



**The Community Foundation of Tompkins County
and
The Baden-Powell Council of the Boy Scouts of America
Camp Barton: Now and in the Future
A Critical Issues Roundtable
May 4, 2004**

The Community Foundation of Tompkins County held its fifth 2003-2004 Critical Issues Roundtable on May 4, 2004, at Taughannock Farms Inn in Ithaca, New York. Co-hosting the event was the Baden-Powell Council of the Boy Scouts of America, owners of Camp Barton. The topic was *Camp Barton: Now and in the Future*.

Sixty-six people attended the conversation focusing on the possibilities for using Camp Barton as a year-round community-wide resource. Participants included government representatives, staff and board members from local nonprofit organizations, Boy Scout leaders and area administrators, representatives of community governments, educators, economic development and business leaders, local funders, representatives of various towns/villages in Tompkins County, church leaders, and leaders of the social service community.

The 2003-2004 Critical Issues Roundtables are a series of community-focused conversations hosted by the Community Foundation. Each roundtable features a strategic topic that addresses the quality of life for those who work and live in Tompkins County. The roundtables are provocative discussions that lead to action, produce more effective strategic decision-making and planning practices, promote positive results for our communities, and foster enlightened philanthropy.

Framing the Discussion: The Arts and Culture of Tompkins County

Preliminary to the general discussion, Jay True, community leader and member of the Baden-Powell Council, presented an overview of Camp Barton as it is today, the resources it represents, and the interest the Baden-Powell Council has in opening Camp Barton to community-wide participation. The availability of Camp Barton for community uses would be year-round except for the six weeks in the summer for Boy Scout Camp (last week of June through the first week of August). Interesting facts supporting Camp Barton's use as a special community asset are:

- Camp Barton has served scouting and Tompkins County for more than 76 years
- Camp Barton is 120 acres with 3200' of Cayuga Lake shoreline located on Frontenac Point, four miles North of Taughannock State Park and within 15-30 minutes of Ithaca, Trumansburg, and much of Tompkins County..
- Camp Barton has many scenic and natural aspects including Frontenac Creek, a 78' waterfall with a pool drop and two smaller waterfalls, nature trails, lean-tos, a pavilion and fully-equipped dining hall (capacity 250 people), a chapel, sports areas, and an upper section near State Route 89.

- Camp Barton has facilities – including waterfront swimming, boating and boat launching – that would lend themselves to group camping, family camping, special events, and other activities consistent with a natural setting/outdoor-oriented focus.

Although opportunities exist to sell or lease Camp Barton, the Baden-Powell Council is hoping to retain and preserve this beautiful setting for the good of all, since it is one of the last remaining “open spaces” along Cayuga Lake.

Serving as leader of the general discussion, Steve Johnson, Cornell University and member of the Baden-Powell Council, posed the primary questions of the roundtable: *how can Camp Barton be used by the community and what are the next steps toward implementing these uses?*

Results of General Discussion

Participants were involved in small-group conversations about the general questions, considering as well how the seasons might influence their uses of Camp Barton and how the current facilities are suited to immediate use and then through enhancements to expanded uses might strengthen and extend the vitality of opportunities for residents of Tompkins County and the Finger Lakes Region. Among the ideas for community uses emanating from these small-group discussions were:

- the wide variety of outdoor education, sporting, and camping opportunities for youth and families;
- the opportunities for organizations to hold meetings, teambuilding retreats, conferencing, and cultural activities such as arts or music festivals, wedding receptions, family reunions, weekend seminars, boating and fishing tournaments;
- the options for tourism-related activities, such as lodging for visiting college parents or visitors to the Finger Lakes area (could be packaged with other collaborative partners such as the Discovery Trail, the theaters or businesses offering special visitor experiences); and
- special camps such as sailing camps, winter sports (ice climbing, hiking, outward-bound experiences), church-related programs, and health-wellness training.

Twenty-six of the participants represented organizations or groups that would have immediate interest in using Camp Barton. These organizations ranged from businesses to town sports’ programs, colleges and universities, 4-H and Cooperative Extension, fraternities, churches, social service agencies, the Chamber of Commerce and the Tompkins County Visitors Bureau, Discovery Trail, cultural associations, and even the local banks. Many were interested in collaborating with each other in possible uses, such as the cultural or educational organizations teaming up to provide multi-faceted programming opportunities for youth, families, and tourists. Several were interested in using the Camp during August this year. All in all, ideas abounded and excitement was high.

Participants were in general agreement that they learned something new as part of their discussions. Among the ideas mentioned most frequently were a heightened sense of the facts and data regarding Camp Barton as a natural resource and a location of great potential, the economic impact of having Camp Barton as a vital part of areas arts and cultural programming, and the ways it could encompass uses for people of various ages, socio-economic, or cultural-ethnic interests. Participants expressed their appreciation for the Baden-Powell Council’s interest in preserving and retaining Camp Barton as a community resource.

Next Steps

In closing, participants were asked to identify what information they or their organizations would need to move forward. Mentioned most frequently were the potential costs for use, the guidelines or limitations surrounding various uses, and the availability/duration of uses. Many suggested that the next steps for the Baden-Powell Council would include developing a new mission statement and strategic plan for Camp Barton as a community resource and a business plan to encompass its various uses. Thirty-six participants offered to help with “next steps.” Areas of expertise included legal, marketing, engineering/design, fundraising, business and long-range strategic planning, and educational programming. The Baden-Powell Council will now move forward to consider the ways in which all of these activities and support can be mobilized to the best advantage of Tompkins County and specifically the vitality and retention of Camp Barton as a community-wide resource.

Special Thanks to All

On behalf of the Community Foundation of Tompkins County and the Baden-Powell Council, we thank all who participated in this roundtable on *Camp Barton: Now and in the Future*. The discussion was lively. The results offer promise of future strategies that will strengthen and broaden outdoor opportunities for residents in Tompkins County and for visitors to this region. Best of all, there are those who have offered help in making these strategies realities.

Vital to the community conversation on Camp Barton was a dedicated planning team, whose work identified the main discussion points and identified preliminary background information that would be helpful to participants. The Planning Committee included: Eric Clay, *Chair-Grants Committee and Community Foundation Board member*; Mike Degenhart, *Cornell University and the Baden-Powell Council*; Steve Gray, *Cornell University and the Baden-Powell Council*; Kevin Gross, *District Executive and the Baden-Powell Council*; Peg Hendricks, *Community Foundation*; Ted Hullar, *Director for Higher Education, Atlantic Philanthropies, Inc.*; Steve Johnson, *Cornell University and the Baden-Powell Council*; David Kuckuk, *The Thomas Group and scout volunteer*; George Pfann, Jr., *True, Walsh, & Miller and former scoutmaster*; Jay True, *True Insurance and Vice President of the Baden-Powell Council*; and David Tyler, *True, Walsh & Miller and member of the Trumansburg community*. Our special thanks go to all of these people and especially to Steve Johnson for serving as the roundtable host and discussion leader.