

For Immediate Release:

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1653 Foundation: Private Funds For Public Benefit

January 14, 2020 Huntington, New York:

A new non-profit entity has been launched to raise the quality of life for Huntington residents without raising taxes.

Better quality of life without raising taxes.

Do we have your attention yet?

Meet the Town of Huntington's newest resident, the 1653 Foundation. A not-for-profit 501c3 entity, 1653 Foundation was conceived as a means for individuals, businesses, local organizations and fellow charities to support the ongoing goal of improving the tangible quality of life for all of Huntington's residents.

Among the biggest challenges faced by municipalities today is finding the funding to acquire open space to create new parks and public spaces; and to keep them maintained and running for the benefit of all, from sports leagues to passive park users. Despite the proven benefits of greener communities and increasing demand for great community spaces, public dollars for funding Town parks cannot keep up with the demand from a growing population.

That's where 1653 Foundation comes in. The name is a nod to the year when a group of Colonial settlers made "The First Purchase," perhaps the greatest real estate deal in the town's history. The foundation will raise private funds for the benefit of Town public parks and open spaces.

1653 is the brainchild of Robert Bontempi, Vice Chairman of the Huntington Chamber of Commerce (Open Space EOSPA Committee Member); Brian Yudewitz, the Chamber's Chairman; Mark McAteer, principal of The Laurel Group; and Greg Wagner, Director of Parks and Recreation for the Town of Huntington.

"We will be proactive in using private dollars, coupled with public funding and grants to find those critical projects that will benefit the Town," Wagner said. "This is a model that New York City does extremely well. We can do that here."

"Huntington is a world class community renowned for its history, arts, museums, energetic downtowns and eclectic culture," Bontempi said. "It's parks and public spaces need to reflect that same status. The Foundation seeks to restore, maintain and enhance Huntington's open space, parklands and public spaces."

1653's Board of Patrons will work closely with the Town of Huntington to identify and fund projects consistent with the foundation's aims. The Committee has a "wish list" of potential park and public space improvement projects far bigger than the Town can budget for. That's where 1653 Foundation comes in.

Mark McAteer, Principal of the Laurel Group and EOSPA Vice Chairman, is excited about taking the mission of the Foundation and coupling it with the Town of Huntington's efforts to enhance neighborhoods, park and acquire open space. "1653 is built to foster public/private partnership in improving our town. We will be connecting corporate & private donors, community volunteers, elected leaders & staff in driving progress on the priorities of our community."

Now is an ideal time for an organization like this, Brian Yudewitz, Chairman of the Huntington Chamber, commented. "While the Town continues to grow and add businesses, we can put a spotlight on a holistic approach to progress, target smart growth that focuses as much on the environment, parks and public spaces as on the opportunity for a new or existing business."

The first project of the 1653 Foundation is an informal survey that asks respondents to help identify needs and create the 1653 Wish List. Results will be compiled into a report that will be published on our website and guide the foundation's future efforts. "We ask respondents to be bold in their responses" said Bontempi, "be a change agent for our community".

To learn more, make a contribution or join the effort, go to 1653foundation.org.

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