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CRSE · Concerned Residents of Southeast

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From: "Lynne Eckardt" <midfarm@bestweb.net>
Date: Sat Aug 21, 2004 5:48 pm
Subject: Recap Southeast Town Board Meeting 8/19/04

Hi,

Thursday night was the Regular Meeting for the Town of Southeast. As always it was meticulously choreographed with some decent one-liners thrown in for good measure.

The recap that follows is unofficial and the comments that follow are strictly my own often caustic and jaded observations. If you're looking for 'nice' skip the commentary. I'm feeling particularly crabby as I've been without power for over 15 hours. Official (draft) minutes will be available on September 9th.

As always I'm skipping to those items that may be of interest to CRSE readers.

There was yet another inane presentation from Mayor Cesar to the town. This one was complete with bell ringing and for the life of me (except for some Mayoral 'face time' on local cable) I have no idea what this was about.

The quote of the night was actually a complete understatement delivered on camera with a straight face by Supervisor Dunford.

When an audience member asked why the Moratorium along Route 22 was going to continue as it had affected her in the real estate business Mr. Dunford said that the rezoning for Route 22 was not yet complete and that during the Moratorium the Board had issued a 'few' variances'. A few? Until Thursday night, and at last count, it was nine waivers granted to six denied. Sorry, John, but nine is more than a 'few' when you've only denied six.

The coveted Chutzpa award Thursday evening went to Councilwoman Mitts who wove a long and gripping tale of why we still have no Town Website. None of which made any sense to me or the two very savvy computer people who also heard the yarn first hand. The

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good news is that for the first time, and again captured on film, Ms. Mitts said that the TB was considering posting minutes on the website. I look forward to it and I am hopeful that this will occur during my lifetime.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Extension of Moratorium: See above.

Set Court Fines: Deferred

REGULAR MEETING:

6. MOTION CALLING FOR THE FOLLOWING PUBLIC HEARING:
'Right Turn Only' Sodom Road/Old Milltown Road September 9th at 7:30
Passed 5-0

7.RESOLUTION: Extension of the Moratorium Passed 5-0

8. RESOLUTION-SPECIAL PERMIT- Terravest 9.

This will allow a building of 34,000 sq. ft. to be 80% warehouse with 20% office space.
This is the complete reversal of what is allowed in an OP-2 zone (without a special permit).
Passed: 5-0

9. RESOLUTION- WETLANDS PERMIT- Putnam Seabury

This is 'The Campus at Fields Corner'. Upon recommendation of the Conservation Commission the Board passed this by a vote of 5-0.

10.RESOLUTION- VARIANCE FROM THE MORATORIUM: Root Avenue Subdivision.

This variance was denied by a vote of 5-0. Economic hardship was not proven.

11. RESOLUTION - VARIANCE FROM MORATORIUM: Turk Hill East Estates Subdivision

Denied 5-0. See above.

12. RESOLUTION- VARIANCE FROM MORATORIUM: Waterview Estates Subdivision

Denied 5-0. See above.

13. RESOLUTION: WETLANDS PERMIT- Palazetti Warehouse (Fields Lane)

Upon recommendation of the Conservation Commission the Board granted this permit by a vote of 4-1.

Ms. Mitts was the dissenting vote.

14. RESOLUTION: WETLANDS PERMIT: Lawes Construction

This is the 'holding area' for the sewer works in the Village. On recommendation of the Conservation Commission the Board granted this permit by a vote of 5-0.

15. RESOLUTION- WETLANDS PERMIT- TOWN OF SOUTHEAST

This is for the In Line Skating Rink in Lake Tonetta. The Board granted this permit by a vote of 5-0.

16. MOTION- Authorizing Supervisor to sign agreement with Insite Engineering. Passed 5-0.

This allows the Town to hire Insite to oversee the Southeast's 'Drainage Districts'.

17. RESOLUTION- Weston Chase Drainage District. Passed 5-0.

COMMENTS:

8. Terravest 9- Special Permit:

When a fiend of mine took a gander at this agenda last week she e-mailed me simply: 'Wow, it's VariancePalooza.' Well, it turns out that, finally, it wasn't. PermitPalooza: Yes. VariancePalooza: No.

So, let the Special Permits begin. Despite letters read at the Public Hearing and despite the fact that no residents spoke in favor of this special permit (I stand corrected here as the applicant, Harold Lepler, is after all, a Southeast resident.) The Town Board felt that allowing yet another warehouse in an 'Office Park' zone is in the community's best interest.

What I especially love about this is that the Board knows that 'Senior Housing' is proposed here. So instead of thinking: Gee, do we really want another warehouse and so close to 'Senior Housing'? Will that improve the quality of life for the Seniors who buy there? They pass yet another piece of swill that, in truth, doesn't belong in any Office Park. And remember, the architecture on this gem looks like a 1950's KGB Headquarters.

Do you suppose that they granted the 'Special Permit' because they're actually going to deny the 'Senior Housing' permit?

Nah.

10. Root Avenue Subdivision Variance:

Apparently the applicant of this charmer did not prove financial hardship. It's terrific that the Board was able to deny an applicant based on this criteria. But my cynical side asks: Why now? Why, after almost two years of 'waiving' almost everyone through the process, does the Board suddenly hold firm?

My first thought is that this Moratorium will only be six months and we're already two months into it. So holding an applicant up for 4 months is probably no big deal. But

judging from the body language the applicants in attendance would disagree vehemently. And looking at it from their point of view you'd have to be wondering: What the Hell happened here? Less than a year ago my variance would have been granted by simply writing a letter stating I was facing 'financial hardship' or submitting my Quick Books Pro Profit/Loss.

Moratoriums simply defuse a situation. They don't really solve much and before now they solved nothing as most applicants got a 'pass' . So what we really have here is a six month 'cooling down' period. Yes, there will be substantial upzoning and this will be a great help. Unfortunately we then go back to the same old/same old of building in wetlands, buffers, on steep slopes etc. and the TB can then resume 'the blame game' pointing the finger at the Conservation and Planning Boards. Still going along with them tacitly.

Aren't we tired of all this? I know I am.

11. Moratorium Variance: Turk Hill East Estates: See above.

12. Moratorium Variance: Waterview Estates: See above.

13. Wetlands Permit- Palazetti Warehouse:

This was interesting. After an explanation that the Board was compelled to follow the Conservation Commission's recommendation Councilwoman Mitts jumped ship.

This is a really lousy project where it might have been possible to substantially limit wetland and buffer incursion. I'm not sure where Ms. Mitts got her information (possibly CC minutes) but she was swayed enough to vote against Palazetti. It was nice to see a Council member engaged enough to investigate a project and consequently vote against the tide. Thanks to Councilwoman Mitts.

15. WETLANDS PERMIT- Town of Southeast:

Setting a fine example the Board voted unanimously to follow the CC recommendations. Thus we will have Town owned facilities that encroach in the buffer. Hey, maybe they're practicing for the ballfields and restrooms at Terravest.

NEW BUSINESS: Under new business County Executive Bondi asked for a letter from the Town Board supporting the village in it's endeavor to obtain grant money towards the Cameo Theater's renovations. In a great show of support (and artifice) the Board wholeheartedly agreed. While I believe that the TB will be supportive of this measure, after all they agreed on camera, I could have lived without the purely gratuitous addition of how the Board has always been supportive of the village. Still, I am hopeful that this may be some small turning point for strained Village/Town relations. I have to believe that the Board knows how much the residents of Southeast want their offices to remain in the village and how much we want them to really pitch in with revitalization plans.

As always please feel free to e-mail me with any questions or comments that you might have.

Best,
Lynne Eckardt

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