

# Hoosick brainstorms with HAYC3 on uses for armory space

**ZEKE WRIGHT**

Friday June 8, 2012



HOOSICK FALLS, N.Y. -- Members of the public met Wednesday at the Hoosick Falls armory to pitch ideas for future uses for the space during an event that included live music and light refreshments.

The nonprofit seeking to acquire the armory, the Hoosick Area Youth Center and Community Coalition, organized the evening to garner input from all sectors of the community. HAYC3 staff and board members say they envision the armory as a shared community space, and their openness to suggestions was reflected in Wednesday's session.

Participants were asked to write down ideas on sticky notes and apply them to one of eight posters categorized along agriculture/business, recreation, arts, wellness, community events, youth, adults, and seniors.

"We can come up with lists and lists of ideas (on our own)," but still overlook potential uses, said community coalition Chairwoman Amanda Haar in an interview last month, explaining this week's event.

The brainstorming session continued planning that began at the town level, upon last year's announcement the National Guard unit stationed at the armory would be leaving. An ad hoc HAYC3 committee, comprised of community members and staff and board members, picked up the planning process in March. "The vision is a community building," said Margaret Restino, a board member and secretary for HAYC3, who cited many youth present and making suggestions. "Everyone has the whole feeling of community," she said.

HAYC3 Vice President Harold McClellan said there were many new and exciting ideas posted Wednesday. He also reflected on the building's past as a community space where many events were held. "As a kid, I spent a lot of time here," McClellan said, his father a past company commander at the armory. "It was a great place to have weddings and social events," with large spaces, and a well-equipped kitchen.

HAYC3 Executive Director Aelish Nealon said ideas received would be compiled and put on display downtown.

The Hoosick nonprofit began seeking the property earlier this year after receiving support from town officials who had previously mulled taking ownership of the armory. Opinions on the town board were split, leading them to throw their support behind the nonprofit.

The municipality has rented office space at the armory since the mid-1990s, and will continue to remain there for the foreseeable future. Nealon said previously that she could see the town successfully co-habiting at the armory, calling it another service the building could provide.

In attendance Wednesday were Hoosick residents and town and village leaders. Invitations also went out to New York officials and locally elected representatives in the state Legislature, Sen. Roy McDonald and Assemblyman Tony Jordan. HAYC3's acquisition of the armory remains contingent on a positive vote on a bill which would authorize the state Office of General Services to transfer ownership to HAYC3.

McDonald and Jordan introduced special legislative member items in their respective houses last month, and a vote is expected as early as next week. Following passage in the Legislature, the state Office of General Services will determine a purchase price and any other conditions, and HAYC3 will then have one year to accept or reject the offer.

The nonprofit formed in 2010 out of the merger of two like organizations, the local youth center at 115 Church St. and the Hoosick Area Partnership for Parents and Youth (HAPPY). While mostly associated with its youth center and children's programming, HAYC3 has expanded its reach in recent years, and now organizes or provides support for a host of events catering to youth and adults throughout the year.

HAYC3 receives primary funding through federal grant money through the Drug Free Communities Support Program, but the organization also raises a growing amount of funds through events and an annual appeal drive. The town of Hoosick provides annual support for a part-time youth counselor position. Town officials have voiced support for increasing financial contributions to the organization over the next several years, but no firm plans have been made while the building remains in flux.