

Town of Southeast
1360 Route 22
Brewster, New York 10509
Thursday, January 8, 2026
WORK SESSION/REGULAR MEETING 7:00 P.M.

Pledge of Allegiance
Notation of Exits
Turn off/put on vibrate – all electronic devices

Present: Councilman Eric Cyprus
Councilman Eric Larca
Councilwoman Lewis
Councilman Mazzotta
Supervisor Nick Durante

Also: Town Clerk Kathleen Chiudina
Town Attorney Willis H. Stephens Jr

And: 62 persons

WORK SESSION:

Discussion – Garden Street School – Repurposing for Municipal and Community Use:

Councilman Larca provided a presentation regarding the conversion of Garden Street School to a municipal town hall. He said this is an exploratory presentation regarding a beloved landmark in our community. This is a potential proposal to bring together two municipalities to service our community as a whole, he said. Conceptual design was shown and potential costs provided. Next steps would be to do a professional services evaluation to review the property and come up with potential costs and issues.

REGULAR MEETING

Supervisor Durante made a motion to open the Regular Meeting. Councilman Cyprus seconded. All in favor.

Supervisor Durante made a motion to set a public hearing for Thursday, January 22, 2026, regarding the proposed local law to amend Chapter 54, Building Construction and Fire Prevention, 54-7 Permits and Fees. Seconded by Councilman Cyprus. All in favor.

Supervisor Durante made a motion to set a public hearing for Thursday, February 20, 2026, regarding Water District Rates. Seconded by Councilman Larca. All in favor.

Supervisor Durante made a motion to consent to Putnam County being lead agency for Putnam County Solid Waste Management Plan. Seconded by Councilman Cyprus. All in favor.

Supervisor Durante made a motion to consent to Putnam County being lead agency regarding Tilly Foster Conservation Easement Amendment. Seconded by Councilman Mazzotta. All in favor.

NEW BUSINESS:

There was no new business.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jamie Callahan, Southeast resident, thanked Councilman Larca for his presentation on Garden Street. She said I have been advocating for children, trolling the board or being a board member. No one talks about JFK like they do Garden Street, she said, because there was a heart and soul in there and right now the Brewster community does not have a heart and soul. It does not have that anchor that draws everyone together to a central location, she said. We have seen crime increase in our town, she said, and we need to take the action now to actually change the trajectory of what is going on. She said the County should be promoting our town and helping us to move forward as well and not something that would be detrimental

to the community like a mental health center right next to a daycare. Ms. Callahan said Maple Road needs to be back on the schedule to discuss with the Board and invited anyone from the Board to come to Maple Road and see how detrimental the roads are currently.

Mrs. Bertie Kozma, Southeast resident, said my children went to Garden Street and I taught at Garden Street and it holds an important piece of people's hearts who have been here a long time. She said I was on the Board of Ed when the school was closed and it was not because of asbestos, but it was because it would have cost. at that point in time, it would have cost 11 million dollars just to bring it up to State regulations for education. She said I have lived in the community for 44 years and in that time there has always been a push for a community center because there is not central location for them to go. Combining the Village and Town offices into one building would also make it much easier for the community, she said.

Mrs. Monica Larca, Southeast resident, said I remember going to Garden Street for dances when I was a teenager. I think this proposal would have a wonderful impact on the community and would bring together the Village and the Town.

Scott Seaman, Town of Southeast resident and Brewster Central School District board member, said I do not want to go back and forth with who is to blame; we are where we are – today and that is what we are and we as a community have to be more involved. He said the last thing the Village or Town need are more luxury homes on a hill and nowhere for the people to go. Most of the development in this area does not bring community together with the warehouses and distribution centers and storage places. My kids went to JFK, he said, and there was lots of love, and it is a beautiful building. Kindergarten registration is starting. Over 20% of the high school student body is involved with NJROTC. The VFW breakfast is this Sunday.

Mr. Drew Peterson, Southeast resident of five years, said in my hometown of New City, New York, there is a Street Community Center on Zucker Road that used to be a school. It would be a good project to research to help with this one.

Ms. Debbie Oswald, Director of the Southeast Museum, said this project would be the answer to a lot of prayers. The Museum's lease is about to expire or has expired. She said I am in my third year as director, and we are fully invested in the Brewster Central School District by providing local history of Brewster, Carmel, and Mahopac to students grades K through 12. We have seniors doing their Senior Success projects at the museum. We also have work-study programs with students from Green Chimneys and the Brewster High School Vocational Skills Program, so we are serving so many people at this point.

Ms. Jamie Callahan returned to the podium and said one of the things I did not bring up is the importance of BOCES and the fact that our students must travel approximately 45 minutes on a bus each way to attend BOCES. There is limited room in these programs as well such as the electrician program which has 25 spots; Brewster got 1 spot last year.

Ms. Katy Faivre, Southeast resident, said Beacon High School has a similar project that they did. The Prospector Theater took an old building that they renovated. Mid-Hudson ARC, which used to be PARC, is looking to expand their program and it would be wonderful to bring services for peoples with disabilities to Southeast. This project is a piece of bringing the community together. She said two of my three kids had Mrs. Larca and she is still to this day their favorite teacher.

Ms. Olenna Truskett, Town of Southeast Cultural Art Coalition, said we occupy Old Town Hall on the top and bottom floors with the museum in the middle and we would love to embark on a renovation project at the same time.

Ms. Ellen Yass, Southeast resident, said I have been here five years. When we saw Garden Street for the first time what we thought was torpedo factory, banana factory which were artist destinations and artist lofts, she said. Twenty million dollars is not a lot of money, she said, and we need to invest. She asked what the vision was for 1 Main Street and Old Town Hall. Councilman Larca said we were in contract to sell both of those building to the developer doing the revitalization. She said the community, as a whole, needs a vision of what it wants to be, not just a community center, and the arts needs to be an integral part of that because people come for the arts.

TOWN BOARD COMMENT

Supervisor Durante made a motion to go into Executive Session where no action will be taken. Councilman Larca seconded. All in favor.

Supervisor Durante made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 8:45 pm. Seconded by Councilman Larca. All in favor.

Supervisor Durante made a motion to close the meeting and Councilman Larca seconded. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathleen Chiudina
Southeast Town Clerk