

NEWS RELEASE  
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## **Riverhead Neighborhood Preservation Coalition Reaches Critical Mass with Big Three Riverhead Civics**

The Riverhead Neighborhood Preservation Coalition (RNPC) has reached its first significant milestone with all three major Riverhead civic associations now counted as active members. “The unification of our civics brings us together on issues concerning town-wide zoning disputes and challenges to our master/hamlet plans,” notes Mike Harrigan, president of the Wading River Civic Association, the first ‘civic’ to sign on after a handful of residents facing issues in their own backyards formed the RNPC last September. Within a few months the Greater Calverton Civic Association joined the ranks and then, in April, the Jamesport-South Jamesport Civic Association.

Not only does the RNPC bring together the town’s eastern- and westernmost civic groups, it also bridges the widening gap of politics. According to coalition co-founder Dominique Mendez, “Our members include modern day progressives, hard line conservatives and everything in between. One thing we all have in common is our commitment to protecting residential areas, open spaces and agricultural lands against uses and expansion that would negatively impact the quality of life and character of the town we love.”

RNPC co-founder Phil Barbato adds, “I think we’ve hit a real nerve. When people are informed about what’s going on and the impact subtle changes in code or the granting of a new variance can have on them, some of them are actually willing to get up off those couches and come to a hearing.” Anyone who has been to a Town Board or Zoning Board of Appeals meeting held over the last few months, or watched it on Channel 22, may have noticed the uptick in participation as RNPC leaders, members and residents exercise their rights to engage local government and advocate for their interests as homeowners and taxpayers.

In addition to educating and mobilizing its membership, the RNPC is also working to improve the quality, type and amount of information available to the public; to encourage and facilitate enforcement of town codes; and even to contribute to the evolution of the codes themselves. Longtime civic leader Sid Bail notes, “I think we’re all looking forward to working together through the RNPC on some big picture issues that will benefit all our communities.”

A few early RNPC initiatives include suggestions for code changes to require cell tower builders to set aside monies for their eventual removal and a series of ‘best practice’ suggestions for improving public access to information including more descriptive public hearing and agenda content plus access to basic information on submitted site plans. The Town has already implemented a number of these best practice suggestions. The RNPC has also been very active in efforts to stop unsuitable overexpansion in residential neighborhoods in Wading River, where Great Rock Golf Club has been attempting to circumvent zoning to build ‘golf villas’, and in Jamesport, where the Jedediah Hawkins is pushing for outdoor catering despite town code that prohibits it and the residents who vigorously oppose it.

The Riverhead Neighborhood Preservation Coalition can be reached at [RiverheadNPC@optonline.net](mailto:RiverheadNPC@optonline.net) or at RNPC, Box 984, Wading River, NY 11792.

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