

May 8, 2024

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Dear Linda and Meghan,

We are two members of the Board of Trustees in the Village of Cold Spring, elected to represent villagers. We endorse the idea of a multi-use, accessible trail that begins at Dockside Park, runs along the shoreline, and connects Cold Spring and Beacon. Our position does not reflect the views of every trustee and every villager. But we speak for a sizable group of constituents who have consistently expressed to us attitudes of collaboration, support, and goodwill toward the Fjord Trail, even though their voices have sometimes been drowned out in the contention over this issue. During a public discussion about the proposed Fjord Trail that the Cold Spring Board of Trustees held on May 1, many villagers expressed support for the project.

The planning process to date makes us confident that the Fjord Trail will provide crucial benefits to the residents of Cold Spring and the surrounding areas: expanded options for outdoor recreation, better visitor management, and new modes of slow transportation. Bicyclists in Cold Spring, especially bike-riding families, will have a flat, car-free, safe path for long rides. Anyone with restricted mobility who cannot handle a hiking trail (seniors, families with infants, people in wheelchairs) will be able to take a scenic excursion and live a fuller, healthier life. The Village will have public bathrooms, trash receptacles, and trash collection at Dockside Park provided and managed by HHFT and NYS Office of Parks. Ecologically minded villagers who do not drive will have a safe route out of town other than the train. None of these benefits will exist unless the Fjord Trail begins at Dockside.

While bringing these benefits, however, the Fjord Trail will worsen transportation problems on Fair Street and Route 9D. The planners have not adequately addressed these problems. Even if the trail begins at Dockside, many users will approach it by walking out Fair Street, but Fair Street lacks a sidewalk north of the municipal parking lot. Route 9D would be a direct approach to the trail for a key set of users: class groups and individual students from Haldane School. But that way also lacks a complete sidewalk. A throughway for commuters and trucks, Route 9D is hazardous to pedestrians. The crosswalks, except for the one at Main Street, have no traffic lights and are dangerous to use against 30–40 mph traffic, especially for Haldane students and seniors from Chestnut Ridge and Butterfield residences, who cross 9D frequently. To mitigate these problems, we ask the Fjord Trail planners to work with the state DOT and the Village to extend sidewalks to Little Stony Point, improve crosswalk safety on 9D, and reduce the speed limits on 9D. We also ask you to reconsider the idea of adding new parking spaces north of the Village, since increasing accommodations for vehicles would increase the traffic on 9D.

Overall, we are grateful to the NYS Office of Parks and the Fjord Trail organization for giving our community a new park. Its presence will encourage residents and visitors alike to value the environment and lead healthier lives. We hope you will continue to engage in cooperative planning with the Village residents and leaders to minimize harmful side effects.

Sincerely,

Trustees Eliza Starbuck & Aaron Freimark
Village of Cold Spring