

PLAN ON IT

A Dutchess County Planning Federation Newsletter

June 2007

For Local Man, 7-Day Weekend Begins

Assistant Commissioner Richard Birch Retires from County Planning After 34 Years

With his newly-acquired Masters Degree in City and Regional Planning from Rutgers University in hand, a young man named Richard Birch was hired in 1973 as a Junior Planner with the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development. He steadily moved up in the department to Senior Planner, Planning Supervisor, and in 1994 to his current position as Assistant Commissioner. As of June 29, 2007, Rich Birch moves on to a new adventure - the life of a retiree.

Then and Now

During his time with the County, Rich has seen countless changes – he went from manual typewriters, recordkeeping on green columnar sheets, and hand-coloring maps with pencils to high-tech GIS mapping (as Chair of the County’s GIS Committee) and dependence on constantly-improving computer hardware and software. He has worked with every Planning Commissioner and County Executive since the Department was created. He watched as the Planning and Development department created five other units: Real Property Tax, LOOP, Resource Recovery Agency, Traffic Safety, and the Dutchess County Water and Wastewater Authority.



Shaping the County

Rich was part of the team that produced the County’s Comprehensive Plan, “*Directions.*” He also worked on several municipal master plans and zoning laws, was lead planner for Hyde Park and Pawling, and has provided valuable advice to the staff of Planning and Development as well as most other County departments and the public, always remaining professional, direct, and courteous.

When asked about his most important contributions over the years, Rich focused on ways to improve both the County and staff members. He spoke of refining the County's master plan to reflect changing times and new growth pressures, of encouraging a spirit of cooperation with other departments, self-improvement through continuing education, and congeniality among members of the department to help reach our objective of "excellence in planning." Rich always felt it was important to be approachable to the public when they needed information, and to maintain a reputation for honesty and integrity in planning decisions.

Best Wishes to You, Mr. Birch!

Rich will be missed for his great wealth of knowledge concerning County issues and policy, his professionalism, sense of humor, and calm demeanor. Best of luck to you, Rich, as you start this next adventure. We at Planning and Development hope you enjoy a long, healthy, and happy retirement!

[CLICK HERE](#) to view past issues of the DCPF's newsletter, *Plan On It*.

This newsletter was developed by the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development, in conjunction with the Dutchess County Planning Federation.

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