

## Here's some news: Long Island does have a plan

By: John D. Cameron Jr.    September 12, 2008    [Comments Off](#)

It never ceases to amaze me how people are willing to criticize something without taking the time to learn the facts. A most recent illustrative example of this is Marty Cantor's piece in Long Island Business News entitled "LI needs a Change of Plan."

Marty elected to disparage the Long Island Regional Planning Board, as if it were squandering opportunities for private funding and looking to send its valued taxpayer dollars off Long Island. If Marty actually took the time to attend at least one of the board's dozens of meetings we have had over the past couple of years, he would have learned a little bit about this board's commitment to judiciously spend its public dollars and to obtain the greatest value for the monies expended.

As a point in fact, the reconstituted regional planning board has the strong support of both Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy and Nassau County Executive Tom Suozzi, as well as the respective county Legislatures. Our charge has been to move the board from its isolated policies of the past to ones that will produce a vision for Long Island that squarely meets the challenges we face and will capitalize on the opportunities available. Our board will soon morph into a council, doubling in size to 12 members, with the addition of a town supervisor, village mayor and at-large member from each respective county. Elected officials who actually control zoning on Long Island will now be represented on the board. Michael White, our capable executive director, will continue to direct the activities of the board.

The board has been extremely busy over the past two-plus years on such strategies as developing an affordable housing plan (including successfully negotiating to secure passage of the state's Inclusionary Housing Law), designating "Projects of Regional Significance," in which we are injecting ourselves into review processes to serve as a catalyst for action on identified critical projects, as well as engaging ourselves in the public discourse on how we can best deal with the Island's vexing problems.

In that vein, we are presently procuring a qualified team of planning consultants for our major initiative: preparing a Sustainability Plan for Long Island.

The plan will be funded by public and private dollars. Our decision not to proceed with the consultant who prepared New York City's plan, alluded to by Cantor, was based on a number of reasons, not the least of which was cost and the lack of a demonstrated knowledge of Long Island's "challenges and opportunities."

The purported offer of \$500,000 of private funding referenced by Cantor in support of that proposal, in his accusatory "fell flat" and "wasting opportunities" comments, never did eventuate. Over 50 private and nonprofit organizations have since attended our pre-proposal conferences demonstrating their serious interest in being part of a consulting team to compete for this prestigious selection. I guess Cantor and his institute were not sufficiently interested in competing for this work, never having attended one of our public pre-proposal sessions.

This is the time for all of us to put our parochial self-interests aside and work together to resolve such major challenges as "brain drain," affordability, economic development, social equity, transportation, energy management, environmental protection, etc. Our future is dependent upon the strength of our resolve. We invite you all to constructively contribute to the dialogue, debate and process. Even you, Marty.