

# POOR EXCUSE FOR ZONING

BY **ABBY LUBY**  
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

WHILE AFFLUENT Westchester towns await a federal monitor's next report on a court-ordered affordable-housing plan, some upper-crust communities are already complaining about mandated zoning changes.

Federal monitor James Johnson finally gave his first nod in a year to a new model zoning ordinance a few weeks ago, after rejecting the county's first two housing plans.

His next report is expected to criticize County Executive Robert

## Ritzy W'chester towns rip fed housing plan

Astorino's refusal to sign off on previous housing legislation.

The county was forced to build 750 affordable units after being sued by the Anti-Discrimination Center for misappropriating federal funds earmarked for affordable housing.

The settlement stipulates that \$51.6 million be spent on units to be built in towns with little or no black or Hispanic residents, such as Scarsdale, Rye, Irving, Tarrytown, Bronxville and Yorktown.

But the targeted communities say the ordinance is problematic, especially considering the cost of land.

"Land here costs \$1.7 million an acre," said Scarsdale Village Manager Alfred Gatta. "It would be a great incentive to build affordable housing if the county gave us \$1.7 million. That would work."

"Somebody who knew nothing about northern Westchester created this plan," said Yorktown Supervisor Susan Siegel. "You can't pop units in where you have no

public water, no sewers, no public transportation."

She said Yorktown is changing its zoning to accommodate affordable homes in the future.

"The plan remains vague and the communities are anxious," said Tarrytown Village Administrator Mike Blau. "We still don't know all the ins and outs and what our obligations actually are."

Towns that resist the plan may lose federal community development block grants or other funding doled out by the county, said

Westchester legislator John Nonna of Pleasantville and Briarcliff Manor, who serves on the Housing and Planning Committee overseeing the plan.

Siegel said the block grants are a major revenue source for Yorktown, adding: "We don't want to jeopardize that money."

"We don't want to start out taking a hammer to anyone's head," said Westchester County Board of Legislators Chairman Ken Jenkins (D-Yonkers). "The last straw would be eminent domain."

Westchester must have both financing in place for 100 affordable units and 50 building permits in place by Dec. 31, 2011.

## He's tuning up for a klezmer revival

**T**oby Kasavan can't read the words on the 106 pages of klezmer music he's had for close to 25 years.

He can't really play any of it either, even though he's a professional pianist in the "jazz and funk" genres.

"These are gig books, arrangements for performances," Kasavan said. "There is a violin book in the key of 'C,' a 'B flat' book for clarinet, and an 'E flat' book for alto saxophone. There really is no part for the piano."

But Kasavan, 58, does know a lot of the history behind the music because it's family history. Each of the pieces are original compositions written by Joshua (Sheayaikle) Barsh, his maternal great-grandfather, who was 102 when he died in Los Angeles in 1952.

Now Kasavan just wants to get the music heard.

"I want to make the music live again," he said. "The music is a connection to the family's past and the past in general. Getting it played is like bringing something to light that was hidden."

Barsh was a violinist, a klezmer musician and an orchestra leader of some renown, though most of his history is sketchy. Born in 1850 in a Polish village that Kasavan said was later destroyed in World War I, Barsh played with a family orchestra of at least 14 musicians in his native Poland.

"The Barsh family were all musicians," Kasavan said. "He probably started playing in the family orchestra when he was 15 years old."

Family research suggests the orchestra, the name of which has been lost, worked within a 100-mile radius of its home base, something Kasavan said indicates not only that it was popular but also that it probably performed for both

Jewish and non-Jewish audiences.

Barsh was at least 50 years old when he left Poland sometime around 1900, immigrating to Germany before joining family members who had moved to Toronto.

"A cousin, Stuart Gold, interviewed Joshua's son back in 1986," Kasavan said. "He said Joshua left Poland because he was about to be drafted in the Polish Army, which had a long enlistment requirement. He got fake papers and went to Germany and then to Canada. Most of the family is still in Toronto."

Joshua moved to Los Angeles after World War II.

"All my life I had heard there was a trunk of my grandfather's music somewhere out there," Kasavan said. He found out for sure when an uncle, Louis Gold, passed the 120 pages along in 1984.

"He said, 'You're the musician in the family, maybe you can do something with this,'" Kasavan said.

The papers sat in Kasavan's Rego Park, Queens, attic until he rediscovered them during a move to Kensington, Brooklyn, three months ago.

Curious, Kasavan made some queries on the Web. Klezmer music, he found, was in the midst of a revival.

Local New York City bands like the Klezmer Mountain Boys and a New England Conservatory of Music professor have performed pieces. A University of Virginia professor is writing a Barsh family klezmer history.

Kasavan could not be happier.

"I just want everyone to play the music, as long as Joshua gets credit and the music gets out there," Kasavan said. "Some of it is really beautiful."

For more info, email Kasavan at [rgfh10@hotmail.com](mailto:rgfh10@hotmail.com).

[crichardson@nydailynews.com](mailto:crichardson@nydailynews.com)



**Toby Kasavan, whose great-grandfather was an accomplished klezmer player in Poland, wants to put life back into the genre after finding sheet music in his attic.** Photo by Michael Dabin

**CITY BEAT**  
BY CLEM RICHARDSON