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SE Town Board Work Session Recap 8/10/06

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Hi All,

Sat Aug 12, 2006 3:00 pm

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Thursday night I attended a Southeast Town Board Work Session. Although there were only two items on the agenda the meeting lasted almost two hours. Whew- where does the time go.

"Lynne Eckardt"
<midfarm@bestweb.net>

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The meeting was fairly convivial despite the appearance of the always charming Mr. Camarda's entourage. No Sir Charming in evidence- I'll bet he's on a little vacation- no doubt resting up for the 'Patterson Crossing' festivities slated for August 23rd and 24th. Those interested in Mr. C's 'Stateline' Project should mark their calendars now for these Public Hearings. (6:00 PM- Patterson Recreation center). I'm guessing this may become a BYO Torch and Pitchfork affair as the hall will be loaded with glitzy 'Yes Patterson Crossing!' signs as well as home made placards bemoaning the proposed blight.

On the brighter side, the major and exciting news is that the Open Space Committee is putting together an Open Space proposition to be placed on the November ballot. The referendum will ask SE voters to put aside \$5 million to acquire open space. More below.

The 'Eye Rolling' award of the evening was handily won by Councilman Johnson whose obsession with minutiae added at least 20 minutes to the meeting. Sigh. This sparkling performance was not unlike that annoying third grader who sat next to you years ago. You know, the one who always raised (and waved) their hand to add useless pieces of non-information to the class discussion. Mr. Johnson's nonsequitors induced eye-rolling even amongst his peers on center stage. I'm feeling benevolent so they shall remain nameless- besides that would really be calling the kettle black as my eyeballs almost seized into my forehead. At one point I began thinking that even a bomb scare might be welcome.

Quote of the evening is awarded to Councilman Honeck- again, who knew Mr. Honeck had 'stand-up' genes in that pool. I'll make you work for this one and throw it into comments.

As always the spiteful, unnecessary comments are mine and mine alone. Thankfully they reflect no group to which I belong.

Agenda:

1. Open Space Committee:

Cherie Ingraham delivered a report to the Town Board on a recent phone poll (executed and paid for by the Trust for Public Land). The OS Committee would like to place an Open Space Bond Referendum (\$5 million) on the ballot this November.

The telephone survey was to 300 SE voters. For a \$5 million bond the average property owner in SE would pay \$76 per year. Of those surveyed 59% said that they'd vote for an Open Space initiative. By the end of the poll the positive figure had climbed to 63%. I asked if hunting would be allowed on possible land acquisitions. I was told that it may not be legal on town owned properties. I also asked if commercially zoned areas would be considered- I was told yes. I mentioned that the DEP can sometimes be persuaded to help fund land acquisition especially when the town first steps up to the plate as in the Eagle River property in Somers.

Ann Fanizzi mentioned that 13 towns in Westchester County have Open Space funding in place. She also thought it would be important to educate the public on the benefits of open space- particularly seniors.

Supervisor Dunford said any decision to go ahead with the referendum should be based on the community's well-being rather than a poll. The wording on the initiative must be accepted 36 days prior to the election.

Zoning Amendments:

Town Planner, Graham Trested gave a presentation on proposed zoning amendments.

The size restriction (using the FAR) on 'Big Box' stores has been changed from a maximum of 25,000 to 50,000. This will be allowed in HC-1 and GC-2 districts. These retail centers will no longer have to be located on an interstate. Design guidelines will have to be followed. The TB would enforce these standards.

Mixed use was discussed as there's more call for small office space above retail. Parking was discussed as far as lowering the present requirements. Also 'overflow' parking which could be pervious. Bicycle parking would be addressed. Bio-swales were discussed as far as replacing storm water retention basins.

Councilman Johnson suggested interior parking and unloading areas. Most on the Board felt that this would enlarge the building by too much. Incentive zoning was mentioned and underground parking considered- although covered parking usually costs up to \$20,000 per space. Mr. Johnson also mentioned berms.

Mr. Trelsted mentioned the best architectural vernacular for building in SE was colonial.

Wrap around architecture, broken facades and the 'rhythm of fenestration' were all considered, as were curb cuts, pedestrian development, walkways and some landscape design. Green roofs were discussed to limit an 'urban heat index'. Supervisor Dunford said he'd like maintain focus before we become the 'City of Southeast'.

