Family	Adult	Family
Monthly Costs				
Housing	\$1,293	\$1,571	\$842	\$1,271
Child Care	\$ —	\$2,375	\$ —	\$1,771
Food	\$182	\$603	\$182	\$603
Transportation	\$116	\$186	\$314	\$627
Health Care	\$196	\$727	\$196	\$727
Technology	\$55	\$75	\$55	\$75
Miscellaneous	\$231	\$671	\$195	\$606
Taxes	\$463	\$1,169	\$363	\$998
Monthly Total	\$2,536	\$7,377	\$2,147	\$6,668
ANNUAL TOTAL	\$30,432	\$88,524	\$25,764	\$80,016
Hourly Wage	\$15.22	\$44.26	\$12.88	\$40.01

Source: United Way, Alice: A Study of Financial Hardship in New York, based on 2016 data from state and federal sources. A "family" here is two adults, a toddler and an infant. For calculations for other situations, see [unitedforalice.org/new-york](http://unitedforalice.org/new-york).



(Continued from Page 1)

These households earn more than the federal poverty level but less than the basic costs of living. “These are people who if they got a sudden bill for some repair couldn’t [easily] pay it,” said Melissa Clark, director of community impact at the United Way of the Dutchess-Orange Region in Poughkeepsie.

The local figures reflect those in surveys done nationally. A study released in May by the Federal Reserve, for example, found that 27 percent of respondents would need to borrow or sell something to pay an unexpected \$400 expense, and 12 percent said they would have no way to pay.

In Cold Spring, Maggie said her life is a “constant push-and-pull over what is going to be paid each month. It’s not having the extra income for meat or fish, to eat in a healthy manner. That’s what had to be cut out immediately to economize.”

She said she began to visit the food pantry in October. “It’s helped considerably, but you have to have a thick skin.” She said it feels like she is admitting failure.

For people who are living week to week, simple pleasures — HBO, a new car, a family vacation, an espresso machine, a laptop — are beyond reach. And in many cases, life’s necessities are also unaffordable: child care, dental visits, college tuition, retirement savings.

In Dutchess County, Lorianne Mann, 56, works for minimum wage (\$11.10 an hour in New York) as a cashier at a Stop&Shop. Her husband works at AutoZone. They rent an apartment and share a car, which he usually drives to work. She takes the bus.

The couple have about \$30 in savings, she said, adding: “I’m glad we’re both working, and I’m grateful to have this job.”

When the couple were raising their three grandchildren, she didn’t work outside the home. “We struggled, but we never went on food stamps.”

Those living on the financial edge make too much to qualify for government aid but not enough to save. It’s a group that the United Way has dubbed “asset-limited, income-constrained, employed,” or ALICE. It’s not poverty, but it’s not painless.

### The cost of living

In a relatively high-cost area such as the Highlands, it takes a lot of income to get by. For a couple raising an infant and a preschooler, a “survival budget” (with no

“I can make it through the month if nothing goes wrong.”

~Participant in a focus group organized by the National Endowment for Financial Education

money saved) requires an annual salary of \$88,524 in Putnam County and \$80,016 in Dutchess, according to the United Way (see chart bottom left).

The United Way noted that only three of the top 20 occupations in New York State — general and operations managers, accountants and auditors, and registered nurses — earn enough to support a survival budget for a family of four, which requires a worker to make at least \$34.40 per hour (top left).

Compare that to the median salary for someone working in the tourism industry in Putnam: A male food service or hotel worker here makes less than \$30,000 a year, or \$14.42 per hour, according to the U.S. Census bureau. For women, the median is \$20,000.

In recreation, entertainment and the arts, which also support the Hudson Valley economy, the figure is even lower. A full-time, minimum-wage job in that category pays around \$23,000 a year here.

Most people in retail work, as well as people like mechanics, security guards, bus drivers, nurse’s aides, warehouse workers, bartenders and school teachers, if early in their careers or a single parent, find themselves in this situation. They are our clerks, cashiers and cleaners.

“It’s the people that we count on every day,” noted Joseph Czajka, senior vice president of Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, a Newburgh-based nonprofit that promotes stable growth in the region. “They’re our neighbors.”

(Continued on Page 12)



# WHAT CAUSES FRAGILITY?

## LACK OF ASSETS

Financially fragile households tend to lack assets that non-fragile households take for granted.

### HOUSE

Renting means no equity is being gained and the family is at the mercy of the rental market.

### CAR

Reliable transportation is crucial to getting and keeping a job, as well as for daily activities such as grocery shopping and doctor appointments.

### INSURANCE

Inadequate health insurance means higher out-of-pocket costs. Lack of car and home insurance can mean huge bills for repairs and maintenance.

### BANK ACCOUNTS

Lack of access to traditional financial products can lead to use of services that charge higher interest, fees and penalties.

### RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS

Without a 401(k) or IRA in which to grow it, cash that could have been invested loses buying power, thanks to inflation.

### CREDIT CARDS

Low borrowing capacity means fewer options to pay for large unexpected expenses. There is no credit safety net.

## DEBT

### MEDICAL DEBT

Unpaid bills make respondents more likely to be financially fragile.

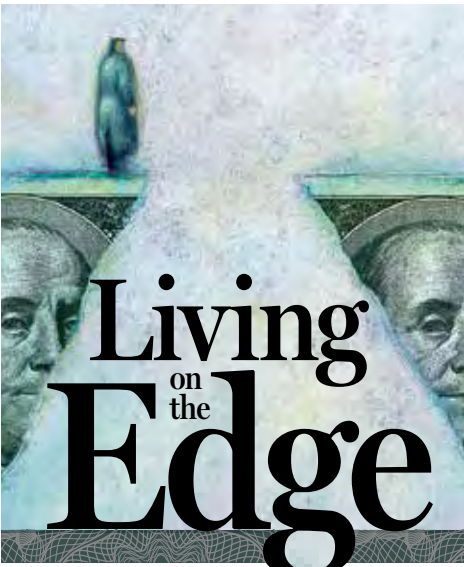
### EDUCATION DEBT

Nearly 50 percent of people with education debt have difficulty dealing with a \$400 emergency expense, versus 39 percent of those without education debt.

### CREDIT CARD DEBT

Financially fragile people tend to have limited access to credit. They are more likely to be denied credit or to receive less than they ask for.

