



Tamaqua Area CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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*"Promoting and strengthening the economic, industrial, professional,
cultural and civic welfare of the Tamaqua Area and managing Tamaqua's Main Street program."*

May 14, 2009

**TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA SENATE URBAN AFFAIRS AND HOUSING COMMITTEE'S
HEARING ON
COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION IN ECONOMICALLY TOUGH TIMES**

By
Linda Yulanavage
Main Street Manager, Borough of Tamaqua
Executive Director, Tamaqua Area Chamber of Commerce

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and members of this Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on the issue of community revitalization in time of economic stress.

The Borough of Tamaqua is a community of 7100 citizens and has been a Pennsylvania Main Street community since 1998. My name is Linda Yulanavage and I have been the manager of the Borough's Main Street program since 1999.

Our revitalization efforts through the Main Street program began with a "kickstart" through "New Communities" program funding through DCED. Since our "graduation" from that funding stream two years ago, we have managed to become self-sustaining thanks to the support of our businesses and the partnerships we have formed with other community organizations.

The Main Street program, known as Downtown Tamaqua, Inc., now operates through its volunteers as part of the Tamaqua Area Chamber of Commerce, through a management agreement with the Borough of Tamaqua.

The Chamber and Main Street programs share office space and expenses with the Gallery at the Tamaqua Art Center, as well as the Tamaqua Industrial Development Enterprises, in downtown Tamaqua. The art gallery is a project of the Tamaqua Area Community Partnership, another all-volunteer non-profit community development organization. Five Tamaqua non-profit volunteer organizations are located in a building that is owned by the Tamaqua Historical Society and the staff of the Chamber/Main Street program provides a wide variety of services to each of the five organizations. These organizations contribute a small amount of funding to the Chamber/Main Street program for these services. These fees range from \$500 to \$7200/year.

The Borough provides a municipal contribution of \$8500/year to the Chamber for management services of the Main Street program. As the Executive Director of the Tamaqua Chamber of Commerce, I provide day-to-day management of the Main Street program to the Borough.

The Main Street program, through these partnerships, provides day-to-day management of the Art Gallery, downtown parking lots, a parking garage, a public park (known as Depot Square Park), and three major festivals each year. We provide design services for facade improvements on commercial and residential

buildings within the Main Street area. There have been over 60 facade improvement projects completed since 1999.

In addition, our Main Street program recently completed an Upper Story Market Study in the commercial district of Tamaqua. We are using the results of the study to market available upper story spaces for both commercial and residential development. Inexpensive marketing is provided through an online video on both YouTube and the Chamber's website.

Our fund raising efforts include monthly mixers, a fishing derby, pub crawls, sidewalk sales, community yard sales, an annual progress report booklet, an annual dinner, a summer concert series, a community website and much more with the help of business sponsorships. All of these projects are managed and organized through the Main Street and Chamber programs.

The all volunteer organization, Save Our Station, owns and manages the beautifully restored 1874 Tamaqua Train Station in the heart of downtown Tamaqua. This project is aided through funding that comes from the sale of engraved bricks that line the sidewalks of the station property.

Depot Square Park, the public park in the heart of downtown Tamaqua, is owned by the Borough of Tamaqua and an all volunteer Main Street committee provides the maintenance of the park. The park was once a 70's style gas station. The site was donated to the Borough by the Amerada Hess family for use as a green space. The Tamaqua Area Community Partnership and the Main Street program solicited funds from local businesses and individuals and the park became a reality, complete with Victorian style lighting, grass, trees, park benches, flower gardens and a large water fountain. The park, along with the Tamaqua Train Station, has become the focal point of our community and continues to be used for many community activities.

Several years ago, the Tamaqua Area Community Partnership's Historic Preservation Committee wanted to place historic markers throughout the area to highlight our heritage. Lacking the funding for the markers, members of the committee provided the money from their own pockets to install several markers. Since then, community donations provide the funding that allows the program to continue.

All of these all-volunteer, non-profit organizations have worked for more than 10 years to revitalize our community to provide a better place for our families and friends to live, work and play. Our success has been made possible because of the hard work and dedication and the cooperative spirit that exists among the volunteer organizations, residents, and businesses who continue to work to revitalize the entire Tamaqua area. Without the initial help of Main Street funding, Tamaqua would not have been able to move forward in our revitalization efforts.