There will be more discussion on September 7th.

COMMENTS:

Where to begin.

First I'd like to thank Supervisor Dunford for allowing some audience participation. It never got out of hand and there were some helpful suggestions made. In fact the Supervisor actually complimented me (I think- although sometimes Mr. Dunford's rather dry wit and even drier delivery fools me). Anyhow, hopefully this won't become a trend as it will be much harder to remain my snippy self.

Open Space Bond:

Cherie Ingraham presented a clear and concise report on the proposed referendum. I'm ecstatic that the Open Space Committee is moving forward on this bond initiative. There are currently several large tracts on the market so for better or for worse it's imperative that we move forward. Still to get this initiative passed I believe that there will have to be a great deal of compromise and education.

As I see it there are two deal breakers here. One is the possibility that hunting will not be allowed on any town land acquisition. And I find it hard to believe that hunting is prohibited by law on any town owned property. That said, each parcel will have to be individually considered as to the appropriateness of hunting. Local sportsmen are a force to be reckoned with, they have an incredible network and can change the outcome of this vote.

As for throwing commercial into the acquisition mix. I believe that this will meet with too much resistance in the community. When residents understand that developed residentially zoned land actually costs the community more in subsidies while undeveloped residential property costs less I think we've got a shot. On the other hand, commercial land can generate revenue. It can generate decent jobs. It can more than pay for itself. In general it's also less desirable for passive open space. The inclusion of commercial properties for open space would be a mistake.

This is such an important referendum I can only hope we have the vision to accept a tax increase now. I believe that it will pay us (and more importantly future generations) back in spades. I believe that the resulting higher property values, recreational opportunities, cleaner water and air will be worth the cost and compromise.

Zoning Updates:

I'm guessing that the TB will want to enact a lot of these proposed zoning changes sooner rather than later so that these 'design guidelines' will be applicable to the Stateline Retail Center. Certainly that's why Sir Charming's posse was there en masse. I'm also guessing that these design guidelines will already have been incorporated into 'Leplerville'. By the end of the presentation Mr. Trelsted had gotten so carried away that the Supervisor's crack about the 'City of Southeast' was funny and completely appropriate. It really did sound like every inch of our commercial districts would eventually become wall-to-wall blacktop. Sure, there'd be some pervious pavers, gazebos, bike racks and green roofs but it all sounded profoundly unappealing. More along the 'lipstick on a pig' line. Of course the possibility of corporate parks was only mentioned in passing.

On the lighter side... You know how you've always been told that: 'There's no such thing as a 'dumb question?' Well, I'm here to shatter that illusion. Scheesh. Councilman Johnson had a question or comment on almost everything. People sitting around me resorted to compiling 'to do' lists while Town Counsel Stephens wrote out checks and did a little light housekeeping sorting through what appeared to be receipts. Frankly, while I love a good Stephens' rant as much as the next gal, I really couldn't blame him.

Councilman Johnson was the minutia king- even Councilman Honeck kinda, sorta snapped and got in the best line of the night. When Johnson started waxing poetic about berms Mr. Honeck interjected, 'Hi my name is Paul Johnson and I'm a berm-a-holic.'

I also loved the convoluted term 'rhythm of fenestration' being bandied about as it sounded like a really bad disco tune straight out of the eighties. And while I would reluctantly agree that the architectural 'vernacular' of Southeast is colonial I live in fear of oversimplified and overly cute 'Ye Olde fill-in-the-blank Shoppe' syndrome. I'm also thinking since we can't seem to enforce new sign regulations, wetland regs and the like what are the odds we'll actually follow the 'colonial theme'. And will this 'theme' end up precluding greener architecture?

Still much of what was discussed was interesting. I was hoping to take a peek at the apparently 'Top Secret' document given to the TB by the Town Planner- but alas... it's not to be. To his credit Supervisor Dunford said I could e-mail him with questions or suggestions. Heh, heh, heh- until Thursday night I had no idea that his e-mail at Town Hall was even operational. This was really the revelation of the evening- I feel so 21st century...

That's it from my desk- as always feel free to e-mail me with any questions or comments and enjoy the rest of this spectacular weekend.

With best regards,
Lynne Eckardt

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Lynne Eckardt
[lynneeckardt](#)

Aug 12, 2006
3:01 pm



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