Source: National Endowment for Financial Education (nefe.org)



(Continued from Page 11)

### Raising the children

Affordable housing in Beacon and Cold Spring has been a hot-button policy. But child care can cost a family even more, according to Clark at the United Way, “and

we’re not talking about five-star care.”

In Putnam County, the average monthly cost of day care for two children comes to \$2,375 a month, which is far more than housing (\$1,571) and more than federal and state income taxes (\$1,169), according to the United Way calculations. In Dutchess, the top expenses for a family of four are child care (\$1,771), housing (\$1,271) and taxes (\$988).

By contrast, the monthly median income at a retail job in Putnam is \$1,267 for a woman and \$2,853 for a man.

As with Lorianne Mann, the cost of child care could make a parent or guardian decide that it’s cheaper to stay home than to take a minimum-wage job.

### Medical expenses

For others, unexpected medical problems break the bank.

A couple living in eastern Dutchess County say they were blindsided by the mental health issues of their two sons.

“We were just kind of going along through life, and then, boom,” said “Leslie,” 55, who asked that her name not be used for privacy

reasons. “It paralyzes an entire family.”

She works several part-time jobs, and her husband is self-employed. Last year, they made \$54,000, she said. The major expenses include mortgage payments plus \$900 a month for health insurance with a \$6,000 deductible.

“The way we survive is we live a very simple life and don’t have any debt,” she said. “We’re workers.”

### Housing

In Putnam County, a resident needs an annual salary of at least \$125,000 to afford a home priced at the median of \$336,000, assuming a 5 percent down payment, said Czajka at Pattern for Progress.

That’s partially based on a rule of thumb that no more than 30 percent of gross income should go toward housing. If applied to a person working full time at a minimum wage of \$11.10 per hour, he or she should pay no more than \$577 a month for housing; for a couple, that would be \$1,154.

Yet the fair market rent for a one-bedroom (Continued on Page 13)

## COMING UP SHORT



A study by researchers at George Washington University funded by the National Endowment for Financial Education calculated that 41 percent of American working adults ages 25 to 60 could not come up with \$400 immediately for an unexpected expense and 36 percent could not find \$2,000 within 30 days.

“A broad cross-section of Americans of all ages are financially fragile, but middle-aged and middle-income families are surprisingly vulnerable,” it noted.

The study found that women are more vulnerable than men, that it becomes less common as incomes rise (e.g., only 20 percent of households that earn at least \$75,000 annually are considered fragile, versus 43 percent of those making less than \$50,000) and that fragility is spread equally among age groups.

It also found financial fragility to be more likely among people whose formal education ended with a high school degree or some college, those who are not married, and families with three or more children.

The researchers organized focus groups in Baltimore, Cincinnati and Austin, Texas, asking participants how they would cope with an unexpected expense (below):

Coping Mechanism	Potential Effect	Potential Secondary Effect
<b>Work more</b> , particularly if they are self-employed or control their own hours, for example, as a ride-booker driver.	Working longer hours leads to needing more child care. If free care isn’t available, this could mean paying for a babysitter, which cuts into earnings.	Working leads to fatigue and declining health. For ride-booker drivers, it also means more wear and tear on their vehicles.
<b>Use alternative financial services</b> , such as payday lenders, pawnshops and check-cashing services.	Borrowing at up to 300 percent interest triggers a cycle of loans to pay for other loans, putting the family into deeper and deeper debt.	More debt lowers credit scores, making it harder for family members to get better credit terms from traditional lenders.
<b>Borrow from family and friends.</b>	To help their adult children, aging parents borrow against their home equity at terms they can’t afford, jeopardizing the family’s only major asset.	As they approach their own retirement, the parents are forced to sell the house for a loss. They move in with their adult children, putting even more strain on the household.
<b>Sell something or cash-in assets.</b>	Taking a lump-sum payout of a 401(k) when leaving a job before age 59½ leads to paying the 10 percent early withdrawal penalty and taxes, reducing the net amount significantly.	The family has little left after paying immediate bills and is quickly back in debt — only now it does not have money growing for the future, either.



(Continued from Page 12)

apartment is \$1,057 in the area that includes Beacon and \$1,558 in the area that includes Philipstown, according to figures from the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, which advocates affordable housing.

In fact, more than 30 percent of renters in the 18th Congressional District, which includes the Highlands, are paying more than 50 percent of their income on housing and utilities, the coalition calculates, putting them in the category of what it calls “severely burdened.”

Spiral effect

When a working family is strapped, it’s not just the household that suffers. It has a spiraling effect that can strain public resources and boost tax rates.

A family that’s working most of the time trying to make ends meet may be shopping at the nearest grocery to the bus route, for instance, even if it’s more expensive, because they have no car and little free time. Or they’re making processed foods at home or stopping for fast food. Longer term, that has an effect on health.

People living on the edge “can’t afford to take care of themselves,” Czajka said, which leads to greater public health costs.

This population is also living in the cheapest rental housing, which may not get a lot of care from the property owner, so they may have old, broken or missing appliances, for instance. Or, if they own a home, expenses such as painting, landscaping and upgrading are unlikely to be priorities, potentially affecting their own and neighbors’ home values.

“The more you have to work, the less time you have for family, friends, community,” Czajka said.

The situation also has an effect on the labor market. Jodi McCredo, a Beacon City Council member, has focused recently on the amount of affordable housing in the city. But she is also a boss.

“As a small-business owner, I know it’s diffi-

“The mental energy that goes into figuring out how to make it all work is incredible. There’s so much stress involved in looking at every dollar.”

~Melissa Clark, director of community impact at United Way

cult to be able to pay the rent [for her business] and pay a fair wage to my employees,” McCredo said.

Yet if people can’t afford to live here on a minimum-wage job, businesses with low-paying jobs may find it harder to find reliable employees. At the same time, the area’s population is flat or declining, meaning a smaller workforce bears more of the tax burden, Czajka noted.

In 2017, New York had the third-highest number of people leaving the state, according to U.S. Census figures.

It’s a problem without an obvious solution. “It’s tough to say what the role of local government is,” McCredo said. Affordable housing — including redefining what “affordable” means here — is one way. “We could do more on the state level, like rent stabilization, both residential and commercial,” she added.

Maggie, the once well-paid Cold Spring resident who frequents the Philipstown Food Pantry, says she hasn’t given up. But she also struggles to stay optimistic.

She has added her name to lists for subsidized housing, though her disability payments price her out of lower-income categories. She also has applied for various housing lotteries in the region.

