

## SLOATSBURG MAYOR CARL STEPS DOWN AFTER 30 YEARS

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*By rctadmin on November 6, 2020 · 0 Comments*

By Kathy Kahn

Village of Sloatsburg residents will be wishing their longtime mayor, Carl Wright, a fond farewell as he leaves office on December 31. Former Deputy Mayor, Peter Ackley, ran unopposed for Wright's post on Election Day and will assume mayoral duties on January 1, 2021.

Wright was first elected in 1975 and served three decades as Mayor, guiding the Village through more than one nationwide recession, the horrific September 11 attacks and, most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides dealing a cruel blow to local businesses, the outbreak has put plans to upgrade the portion of Route 17 that runs through the heart of the village's downtown shopping district on hold.

Planners and engineers from the NYS Department of Transportation have been working for more than two years to reconfigure the "downtown" portion of the busy artery, making it a destination. The Village of Warwick in Orange County also has a major truck

route that doubles as the Main Street but has managed to make the downtown a vibrant destination nonetheless. Traffic lights, pedestrian crossing paths and other amenities work to slow truck and car traffic down and keep the street accessible for everyone.

Tuxedo entrepreneur Michael Bruno has spent several million dollars renovating and remediating properties in Sloatsburg's "downtown area," creating an upscale hotel/spa/restaurant complex, Valley Rock Inn, as well as adding several new micro-businesses along the route to complement Sloatsburg's main tourism attraction, Harriman State Park.

"Just about everything is on hold except getting the current municipal roadwork completed," said Wright. "Everyone is anxious to see the NYS Dept. of Transportation complete its studies on the final reconfiguration of the route. The work being done now, along Route 17 is to finish the last 125 feet of sewer that's going in...that job was contracted out by the Town of Ramapo when the original contractor failed to complete the work. Orange & Rockland is also doing some work as well."

Wright has worked hard to get funding for the small village at the northwest end of the Town of Ramapo. When Woodmont Hills' mega apartment complex started going up right outside Sloatsburg's border, he and the Village Board of Trustees lobbied for and received a new fire truck and a new building to house it. "That apartment complex is all multi-story

buildings, with more being built as we speak...it would have been impossible for us to service that part of Ramapo without a truck that could reach the tops of the taller buildings.”

The future of the Sloatsburg Ambulance Corps remains in limbo as of now. In August 2020, its Captain, Michael Gannon, was indicted for absconding with over \$22,000 of its funds. The Village’s Ambulance Building has been closed since then, and the Town of Ramapo has been contracting its EMS services out

Wright acknowledged that the loss has made it more difficult for outside EMS services to respond in a timelier fashion. “I’ve got a very critical letter sitting on my desk right now —an ambulance was called to St. Joseph’s Adult Home for a 95-year-old woman who was bleeding profusely—it took the ambulance over an hour to get to her. Obviously, we’re not happy with this situation and hope the response time is going to be resolved quickly.”

Wright added that one of Sloatsburg’s ambulances is in the process of being repossessed, which also stings. “We have some dedicated people here who want to resuscitate our Ambulance Corps. 60 years ago, when it was founded, all its members worked and lived locally. That’s not the case anymore. We have many people moving up from New York City who are now commuting to work. Our volunteers spend so much time training—it’s as vigorous for them as it is for our volunteer fire departments, 26 weeks—and it just isn’t feasible anymore. In the early days, it was more than

just a volunteer effort. Many of the community's functions were centered around our volunteers. Times have changed. There's not much we can do about that," said Wright, who is a Life Member of the Sloatsburg Volunteer Fire Department.

The former political science teacher from Suffern High School has been active in the community all his life and said, leaving his position as Mayor of the village he was born and raised was his decision. "I've enjoyed this job. I feel like I'm the most blessed person. I've had wonderful experiences as mayor and have met the most amazing people. But it's better to take control of your own destiny than to have someone else make the decision for you. I'd rather make the decision than have it thrust upon me. I wish Pete Ackley the best in his new position and will always be available for anyone to reach out to me. I'm leaving the office of Mayor, but I'm not leaving Sloatsburg. It's home."



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