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From: "Lynne Eckardt" <midfarm@bestweb.net>
Date: Sat Apr 1, 2006 5:19 pm
Subject: SE Town Board Work Session Recap 3/30/06

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Hi All,

Thursday night I had the distinct pleasure (well, maybe not distinct, and come to think of it, **not** at all a pleasure) of attending a Town Board Work Session for the always charming Mr. Camarda's 'Stateline Retail Centre' presentation.

Fortunately, the 'Winged Migration' cam was in slo-mo so airsick bags were not necessary. That said, hip boots were 'de rigueur', for the absolute crap the Town Board dished out. Scheesh, I've seen better manners on Jerry Springer.

And, who ever thought that any Town Board could produce as much BS as Mr. C? Well, alert the media, film at 11. It happened Thursday night.

The coveted 'Pants on Fire' award went to Supervisor Dunford and some others on the Town Board who insisted that the now infamous proposed zoning change (limiting the square footage of buildings to 25,000 square ft.) applies to the HC-1 district as well.

Look up the definition of 'Large Retail Establishments' (this can now be found on the CRSE website <http://www.crse.org/http://www.crse.org/> under Proposed Local Law re. Retail Establishments) and you'll see that the Board either doesn't understand what they're voting on or they kinda, sorta fibbed.

As always any comments made are my own disillusioned, disenchanting and disappointed musings of my lone voice. They reflect no one's opinions but my own.

Town Board Work Session: Stateline Retail Centre: Route 6 East:

Mr. Camarda began with a brief overview/timeline. The possibility of a lawsuit was alluded to by both Mr. Camarda and the Town Board. In September of '04 the zoning now in place was enacted. He then began negotiations with Farrington to acquire the property. He did extensive soil and wetland testing (\$100,000).

On November 21 he met with Supervisor Dunford and Councilman Honeck to discuss his plans for the property. According to Camarda, Dunford was 'less than supportive' but Honeck was open minded. Camarda submitted plans to the Planning Board in January with fees in excess of \$29,000. He asked to introduce the project at a TB work session on March 9th but was told it wasn't a 'good time to come'.

Mr. Camarda then explained the project:

Property size- close to 50 acres

183,000 square feet

600 to 700' from Reservoir

No variances needed

15 acres will be impervious surface

15 acres landscaping (including retention basins)

15 acres open space

4 Buildings: 135,000, 35,000, 10,000 and 3,000 square feet

Closest neighborhood: Tulip and Ives Farm Road

Berms will hide parking lot from Route 6 (and the bottom 15 feet of the building)

More landscaping than any other project in SE

Lighting- lots of 'low poles'

Mr. Camarda then discussed the sales tax benefits. He compared Route 6 (now at 10% capacity) to Route 312 at 80% capacity and Route 22 at 170% capacity. The figures given were provided by DOT. After build-out Route 6 will be at 33% capacity. He said that there were no plans to have Wal*Mart serve as the anchor store.

Supervisor Dunford explained that a 'huge' project was going in off Saw Mill Road in Danbury and that this needed to be considered in a traffic study.

Although a Work Session questions were allowed. The audience expressed concern and asked questions. Traffic and lighting were the primary issues raised. Also asked was what stores would be possible anchors. Answer: Warehouse type, Target, but definitely not a Wal*Mart.

Denis Castelli asked if the remaining 'open space' would remain as such and Mr. Camarda said that he would consider putting deed restrictions in.

2. Pegasus-

Removed from agenda

3. Fisher Subdivision 280a referral

Will be on the April 20th agenda

Executive Session-

Possible Litigation. No elaboration was given when I asked if it was personnel.

COMMENTS:

Stateline Retail Centre:

Ok. Let's start with the project itself. My views on shopping centers are well known. I don't care how you dress it up, sprawl is sprawl. I'm happy driving to Danbury and even happier just opening a catalog. I believe that there are better ways to balance the County Budget than building retail. And no, Mr. Bondi I do not want a brand new Town Hall at Tilly Foster as a reward.

As for Charming Paul's presentation- well, I've sat through my share and there's always a gimmick. While I enjoyed this year's IMAX presentation I still yearn for the simpler days of the 'peel off' stickers on 'Patterson Crossing'- now **that**, was nostalgic- reminded me of Colorforms.

Whoa... You just know that there's something amiss when you **almost** feel sorry for Mr. Camarda. Most of the Town Board didn't even bother to feign objectivity. Or try to hide their contempt for that matter. To add insult to injury, this was all captured on film and no one seemed to care.

At one point, when the proposed zoning change was discussed and it was mentioned that without an 'anchor' it would be difficult for 'Stateline' to attract tenants, Councilwoman Mitts uttered an 'Oh

well' sounding not unlike a petulant pre-teen 'Valley girl'.

I feel badly for the residents of this area. Concerned neighbors asked some excellent questions on everything from traffic to lighting and showed great concern for their piece of Southeast. After all, the traffic volume will triple. But the traffic on Route 6 will still only be at a third of capacity.

Should Mr. Camarda have to ensure increased safety measures on Route 6? Absolutely. Of course, if he's smart he'll pull a 'Lepler' and either Southeast residents or New Yorkers at large will pick up the tab. Remember, Zimmer Road improvements to benefit Harold Lepler's Terravest project cost us \$60,000 . Additional traffic lights on Route 312- thank you DOT. Also, I don't think that at a current 10% capacity traffic will be the issue that defeats or scales back this project. The vehicular infrastructure is in place- now it's imperative the road be made safer.

I especially loved the ironic grilling Charming got on his 'past experience' by Councilman Johnson- yeah, the same dude who green-lighted Mr. Lepler's 'Home Depot' (a model project of sprawl at it's worst) now comes charging in on his white horse. Because, and let me get this straight, I guess it's better to have a 'proven' commercial track record of complete schlock than nothing at all.

And speaking of the proposed zoning change. I was told not once but twice Thursday night that the change to the zoning code would limit the size of all buildings in all districts, including HC-1, to under 25,000 square feet. So here I sit staring at the code on "Large Retail Establishments" which absolutely allows 'a gross floor area of 25,000 square feet **or more**' in an HC-1 zone. Huh? Oh, I get it. Mr. Lepler owns land in an HC-1 zone. You know, along Route 22 where we're at 170% traffic capacity and we're going to get a whole new 'Town Center'. Further the Town Board claims they've been discussing this change for over a year. Must be over the phone... not at any meetings I can remember.

Although the Town Board can still pass this 'Gateway' zoning change and it would affect any project up to preliminary approval this is a lawsuit waiting to happen. It'll be big and it'll be costly and I don't see how we can win. The timeline's all in Charming Paul's favor. By the way, I had to laugh when Supervisor Dunford said he's been sued by 'some of the best'. Yeah, but when 'he's' sued the defense money ain't coming out of **his** pocket. It's coming out of **our's**.

Bottom line: The Town Board's inability to pass this zoning change months or even years ago will cost the town dearly.

Executive Session:

You know, sometimes, even I get sick of playing '20 Questions'. The Board knows it should identify litigation and I have a feeling that, in this particular case the topic wasn't strictly litigation.

That's it from here. Please feel free to e-mail should you have any questions or comments.

With Best Regards,
Lynne Eckardt

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