She knows there is more affordable housing in eastern Putnam. But she has built her life in the Highlands. “It would help if developments in Philipstown included affordable housing for artists and government employees

like they’re doing in Beacon and Peekskill,” she said.

“It’s about the community deciding not only to keep senior citizens here, but to provide a base for younger people to afford it. We need affordable housing that’s not Section 8,” a federal government program for impoverished households.

She keeps looking, although many apartments she sees “are shoddy for the money they’re asking. We’re not talking about granite countertops and stainless steel appliances. Level floors and windows that open and close would be nice.”

She also believes that more bartering services and resources like the Philipstown Freecycle group on Facebook can help people like her.

“I work out a payment plan for car service locally because I’ve been going there so many years,” Maggie said. “You do what you can. Sometimes if you pay cash, you’ll get a lower rate.”

Czajka sees an educated public as the first step. “Individuals need to make time to understand the issues, educate their neighbors, be part of the community,” he said.

“If you want to build a community where people want to live and work and grow and build something, you have to find a way for them to afford it,” McCredo said. “It’s tricky because developers aren’t going to come if they’re not making money.”

In the meantime, three out of every 10 households are straining just to keep up with the cost of living in Putnam and Dutchess.

“The mental energy that goes into figuring out how to make it all work is incredible,” Clark said. “There’s so much stress involved in looking at every dollar.”

This series was made possible by donors to our Special Projects Fund (highlandscurrent.org/spf). Thank you.

WHERE IS ‘THE EDGE’?



SINGLE ADULT INCOME

\$12,490

This is what a person needs to earn annually to make more than the federal poverty level. It equates to \$6 per hour.

\$25,764

This is what a person in Dutchess County needs to earn to survive, according to the United Way. It equates to \$13.88 per hour.

\$30,432

This is what a person in Putnam County needs to survive, according to the United Way. It equates to \$15.22 per hour.

FAMILY OF FOUR INCOME

\$25,750

This is what a household of four needs to earn annually to make more than the federal poverty level.

\$80,016

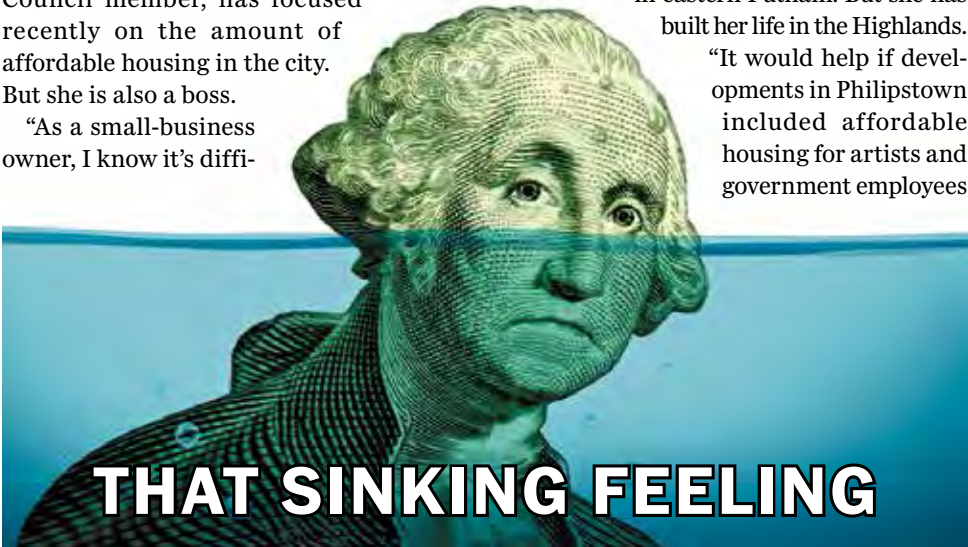
This is what a family of four in Dutchess needs to survive, according to the United Way.

\$88,524

This is what a family of four in Putnam County needs to survive.

NEXT WEEK

Beacon is experiencing rapid growth, with new development expected to bring up to 2,000 new residents to the city by 2022. Will it be possible for these people to reside where they work without living on the edge? What steps can a municipality take to attract businesses that pay at least a survival wage? Jeff Simms will speak with local and regional officials and economic development professionals to investigate the nuts and bolts of job creation.



	# of households	% poverty/survival
Putnam County	34,762	33
Cold Spring	822	42
Nelsonville	230	36
Philipstown	3,599	29
Dutchess County	108,200	36
Beacon	5,203	43

Source: United Way, Alice: A Study of Financial Hardship in New York, based on 2016 data from state and federal sources. See Page 11 for survival budgets.



# The HIGHLANDS Current



Alfresco Food Recipe  
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O'Rourke and Swinburne File photo

## Two Garrison School Board Members Resign

*Also, board sets public vote for \$9.9M project*

By Chip Rowe

Two longtime members of the Garrison School Board resigned earlier this month, citing other commitments, and the remaining five members voted on July 17 to appoint replacements to serve until the district election in May.

The board also scheduled a vote for this September on a proposed \$9.9 million capital improvement project.

The board could have called for a special election or asked voters for the OK to reduce its size to five members but chose to make appointments to replace Ray O'Rourke and Diana Swinburne. The board will accept letters of interest for the positions based on guidelines that should be ready by Aug. 2, said Superintendent Laura Mitchell.

O'Rourke, who was elected in 2009 and had served as president since 2012, resigned on July 9. In a letter to the district, he wrote that "the press of recently acquired personal and professional commitments unfortunately precludes me from fulfilling my obligations. It has been my privilege and a source of great pride to have served the district as a member of the board for the past 10 years and as its president for the past seven."

The board voted at its annual reorganization meeting on July 10 to appoint James Hoch as president and Courtney McCarthy as vice president.

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## Philipstown Approves Cell Tower Settlement

*Vineyard Road tower, at reduced height, can go up*

By Liz Schevtchuk Armstrong

The Philipstown Town Board on Wednesday (July 24) unanimously approved a settlement of a federal lawsuit filed by Homeland Towers and Verizon Wireless, clearing the way for construction of a 120-foot cellphone tower on Vineyard Road near the intersection of Routes 9 and 301.

Board members expressed reluctance to settle the case but said circumstances, including concessions from the tower companies and pressure from judges for an out-of-court resolution, compelled them to do so.

After each side signs the agreement, a federal judge can order its implementation.

