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Council seeks to promote western Putnam

By [JERRY GLEESON](#)
THE JOURNAL NEWS

(Original publication: May 19, 2007)

It was February 2006, and Cold Spring Depot owner Tom Rolston felt "nothing in the world was happening. ... Stores were complaining there was no business. There was no business."

So Rolston threw a free breakfast one morning and invited dozens of people he knew in business, government and social circles to toss around ideas. What emerged was the Western Putnam Economic Development Council, a volunteer group seeking to promote growth.

The group has been meeting Friday mornings for more than a year at the offices of MKTworks Inc., a marketing company in Nelsonville. MKTworks President Marshall Mermell and project manager Marc Sabin are co-chairing the EDC.

On some people's minds that winter morning was the departure in recent years of antique businesses from Cold Spring's Main Street, Sabin said. Others saw broader issues affecting the region, such as the need to attract businesses that support the crucial tourism industry while meeting the needs of local residents.

"People wanted to see positive change," said Mermell, who also serves as vice president of the Cold Spring Chamber of Commerce. "In discussions, everybody realized they were part of a larger whole."

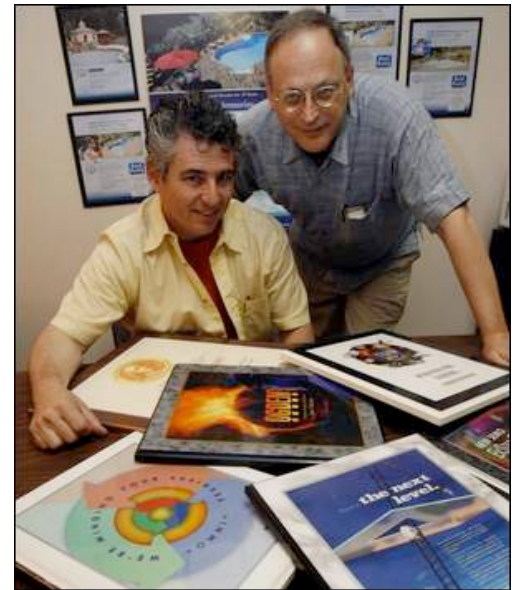
In the weeks that followed, the volunteers set up a series of meetings to address the issues of specific interest groups, such as landlords, not-for-profits, restaurants and real estate.

"We've really made an effort to explore all points of view," Sabin said. "It's a very inclusive philosophy we have."

The council's emergence dovetails with other things that are happening in the area. Cold Spring is working on a master plan to oversee village change. And some historical anniversaries with connections to the Hudson Valley are coming up.

They include the 200th anniversary this year of Robert Fulton's steamboat voyage up the Hudson River, and the 400th anniversary in 2009 of Henry Hudson's voyage. Council members said they want to work with state and New York City organizations that are planning observances.

The group is working its way up. It has incorporated, it has produced a marketing plan



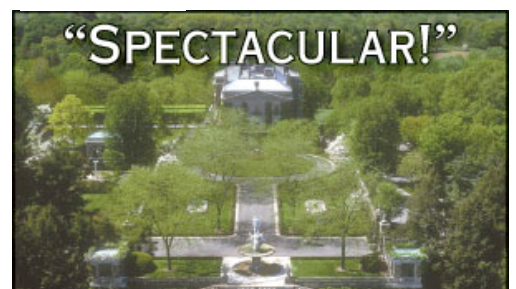
Joe Larese/The Journal News

Western Putnam Economic Development Council co-chairs Marc Sabin, left, and Marshall Mermell at MKTworks, their marketing company in Nelsonville on Monday. The group is promoting the commercial and cultural interests of the western part of the county.

For more information

The Western Putnam Economic Development Council meets at 8:30 Friday mornings at the offices of MKTworks Inc. at 292 Main St. in Nelsonville. The telephone number is 845-265-7000. The Web site is www.wpedc.org

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for the area, and has its own Web site (www.wpedc.org).

Last month it sponsored a Fashion and Home Design Week to promote local businesses with events such as daily restaurant fashion shows. Council member Marilyn Heberling, who organized the program, was pleased with the results.

"In a small community like this, the economy relies on bringing people in," said Heberling, who has run Art to Wear on Main Street and has been a merchant there for 17 years. "We've had our ups and downs, ups and downs."

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I have two boutiques- one in downtown Peekskill, the other in downtown Carmel. Both shops are called "Side Effects/ NY" and we sell upscale jewelry, accessories and giftware. In the past 3 years that I've been open, I have seen first hand the power of effective marketing and Cold Spring is a perfect example of just how beautifully it works. I sincerely hope we can get something going in either of the towns where I'm located because if it doesn't happen soon, I may just pack up and bring everything to Cold Spring.

Posted by: **pattv10579** on Sat May 19, 2007 8:07 am

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