



August 16, 2024

Dear Supervisor Van Tassel, Mayor Foley, Mayor Winward, and the governing boards of Philipstown, Cold Spring & Nelsonville,

Thank you for your patience as we have considered the views expressed by the elected leadership and other elected representatives of Philipstown, Cold Spring and Nelsonville, and the diverse views of your residents regarding the routing of the Fjord Trail within Philipstown. At the same time, we have had to consider our obligations as the non-profit partner of NY State OPRHP, the stated objectives and priorities of NY State, and the many and complicated logistical, environmental, and financial considerations that drive planning and design of the Fjord Trail.

We are pleased to confirm what we expressed in prior discussions with the senior elected officials. First, we will postpone a final decision on routing of the trail between Little Stony Point and Cold Spring. Second, we will include in the DGEIS an analysis of alternative routes, including a newly identified alternative route suggested by community members. Third, although the law requires only mitigation of impacts of the trail itself (as opposed to existing conditions), we are willing to invest, following completion of the SEQRA process, in mitigation of impacts of existing visitation on the Village of Cold Spring. So there is no misunderstanding, we will briefly elaborate on each of these.

For all the reasons we have previously articulated, the Shoreline Trail South (Little Stony Point to Dockside) remains our preferred route at this time. Local elected leaders have publicly expressed opposition to this route, but it is supported by other local officials and many local residents. Because much of the disagreement seems to be rooted in skepticism regarding patterns and numbers of projected visitation, it seemed sensible to postpone the decision until the opening of the Breakneck Connector, including the improved Metro-North Breakneck Ridge Train Station with safer connections to the trail heads, and opening of the main entrance to the trail (and additional parking) at a new visitor center at Dutchess Manor (all of them, subject to the vagaries of construction, currently expected to be operational around 2026-7). We and the experts expect all of these taken together to fundamentally change existing visitation patterns, including pulling cars and hikers away from Cold Spring, as they are designed to do. Postponing the final decision until after these changes occur will allow all of us to consider their impacts when deciding the optimal route to the Village. We are absolutely committed to having local voices and interests at the center of that evaluation when the time comes.

Of course, for the postponement of the decision to be meaningful, we need to pursue (and be legally able to implement) alternatives to Dockside. Accordingly, we have pursued the analysis of each newly identified alternative, including "Alternative Route 6" (west side of tracks to the eastern edge of Dockside) which avoids any village property and leaves Dockside Park as a "meander" (i.e., an option to be explored off the main trail). So, as we agreed during prior discussions, we are pleased to confirm that this alternative will be analyzed, included in the DGEIS, and subject to public comment as part of the SEQRA process.

Finally, the impacts of each route, and consequential mitigation required within the Village of Cold Spring, will be determined through the SEQRA process. We have no responsibility for the mitigation of the impacts on the Village of



existing visitation. Nonetheless, as an organization whose origins lay in an impulse to address the long-standing issues created by the extraordinary popularity of Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve at and around Breakneck, we will be pleased to collaborate with the Village in addressing some of these issues. Thus, we can confirm that, upon completion of the SEQRA process, hopefully early next year, we can move forward in assisting the Village with pursuing grants and making some grants ourselves that address priority infrastructure needs and opportunities to mitigate visitation impacts pending opening of the Fjord Trail. These projects cannot be committed, undertaken or funded until the required mitigation measures in the Village in relation to the Fjord Trail have been identified through successful final completion of the SEQRA process. Before that time, we are willing to continue general discussions with the Village regarding its priorities.

We greatly valued our conversations and meetings with many of you over the past months. We hope these three changes we have made to our prior approach convince you that we are listening to all voices in the community and that we are dedicated to finding solutions that ultimately have broad support among Village residents and leadership. We are determined to keep all lines of communication open and invite you to reach out to either of us at any time.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Davis'.

Chris Davis, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amy Kacala'.

Amy Kacala, Executive Director