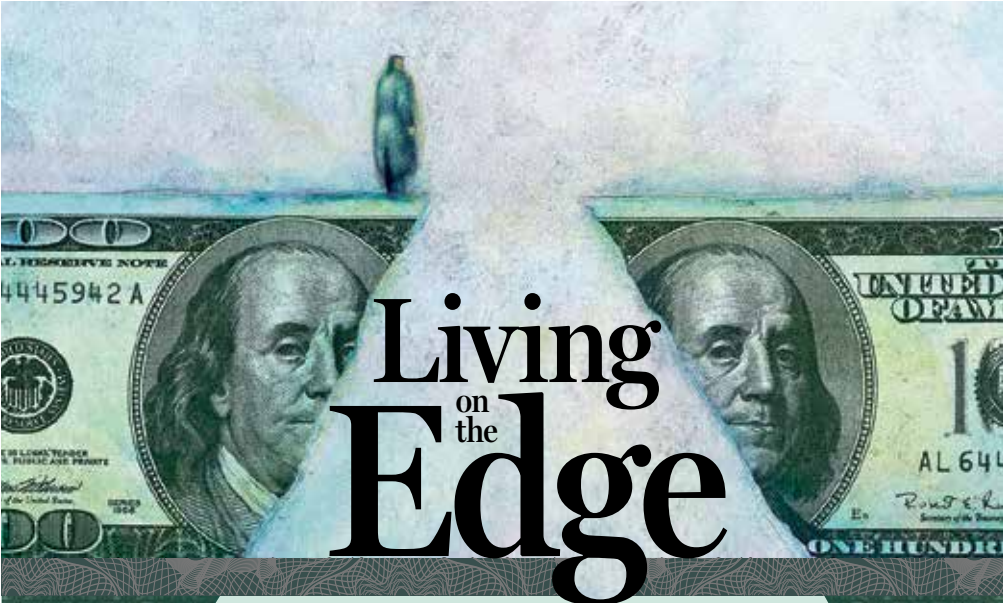
Homeland and Verizon sued Philipstown in February 2018 in federal court in White Plains after the town Zoning Board of Appeals and Conservation Board denied permits for construction of a 140-to-180-foot cell tower.

The ZBA cited a lack of need for the tower and said it conflicted with the

(Continued on Page 10)



A cell tower disguised as a tree



Many people  
can't afford  
to live and also  
work in Beacon.  
What does it take  
to bring jobs to workers  
instead of workers to jobs?

By Jeff Simms

One of the criticisms leveled against Beacon as the city has grown in recent years is that its development has been laser-focused on creating housing, a good chunk of it high-dollar, with not enough focus on job creation.

The perception has been that jobs, aside from retail and customer-service, are scarce, that you must commute to New York City to earn a decent living, and that, with the rising cost of housing, it's becoming harder to live in Beacon and work here, too.

Studies such as those by the United Way described in Part 1 of this series (July 19) that calculate the wage needed for more than a "survival budget" in the Highlands and other locations in New York point to a need for jobs that pay a living wage. According to calculations based on 2016 data, a person needs to earn \$25,754 annually, or at least \$13.88 an hour, just to get by in Dutchess County. A family of four needs \$80,016 annually. In Beacon, about 43 percent of residents are in poverty or just getting by.

(Continued on Page 12)

Second in a series



# Three Companies Bringing Jobs to Beacon

By Jeff Simms

**CAFÉ SPICE** makes all-natural prepared meals with a focus on Indian and Thai recipes. After 10 years in New Windsor, it has outgrown its facility and will move production to the former Mechtronics building on Route 52. Payal Malhotra is the company's vice president.

## How many employees will you bring?

We expect to have 180 to 200 employees but we're not at that number now. We'll probably add 30 jobs. We'll definitely be hiring.

## How have your interactions with the city been so far?

Great. If we run into an issue with contractors or anything like that while we're in construction, we know there's someone we can reach to mitigate the problems. It's wonderful to have a friendly municipality. We love that Beacon is on a train line and new things are happening there, too.

## What's your timeline?

We need to retrofit the site so it's up to standard and meets U.S. Department of Agriculture specifications [for food production]. We haven't gone into any of that work but we'd like to be in there by May.

**DOCUWARE** is a German software company with its U.S. headquarters in New Windsor. It is in negotiations to move to the 23-28 Creek Drive development off Main Street. Thomas Schneck is one of the company's presidents.

## How many employees will you bring?

We have 70 employees in New Windsor but anticipate growing to 120 to 130. If our negotiations are successful, it will take about a year to build the facility, so we could potentially move in early in 2021.

## What attracted you to Beacon?

It checks a lot of boxes. If you want to attract people between the ages of 20 and 35, many times they want the ability to walk to work. That's an important aspect we saw in Beacon, with the Beacon Free Loop and Metro-North — having that public transportation option, or being able to take a walk or ride a bike.

## The site you're looking at would be an easy walk to Main Street.

Yes. In a couple of minutes, I can go to an interesting place for lunch, or I can go shopping if I need to run errands. Instead of jumping into a car, it's all close by. It all plays into this idea that in today's office world, there's office time and there's play

time, but it kind of bleeds in and out — so you need to have options. That's what young people are looking for in an employer.

**INDUSTRIAL ARTS BREWING CO.** was recently approved by the Beacon Planning Board to open a second location on Route 52. (It's based in Garnerville.) Jeff O'Neil, who lives in Cold Spring, is the founder.

## What are your hiring plans?

We have 30 employees and we're expecting to double and triple that over the next few years. Ultimately it will be 30 to 50 new jobs [in Beacon]. We're hoping to open as soon as possible; we've had a tremendous response. It seems like there's a very active and engaged labor pool that's well-indoctrinated into craft beer.

## Will these jobs pay retail-type salaries?

We have made a point from the beginning to be generous with compensation and benefits packages. We think of ourselves as leaders not just in our industry but in the local employment sector. We've lost only one out of 30 people in three years.

## How did the move into Beacon come about?

I originally wanted to locate in Beacon

but a deal didn't work out, so we found a space down here in 2016. We outgrew it faster than we expected. We were looking for Main Street locations for a small tap-room expansion and this building came up on Route 52. We figured out a way to phase it so it starts as a smaller satellite location and will grow into something bigger.

## Was the city helpful in bringing you here?

The city went out of its way to change its laws. One of our tenants is going to be an arcade, maybe with a small bowling alley, but that was illegal [in Beacon]. The city has been pro-project from the beginning. They've been appreciative not just of the jobs but of the tourism component that we'll bring.

