

Hi All,

On December 10th I attended a Planning Board meeting. It's been a while since I posted a PB recap but there was some important stuff on this agenda so I thought I'd give it a shot.

First off (like this is something new) I've gotta vent.

Audience members, applicants, attorneys and assorted engineers were left cooling their heels for well over 30 minutes as only three members of the Board showed up on time. And because our Town Board has neglected to appoint anyone to the two open positions the Board currently has only five members. I believe that there will be a third opening this month thus I'm quite sure that three new members will be appointed before the new regime takes over- if for no reason other than spite. In fact, I'm hearing that former Councilwoman Mitts will be one of the choices and that this'll really push Supervisor-Elect Rights over the edge. What will they think of next...

As far as this meeting Tom LaPerch was still pretty terrific as Chair. Particularly on a Lepler project- and variances in general. I'm in awe. Even more exciting it seems that the Board is putting together a sub-committee to start looking into 'green' building in Southeast. This is a really excellent idea that will hopefully positively impact both Camarda's oh-so-imaginatively-named Stateline project and 'Leplerville'- eventually to be unveiled for Route 22 (after our Town Planner is finished designing it for him).

As always the opinions both above and below are only that- my jaded take on planning and projects in Southeast. My comments reflect no organization unlucky enough to have me as a member.

AGENDA:

Public Hearing:

1. Southeast Memorial Park: North Main Street

Applicant: John Petrillo

There will be a continuation of the hearing for a wetlands permit on 1/14/08. Passed 4-0

REGULAR SESSION:

1. Brewster Transit Mix: Fields Lane:

This was referred to the Town Board for the release of a performance bond. Passed 4-0

2. One Geneva Road, LLC (Across from DMV building)

Applicant: Harold Lepler This was a Preliminary Site Plan review. Approvals were given years ago. The proposal is for a 33,000 square ft. warehouse/office to be built on spec. Talks with the DEC and DEP have commenced. There need to be improvements made on the existing drainage basin on site. Wetlands' consultant Don Cuomo asked if there was a 'Drainage District' formed to take care of maintenance.

Aside from a Special Permit this project will need a variance. Chairman LaPerch asked why a spec building would need a variance. He then pointed out that it would be easier and more appropriate to modify the building plans now.

There were two engineering questions (not addressed directly) that need to be answered. The building will not be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified but would address environmental and energy concerns. Lighting will be in compliance. Mr. Lepler mentioned that the Senior Housing at Mt. Ebo will be LEED certified.

The PB declared themselves lead agency 4-0. This project will be on the January 28th meeting.

3. 12 Old Route 6 Commercial Building- Sketch Plan Review

This will probably be a general store (was the Old Route 6 Pub). Septic was expanded and there are 5 parking spaces. A special permit will be needed. Chairman LaPerch asked that a letter re. expanded septic fields from the BoH be included. This project will be on the January 14th agenda.

4. Tremblay Site Plan- East Route 6

This was a sketch plan review. The property is on the north side of Route 6. The owner (with engineer Peter Tavino) proposed a diner on the old 'Fore and Aft' site (almost opposite Route 121). The Tremson mulching concern would remain (in between Branch Road and Route 6) Some of the site will need a variance to go from 5% outside-storage to 10%. The applicant would also like to sell firewood. This would be on a 4 acre site abutting DEP property on the East Branch Reservoir. A use variance would be needed.

Mr. LaPerch made the observation that this was a busy, busy site so plans must be clear now so there is no question of segmentation later. Don Cuomo asked that wetlands mapping be brought up to date.

COMMENTS/OPINIONS:

Southeast Memorial Park:

This has been one of the sketchiest long term projects I've followed over the last five years. Originally a proposed ball field was to be donated to Southeast while John Petrillo would retain proposed batting cages. SE would also be responsible for constructing the parking lot that Petrillo's customers would use. Almost the entire project was in the wetland or wetland buffer. Then the major question arose: Was the property contaminated? A private well (further north on North Main) had shown contamination years ago. And remember, this project backs up to Metro North yards (where trains are cleaned with various solvents) and the property itself contains construction debris from Route 684 when it was resurfaced. Whew. In light of this the PB asked that test borings be conducted.

Then, several months ago, Petrillo decides to renege on his offer of land donation to the town and insists that there's no longer any need for soil samples to be take. Oh really... Fortunately the PB disagreed.

Now several meetings have gone by without the applicant showing up.

The Planning Board has been great about follow-up in this application- and it's an important one.

One Geneva Road: or... Caution Drainage District rant ensues....

This one's a classic, complete with creepy bad karma backstory (insert 'Twilight Zone' theme here). Apparently, many years ago, the first prospective tenant of this property was killed in a car accident. Then the next prospective tenants were partners who died within a year or two of contracting on One Geneva. Scheesh, maybe there's a developer's curse on the property...

Anyhow, it was hard to believe that the applicant had the nerve to even mention a variance on what is to be a spec building. On the other hand the engineer did call the site 'dynamic' and I'm not sure what this means. I know that steep slopes and wetlands (preferably the two mixed) are often referred to as 'challenging' but 'dynamic' is a new one on me.

Apparently there is a drainage basin in bad repair on site. So I especially loved the chatter about 'Drainage Districts' and whether or not we have any in Southeast. After all, the Planning Board was the entity that had some oversight over these set-ups in the beginning. Yeah, well, now we have theoretical Drainage Districts we just don't have any operational ones. Drainage Districts were the ultimate public pacifier for any who opposed a project. The Board would assure disgruntled neighbors and concerned residents that the subdivision under consideration would be set up as a Drainage District and that all maintenance and resulting fees would be paid for by those within said District. Trouble is- not one residential Drainage District has ever collected a dime. Oh sure, the basins were installed but that was the end of it. So basically, we're paying for all the new subdivision's and their drainage upkeep back to when Crosby Hill was built over a decade ago.

Tremblay Site Plan:

Sure, I like Mr. Tremblay and I patronize his business- but this plan... Ei yi yi. Ten pounds of well, you get the picture. And direct from the 'I-knew-this-would-come-back-to-bite-us-in-the-*ss' Department I loved when the engineer mentioned that a 'use variance' shouldn't be all that difficult to get because the ZBA had given them out before. In general a use-variance is very difficult to obtain but once they've been given out how do you say no?

Of course Mr. Tremblay is entitled to keep all his pre-existing, non-conforming business' right where that are. But truck storage and log splitting? Yeah, because nothing screams 'welcome to our community' like the aforementioned in a 'Gateway/Commercial' district.

Further, a log splitting concern perched on the banks of the Reservoir. Hmmm, sounds like an ecological bonanza to me. As for a diner on the old 'Fore and Aft' site- well, I'd just want to be assured that there's room for a fully operational and effective septic system.

To give credit where credit is due the Board seemed very skeptical of this application inferring that it's too ambitious for the site. And to give credit to Tremblay they gave a good presentation and seemed open and honest about all the 'stuff' they want to jam on the site. In fact, the sheer exuberance of their engineer was actually exhausting. I have no doubt, make that, 'I am hopeful', that this project will have to be substantially scaled back to get through the planning process.

That's it from my desk. As always please feel free to e-mail me with any questions or comments that you may have. So looking forward to the Town Board Meeting on the 27th where 'all will be revealed' as to our brand new Planning Board members. Until then Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year to all.

With Best Regards,

Lynne Eckardt