



23 April, 2018

The Columbia Paper
To the Editors:

As reported in the April 20th, 2018 issue of The Columbia Paper, we note that Kinderhook Village Mayor James Dunham commented that CCHS did not approve the grant of an easement for the proposed Empire State Trail across a triangular portion of the Vanderpoel House lawn. It is unfortunate The Columbia Paper's report included neither the reasoning nor the context for the CCHS decision.

To clarify: after lengthy consideration, the Columbia County Historical Society's Board of Trustees unanimously voted not to approve this easement request due to the fact our liability insurance costs would have more than quadrupled, and that this heavy and increasing cost would have to be borne on a permanent basis. In addition there was a great concern about an increased trustee liability risk that would discourage both current and future trustees from serving on our board.

The decision was not made lightly. After the eight months of ongoing discussion, it was made clear to the Trustees that the proposed easement would be permanent and that no other options were acceptable. Also neither the Empire State Trail nor the Village would accept any liability or responsibility for maintenance, trash cleanup, or oversight beyond the exact perimeters of the trail. (And in fact, The Empire Trail presently already owns a full right of way/easement as part of its National Grid/Hudson-Albany Rail trail easement in order to complete the proposed trail).

Founded in 1916, the Columbia County Historical Society Museum & Library collects, preserves, and interprets the history, heritage, and culture of Columbia County, New York. It serves all eighteen towns and the city of Hudson.

According to the NYS Parks Department, the Village of Kinderhook's "Historic District" status is predominately based on the adjacent and focal locations of the two CCHS village properties: The James Vanderpoel 'House of History' and its nearly ten-acre site, and the CCHS Museum & Library, whose property abuts the Vanderpoel land. This prominent, unique, and historic plot of village land has remained intact for at least 200 years. Village, town, and area residents as well as visitors, enjoy use of the properties and the site. The two CCHS village properties are open to the public—members and visitors—year round. The CCHS Trustees believe it is their responsibility to preserve this.

The CCHS owns four historic properties, a research library, and maintains nearly 40 acres of land and a permanent collection of more than 10,000 objects. The Historical Society also presents an ongoing lecture series and publishes an award-winning, scholarly magazine, all without any, State nor Village funds. We are a private non-profit organization and our modest budget is focused toward implementing our mission, to collect, preserve, and interpret the history, heritage, and culture of Columbia County. The role and responsibility of CCHS Trustees is to protect the Historical Society's assets for future generations to study, enjoy and find inspiration.

Respectfully yours,

Alexandra Anderson and Robert Peduzzi, Co-Presidents
Columbia County Historical Society Board of Trustees