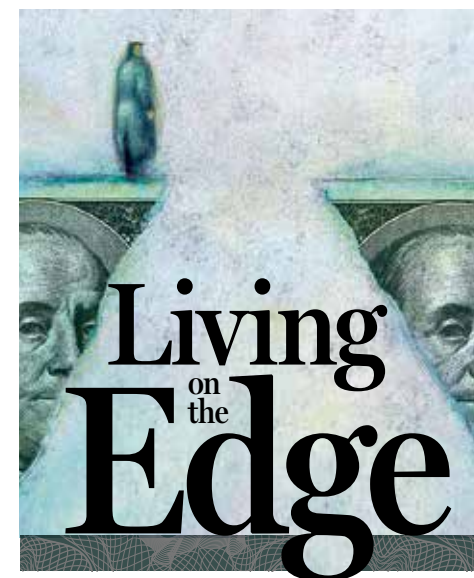
## How was the Planning Board process?

That was the real black box. Because the zoning did not allow for the arcade usage and because we're going to be an event space, there wasn't a tidy way to calculate the parking spaces that we would need. We devised a parking-sharing proposal for the manufacturing day shift, which transitions into a recreational space in the evening. There was a lot of calculation about how the site could handle the traffic that we hope will be there, and I think we came to a good compromise.



Jeff O'Neil, Sofia Barbaresco and Mike McManus at Industrial Arts' Garnerville facility. It plans an expansion into Beacon.

Photo by Matt Furman



(Continued from Page 1)

As Beacon's population grows — a report on the city's long-term water supply last year suggested that up to 2,000 new residents could arrive by 2022 — urban planners and residents argue it's critical that there's a balance of affordable housing and jobs people can afford to take.

With jobs, at least, it appears Beacon may be moving in the right direction. A half-dozen companies — from a new craft brewery to food manufacturing to software firms — have quietly moved to the city or are headed here soon, bringing projections for several hundred jobs with them. For a city of 15,000 people, that's significant progress, if the projections pan out.

Several other metrics indicate that, economically, momentum has been building for a number of years.

In 2010, 15.5 percent of Beacon residents fell under the federal poverty level. By 2017, that figure had fallen nearly 40 percent, to 9.4 percent. (The poverty line is \$12,490 annually for an individual and \$25,750 for a family of four.) Over the same time period, the city's workforce participation rate — the number of people with jobs — increased by 4 percent.

Conversely, 8.4 percent of Dutchess County residents were poverty-stricken in 2010; it had risen to 9.1 percent in 2017.

"Beacon bucking the trend and going the other way is pretty impressive for an urban center in the Hudson Valley," says Jonathan Drapkin, president and CEO of Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, a regional think tank. "Beacon is a walkable community, and there are a lot of people who think it's a great place to live."

Among the new (or new-to-Beacon) businesses are Docuware, a document management/digitization firm that's in negotiations to come to the city; Industrial Arts Brewing Company, a craft beer brew house; Café Spice, an ethnic packaged-foods manufacturer; Ricker Lyman Robotic, a software company; Via Hero, a personalized travel-planning service; and Tightrope Interactive, a San Francisco marketing firm that's moving its Cold Spring office.

Additionally, Urban Green Food was awarded development rights in May to create a campus with farming, a restaurant and a

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hotel, along with a network of public trails, at the former Beacon Correctional Facility. Organizers say it could bring up to 250 jobs.

"They're all here because their employees were living here," notes Anthony Ruggiero, Beacon's city administrator. "This is the type of culture they were looking for."

A century ago, work in Beacon was dominated by its factories. By the 1930s and 1940s, and then later, in the 1980s, Texaco and IBM, respectively, provided jobs in neighboring communities.

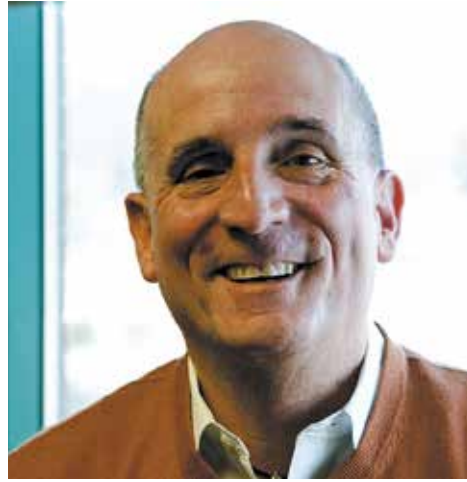
With many people working reasonably close to home, there were ripple effects within the community. Volunteerism flourished. Today, with commuting much more common, Beacon's volunteer fire corps — one casualty of that change — is about a quarter of what it was 40 years ago.

Mayor Randy Casale says people struggled to make ends meet years ago, as well.

"In the old days could people live here and work? My mother worked in the sweatshops and she had trouble paying her rent here," the mayor recalls. "It's not a novelty that people struggle to pay their bills. When I started with Public Works [in 1970], I had to live at home with my mother. I couldn't afford to pay rent."

As Beacon has grown in the last four to five years, zoning regulations have been put in place to ensure some continued commercial development. The City Council voted in 2017 that new projects in the Fishkill Creek development district, for example, must include at least 25 percent commercial usage.

Dutchess County Legislator Nick Page, a Beacon resident, believes the city must



Jonathan Drapkin of Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress

Photo provided

continue to address economic growth through its planning. "The onus is on zoning and the City Council. We have a paucity of commercial space. The next conversation is going to be how we can balance that out."

Drapkin points out that some municipalities in the region — New Rochelle and Kingston, for example — have either hired a dedicated economic development officer or launched departments designed to create an environment friendly to businesses (see below).

"If somebody says they want to start a business," he says, "the municipality needs to be able to help walk that person through all the necessary steps. They've got a road-map ready to get that person up and running as quickly as possible."

Casale says he's not sure Beacon is ready for a full-time person in that position. "If they ever decide to build a transit-oriented development at the train station and they

get it right, then I'd like to hire an economic development person to go into New York City to bring some of their business here, to create a reverse commute," he says. But he says he and Ruggiero take on the responsibilities of vetting and assisting companies that are interested in Beacon.

That means scheduling meetings with the building inspector and other city staff; finding locations with adequate parking and office space; and connecting businesses with developers.

