

With Route 17 Roadwork Completed, Sloatsburg Village Takes on New Challenge

By *Kathy Kahn, Staff Reporter* on July 8, 2021 *Comments*



Sidewalks being added to the Village of Sloatsburg

Back in 2017, the NYS Dept. of Transportation held a series of charettes (public meetings) to discuss how to best improve the busy NYS Route 17 corridor in the Village of Sloatsburg. Spurred by the major investment that entrepreneur Michael Bruno made in the community when he opened Valley Rock Inn and created several new retail outlets in the village's downtown, Sloatsburg became a contender for the same kind of foot traffic and tourism the Village of Warwick enjoys—despite having an equally busy state Route 94 as its main thoroughfare.

To that end, New York State's Complete Streets program awarded a \$4 million grant to Sloatsburg to make major improvements to its portion of the heavily trafficked Route 17 corridor. Restructuring the roadway, creating turning lanes, aligning crosswalks and curbs, and eventually paving the busy artery curb-to-curb from the entrance to the village to its northern end were among the improvements to be undertaken. An additional grant of \$600,000 was also secured to bring ADA-compliant sidewalks to the village.

The 2020 Pandemic and inclement weather may have slowed the process down a bit, but Sloatsburg's Mayor Peter Akey said on Wednesday that one major component of its Complete Streets initiative has finally been completed: New York State and Rockland County have finished the installation of natural gas lines, as well as new water lines (which will become active once a pressure test is completed), bringing the long months of road work to an end.

"I'm happy to say all the underground work has finally been completed and they're will be no more traffic stoppages," said Akey. "As far as the improvements being made to Route 17, our residents are split 50-50 on the changes that will be made. Once everything is in, I think most people will come to like and appreciate it. There will be new sidewalks, realigned crosswalks and curb cuts, and adaptive traffic signals that will help to keep the traffic flowing."

The next major step is the re-paving of the entire Route 17 corridor curb-to-curb, and therein lies the rub; now that Related Companies had decided to reboot its Tuxedo Farms project on Rockland's border, it may seriously affect the completion of the paving. Quail Road, at northernmost end of Sloatsburg, was originally slated to become a secondary road for the project. Of the \$4 million given to improve the village's downtown area, \$2 million is dedicated to the road's entire repaving.

Part of the village's original agreement with Related was that the company would install the proper drainage across Quail Road to the MTA side of 17. Since the project fizzled, the issue became moot at that point. Now that Related is planning to bring development of Tuxedo Farms back on line, Akey wants to resolve the issue before the DOT comes in to repave Sloatsburg's portion of Route 17.

"We'd be pretty foolish to let the DOT pave the entire road, only to have it dug up to create the drainage needed," said Akey. "So, we're looking to get input from Related on how they are going to handle Tuxedo Farm's secondary road in our village and get a definitive answer before any paving commences."

Related's executive vice president, Greg Gushee, made an in-depth presentation to the Town of Tuxedo's board recently, but using the secondary road in Sloatsburg as a means on egress/ingress to the project was not addressed. Related has not yet reached out to Sloatsburg, but Akey is reaching out to the company to discern what its future plans are for the portion of Tuxedo Farms that lie within the village.

The Rockland Times was unable to reach anyone at Related Companies at press time for comment.