



WESTPORT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
PO Box 394, Westport, NY 12993

July 26, 2021

Essex County Board of Supervisors
PO Box 217
7551 Court Street
Elizabethtown, NY 12932

Honorable Board of Supervisors,

The Westport Chamber of Commerce, whose mission is to “advocate for business growth and cultural prosperity...,” urges you to restore the Cornell Extension Building instead of demolishing a structure listed in the National Register of Historic Places and replacing it.

Here are some of the reasons to restore this county treasure:

- The restoration, like that which happened with the Westport Town Hall, will more likely use local contractors and their employees instead of construction firms from outside the area that specialize in building government buildings. Such firms may be less expensive, but all those funds go outside our region instead of to our people. Local firms will likely hire younger people who will learn skills that enable them to stay and raise families here.
- To replicate local involvement with restoring Westport’s Town Hall and the Whallonsburg Grange, the restoration can bring the community together as people volunteer to do tasks like painting, glazing windows, cleaning, and more. Imagine a crew of local people washing, scraping, priming, and then painting a final finish coat. When they finish, imagine the celebration!
- Despite the figures used to justify demolish/replace and the apparently exaggerated costs of restoration, restoring the Cornell Extension Building is likely to be less than it will be to destroy and replace it.
- If the building is replaced, hundreds of parents, who as children attended 4-H activities there, will no longer point out to their children and grandchildren the building where they learned so many important life lessons.
- Demolishing the building will destroy part of Essex County’s cultural and historic legacy.
- People come to a community for its history and culture. Having the opportunity to see and enjoy a restored Cornell Extension Building will honor those people and add to their enjoyment of this area. They will likely return and support our businesses.

- This helps with Westport and the county's economy because people see that local officials and the general public have valued this historic building and preserved it so everyone can experience its architectural and cultural features.
- The Cornell Extension once housed federal, state, and local agencies working on agricultural matters. As the county board curtailed use of this building, these agencies have moved to separate places with fewer opportunities to communicate and collaborate. While a new building may provide space for that purpose, it will lose the context of people collaborating in that building for decades.
- Funding for demolish/restore would come from federal earmark funding to construct the new building. This funding could also be used to renovate the existing building, which is a far better use of the money.

In sum, restoring the Cornell Extension will promote business growth in Westport, Essex County, and regional communities. The Westport Chamber of Commerce requests that you honor Essex County history, consider how your actions on this matter has short- and long-term impacts our communities, and vote to restore this historic and culturally important structure.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Westport Chamber of Commerce