Docuware, for instance, needs 20,000 feet of office space, Ruggiero says. The company in early 2018 considered creating an industrial complex at the corner of Main Street and Route 9D; it is now negotiating with developer Rodney Weber to become part of his mixed-use project at 23-28 Creek Drive, the site of the city's former highway garage.

"You have to have space, and it's hard to find that," Ruggiero says. "For a while we didn't even have housing for [employees]. There were no vacancies."

That's no longer the case; more than 1,000 housing units have been approved for construction in recent years.

What Beacon shouldn't do, Casale says, is try to find the next IBM. For one, he says, Beacon doesn't have the space for a company like that, and "those days are gone anyway. When you put all your eggs in that basket and then they leave, you're left with an empty basket."

Ruggiero explains: "Places like us have to be more creative. We're not New York City. We're not going to get Amazon, but we're going to get 20 companies with 20 people, and that's going to have a real impact on Beacon."

## Feeling Lost About Money?

The National Endowment for Financial Education (nefe.org), founded in 1984 and funded by an endowment from the proceeds of the sale of the College of Financial Planning in 1997, argues that teaching people how to handle money can help every group that is financially fragile. It provides free courses at **smartaboutmoney.org** on financial basics such as spending and saving, credit and debt and employment strategies. It also has a site for younger adults at **onyourown.org**.

Those additions may indeed be the future of job growth in Beacon. Docuware, if it reaches an agreement with Weber, could eventually add around 60 jobs to its existing workforce. Café Spice and Industrial Arts both say they have plans to expand once here, too (See Page 12).

At just under 5 square miles, and with much of it developed, the city probably doesn't have room for an "anchor institution" like a hospital or a university. But even if Beacon can't attract a 300-acre college, Ruggiero says, it could get a satellite campus. Flexibility, he believes, is the key. Fewer major hospitals are in expansion mode now, too, "but they're all looking for urgent care centers. That's where we could do something, and we're working on that."

*This series was made possible by donors to our Special Projects Fund (highlandscurrent.org/spf). Thank you.*

## 'Shovel-Ready Downtown'

*New Rochelle streamlines development to attract jobs, growth*

By Jeff Simms

In New Rochelle, in southern Westchester County, Luiz Aragon has in the last four years created what he calls a "shovel-ready downtown."

While there are many differences between New Rochelle and Beacon — the former is twice as large, with nearly five times as many residents — there may be components of Aragon's plan that could be implemented here.

Aragon, who was hired in 2013 as New Rochelle's development commissioner, says the city began to attract meaningful job growth in 2015 after it created a partnership between the local government and developers.



An artist's rendering of improvements proposed for a street in New Rochelle's downtown

RDRXR

"We wanted to understand why development was not occurring in New Rochelle when it was in other cities, like Yonkers and White Plains," he recalls. "We're 25 minutes from Grand Central Terminal, but investment was not occurring."

In return for providing developers with "the privilege of developing on our land," New Rochelle set out to "create certainty for the investor" by revising zoning laws to streamline approvals. "We wanted them to know that they're coming into a city that was open for business."

The city issued a request for proposals before selecting a "master developer" charged with helping to plan the build-out (and developing a portion) of a 300-acre section of the city set aside for density and growth. In just a few years, the outcome, Aragon says, has been development within the district — including retail, office space, hotels, housing units and restaurants — that's "designed for the pedestrian," with its focus "on the shape of buildings rather than what's going on inside of them."

Not everything that occurred in New Rochelle — 48-story buildings, for one — would translate well in Beacon, but Aragon noted a series of "give-back" agreements the city made with developers that provided significant public benefits.

One, a "fair-share mitigation fund," is used for municipal infrastructure improvements. Another, a community benefits fund, pays for city parks' upkeep and helped create a community performance theater. That fund also pays for a job training center where the city has partnered with two organizations to provide help with resumes, interview skills and other assistance to residents.

In a year and a half, Aragon said, nearly 500 people have come through the center, and more than 200 of them have been placed in jobs ranging from construction to office managers to positions in law firms.

Aragon says there's a critical balance that municipalities must strike when managing development.

"Developers are not just going to give you money," he explains. "Know your assets and understand how to leverage them. You have to be able to have a project that will provide enough return on investment to enable them to give that gift."



# The HIGHLANDS Current

AUGUST 9, 2019

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Bee in the Tea  
Page 9

## Philipstown May Sue Over Secrecy Law

*Also, hears plea about CBD candy, gets paving updates*

By Liz Schevtchuk Armstrong

Philipstown is considering a lawsuit against Putnam County to kill a secrecy law enacted last week.

Supervisor Richard Shea said during the monthly Town Board meeting on Aug. 1

that he is consulting the town attorney about filing an Article 78 lawsuit, which refers to the part of state civil law that allows appeals of decisions by municipal governments. He noted in an email on Thursday (Aug. 8) that the town has about four months to act, which allows enough “time to do this properly.”

Among other provisions, the new law authorizes “any county officer or employee, outside legal counsel or consul-

tant” to slap “confidential” on documents; it adds that communications by, to, or from the county Law Department, the Legislature’s attorney or a county “outside legal counsel or consultant shall be presumed to be confidential material even if not explicitly designated ‘confidential.’ ”

Critics say the law violates the spirit, if not the letter, of the state Freedom of Information Law. Earlier rulings from state

(Continued on Page 3)



**CLOSER LOOK** — A visitor zooms in at the annual ice-cream social held on July 28 at Boscobel, which included 19th-century family games, popular flavors from a century ago such as raspberry, peach and mint, and music from a quartet led by violinist Gwen Laster designed to evoke “summertime breezes.”

Photo by Ross Corsair

## Putnam Names Tourism Director

*Former nonprofit executive and Carmel native lands job*

By Chip Rowe

Tracey Walsh, a lifelong Carmel resident and former executive with the American Cancer Society, is the latest director of tourism for Putnam County.

She is the fifth person to hold the job since County Executive MaryEllen Odell

took office, following the departure of Valerie Hickman in 2012, the resignation of Libby Pataki in 2016 after an investigation by the state attorney general, and the departures of Frank Smith in 2017 and, most recently, Bruce Conklin in June when the nonprofit Putnam County Visitors’ Bureau unexpectedly disbanded.

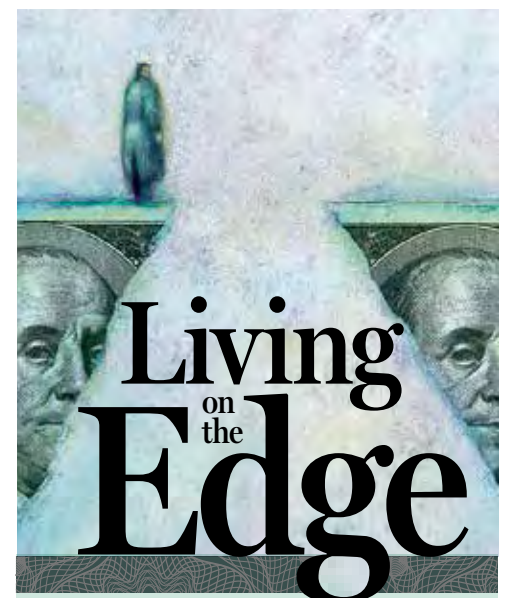
The county Legislature on Tuesday (Aug. 6) voted unanimously to establish its own Department of Tourism rather than fund another nonprofit. The Visitors’ Bureau board said its decision to close came after its members saw a help-wanted ad placed by the county looking for a new tourism director.

Although Legislator Nancy Montgomery

(Continued on Page 5)



Tracey Walsh



## The Gig Economy

*Highlands workers share challenges of freelancing*

By Jeff Simms

In a series last month, *The Current* looked at Highlands residents who are “living on the edge,” with little savings, as well as efforts to bring higher-paying jobs to the area to support the rising cost of living. But there are many workers for whom the edge is a personal and sometimes philosophical choice.

Disillusionment with the corporate work structure, family obligations and quality of life are all reasons people cite for bypassing a traditional, office-based job, choosing instead to enter the freelance, or “gig” economy — stringing projects together to earn a living that may well require what the United Way in a study called a “survival budget.”

Whatever the reason and whatever you call it, the gig economy is growing rapidly, and will continue to do so over the next decade, according to projections.

A 2018 Gallup Poll found that 36 percent of U.S. workers (57 million people) do freelance work. It calculated that a quarter of full-time workers and half of part-timers rely on “alternative-work arrangements” as their primary jobs, meaning they work remotely or are independent contractors, on-call or temps.

(Continued on Page 12)



## Gig Economy, by the Numbers

**11**

Percentage of working adults in U.S. who are full-time freelancers

**28**

Percentage of freelancers who say they do it full-time

**51**

Percentage of freelancers who said in a survey that “no amount of money would get them to take a traditional job”

**77**

Percentage of freelancers who say they earned more within a year than they made at their most recent full-time job

**22**

Percentage of increase in the number of 1099 forms filed by employers with the IRS since 2000 to report freelance payments of \$600 to \$20,000

**-3.5**

Percentage of decrease in the number of W-2 forms filed by employers with the IRS to report income paid for traditional jobs

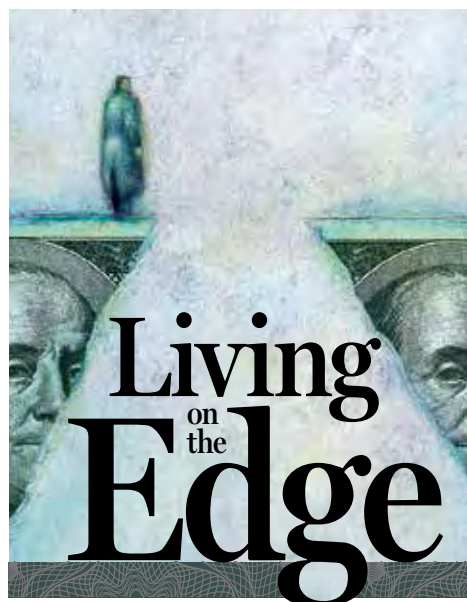
Sources: Nation1099.com; “Freelancing in America,” UpWork/Freelancers Union, 2018; “Evaluating the Growth of the 1099 Workforce,” George Mason University, 2015

## Tied to the Phone

Legislation introduced in June in the state Senate and Assembly would allow “dependent workers” to be considered employees who could unionize and file wage-theft complaints. It defines “dependent worker” as “an individual who provides personal services to a consumer through a private third-party that establishes the amounts earned by the worker or charged to the consumer, or collects payment from the consumer, or pays the individual, or any combination thereof” (e.g., ride-share drivers).



Joseph Ayers | Photo by J. Simms



(Continued from Page 1)

The Gallup report also distinguishes between independent and “contingent” workers, with the former better suited for the flexibility and freedom often associated with the gig economy. Across all categories, Gallup found that gig workers scored higher than people in traditional jobs when polled for a half-dozen metrics, including creativity, autonomy and being paid fairly.

Gig workers aren’t just artists, either. Some researchers include short-term rentals, made through sites such as Airbnb, as yet another “gig.” It’s a lucrative one, too; revenues from home rentals are expected to reach \$107 billion by 2025.

How do gig workers in the Highlands make ends meet? In this follow-up to our series, we asked two freelancers to share their stories.

### Joseph Ayers

Joseph Ayers grew up on the west coast of Florida, learning carpentry skills from

his father, a handyman and commercial fisherman who bought and sold houses on the side to supplement the family’s income.

Ayers was artistically inclined, but before studying digital media at the University of New Orleans, he served five years as an electrician in the U.S. Air Force at Elmendorf Base in Alaska, a stone’s throw from Fort Richardson, where his father had served in the Army 25 years earlier.

After school and the military, Ayers moved to New York City, where he cobbled a living together waiting tables, teaching and apprenticing for established artists. He and his wife, Aya, who is also an artist, moved to Beacon in 2009, and Ayers began teaching at community colleges.

He recalls a grueling schedule of teaching seven courses at three schools, but as he gained experience, his opportunities expanded. He teaches exclusively now at the Parsons School of Design in New York City two to four days each week, and that stability affords him the freedom to pick and choose side gigs while spending time at home with his wife and daughter, who is 8.

“There was always this option to get into a 9-to-5 job so we had some security,” Ayers explains. “I was thinking that way for a while but eventually I decided I didn’t want to do it. I had the skills to make enough money by piecing together side jobs that were more meaningful to me.”

Recent gigs have included managing a two-month-long, 100-artist video and still image exhibition in the Oculus building at the World Trade Center, a contracting project helping Manhattanites renovate private apartments and, in Beacon, a nonpaying gig helping to create the video component of a production by the A-Y/dancers company.

“If I was doing a 9-to-5 job, there’s no way

I would have been able to think of [the A-Y gig],” Ayers says. “As an artist, I want to have as much flexibility as possible. Working a 9-to-5 job is like purgatory to me.”

The summer months are leaner for Ayers without his teaching income, but he supplements his earnings with other projects while spending more time at home. This year he’s taken on a project helping a couple build a home on Mount Beacon, while another gig editing a documentary film is on the table for the fall.

For him, the choice to work gigs is clearly a philosophical one. But it’s also harder these days, Ayers says, to put much stock in the “one-company, one-career” model that may have worked for his parents’ generation.

“Now that seems vividly impossible because so many things have been in flux,” he says. “The perception of quality of life is shifting. People prefer freedom over prison, and a lot of those jobs feel like prison.”

### Alix Winsby

Prop and set designer Alix Winsby, who lives in Wappingers Falls, became a gig worker less deliberately, when a handful of external circumstances — namely rent, small children and tax incentives — made buying a house outside of New York City an attractive option.

Living first in Brooklyn and then Queens, Winsby and her husband moved to the Highlands in 2017. They looked in Beacon, where properties either sold quickly or needed too much work, before landing nearby.

While her husband, Myles, still commutes to the city daily, Winsby takes Metro-North down a handful of times each month, caring for her children, 6 and 2, and working from her home studio the rest of the time.

“We make it work with day care and school plus an on-call baby sitter when

(Continued on Page 13)





Scott Tillitt outside the Beahive in Beacon

Photo by J. Simms

## You Can't Be Fired When You're the Boss

*Half of workers won't have "jobs" by 2030*

By Jeff Simms

Within the next decade, predicts Scott Tillitt, the founder of Beahive, half of all workers won't have salaried jobs.

He may be right on the money. By 2027, according to one projection, 58 percent of Americans will be freelancers or have worked as an independent contractor.

Beahive offers what is known as "coworking" space that is typically rented by free-

lancers, consultants and telecommuters.

Opened in 2009, Beahive was innovative. A study commissioned by GCUC, which organizes coworking conferences, estimated there were fewer than 1,000 coworking spaces worldwide at the time; today, there are more than 21,000, with 3.1 million members. It projected that, with a growth rate of about 24 percent annually, those figures should jump to 30,000 and 5.1 million by 2022.

Like many similar ventures, Beahive was designed from the start as more than a work space. It regularly hosts community meetings, film screenings and, twice last year, a forum to help residents understand Beacon's changing zoning laws.

"The mission is much larger than just coworking," says Tillitt, whose background is in marketing and communications. "It's about community engagement. The events and forums I do are much bigger. They have nothing to do with work but they have everything to do with a vibrant community."

While traditional economic development may focus on creating the right combination of incentives to bring businesses into a municipality, Tillitt says he's "much more interested in micro-enterprises and individuals."

But that doesn't mean he's averse to expansion. Membership numbers have doubled at Beahive in the last three years. An Albany location opened in 2012 and, in May, Tillitt launched a Beacon annex at 134 Main St. (The original space, at 291 Main St., remains open, although the building is for sale.) He has also just implemented "big-company" benefits, including health-care and a 401(k) retirement savings plan through an association of coworking spaces.

Losing his job as a communications manager for a digital firm in late 2000 led Tillitt to a "social and spiritual awakening" that eventually gave birth to Beahive.

"I realized I didn't want to work for a company again," he says. "I didn't want to do corporate work; I wanted to do something more meaningful and community-oriented. Beahive was meant to be a

### Local Coworking



#### Beahive (Beacon)

291 Main St. | 134 Main St.

845-418-3731 | beahivebzzz.com

Cost: \$25 (day pass) to \$295 (desk) per month



#### Create Community (Nelsonville)

11 Peekskill Road | 845-202-3494

nycratietherapists.com/create-community

7 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily

Cost: \$20 (drop-in, daily), \$220 (15 visits)

platform and a lab to try to do that."

Similar spaces have opened all over the region, including Create Community in Nelsonville and facilities in New Paltz, Hudson and Rhinebeck.

"There's something about coming to a space and working around other people," says Tillitt. "Coworking isn't work and it isn't home. These are places where people convene and feel a sense of belonging."

(Continued from Page 12)

I'm on set, but it's a juggling act," she says. "I'm able to work when they're at school, and then I usually do a second shift after bedtime to get in all the hours."

For her, the move from the city has been disruptive at times. It's difficult, for instance, because the studios she normally contracts with have meetings all day and reach out to freelancers in the evenings, "and those are my witching hours, when I'm not available."

In a fast-paced field, she juggles multiple responsibilities, as well.

"There's the job of finding the work and maintaining those connections. There's the job of doing the work, and then there's the bookkeeping and overhead aspects," Winsby says. "It's essentially three jobs, all of which should be full-time. Plus, I'm in an oversaturated field competing with people with no children or overhead expenses."

Winsby concedes that there's a delicate balance between personal satisfaction and risky finances.

Her dog was hit by car when she and her family first arrived in the Highlands. Winsby had to miss a job, which impacted her rela-

tionship with one of her largest clients. Then, six months later, when her mother died, she had to call out of work with the same client.

"After losing that job, they hired a new set designer and gave half of my work to her," she recalls. "It cut my income in half and we

went massively into debt. It was completely unexpected. We could have lost our house."

As for benefits: Her husband is insured through his work and the rest of the family is covered out-of-pocket through the New York State of Health marketplace.



Alix Winsby | Photo provided

"From a job satisfaction perspective," she says, "this work can be incredible. Sometimes I'm involved all the way from conception to the end product and for that, I feel privileged. What I learned in art school and still use are not necessarily the art or craft, but the visual language. Every day I see the importance of being able to clearly communicate visual ideas, especially as they manifest into a physical reality. In that aspect, it's a very satisfying career."

On the other hand, savings and retirement can feel unattainable. "I'll work a 13- or 16-hour day and make good money, but when you're not working, you're not making any money," she says. "It takes away your social life and any semblance of normal business hours. It is destabilizing."

Winsby says she thinks often about an exit strategy from gig work. Many in her field, she says, can tolerate the ups and downs when they're younger, "but most people, especially women, get to a certain point where they open a store or do something else."

She, too, may one day open a small business, but until then, "this is what's working for us as a family. It's a struggle, but it seems like the only option that allows me to have a flexible schedule and do what I love to do."