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From: "Lynne Eckardt" <midfarm@bestweb.net>
Date: Sat Oct 16, 2004 12:17 pm
Subject: SE Town Board Recap 10/14/04

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Hi All,

Well, there's good news and there's bad news. The bad news first. The Town Board's Special Meeting on proposed Zoning and sign regs. on Thursday night was long. The good news- the audience was made up primarily of engineers and attorneys so I'm editing to a fine fare-thee-well.

These notes are unofficial. Official DRAFT minutes will be available on the Town's website on October 28th. As always I take full responsibility for the snippy observations which follow.

Ironic whining of the evening went to attorney James Moody who wants the new Gateway/Commercial 2 district to allow warehouses. Yeah, because nothing screams 'welcome to our community' more than a row of warehouses. Of course, Mr. Moody did make the point that there were already 8 warehouses along the stretch of Route 6 where his client's property is located.

What will be most fascinating here is the work session to discuss comments made last night and the Regular Town Board Meeting on October 28th. Of course, that assumes that there will be public discussion. There is a ten day comment period on the proposed zoning and sign regulations.

SPECIAL MEETING:

Town Planner, Graham Trelsted gave an overview of the changes being proposed in the Town's 27 page document. The floor was then opened for questions and comments.

Attorneys Mr. O'Rourke, Mr. Hollis and Mr. Rossi spoke at length about proposed changes (setbacks, height restrictions (50' down to 30'), lot coverage (from 65% to 45%) and outdoor storage) to the OP 1 district. The financial ramifications to property owners in the OP 1 districts were pointed out (the focus here was Fields Lane).

Mr. Rossi said that this rezoning could be considered 'Ad hoc' although he felt that the Board would never pander to the recent 'concerns' and 'attacks' of various environmental groups. The Board was urged to stick with the Comprehensive Plan. Not the proposed changes.

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Tony Hay, local businessman and County Legislator, spoke at length about the new sign regulations as he felt that many changes were ill advised.

Three other attorneys addressed the newly designated Gateway Commercial zones and were unhappy with their client's change of zoning designation.

Two Landscaping Contractors with property on Fields Lane were unhappy with the proposed changes re. outdoor storage and lot coverage.

And Engineer Jim Hahn felt strongly that the changes should go through the SEQR process complete with a DEIS required. He felt that there would be both environmental and economic implications that warrant a DEIS.

Several local businessmen spoke against the proposed sign changes. Citing them as too small and too costly to replace for small business.

I spoke for CRSE and asked 6 questions and commented that CRSE would like to see the Senior Housing code be made far more restrictive and at the very least a moratorium be enacted.

Ann Fanizzi spoke about the importance of preserving open space, that the Comprehensive Plan was a good one and that many of the newer more restrictive measures dovetailed nicely with the original plan. She also agreed strongly with CRSE regarding Senior Housing Law.

COMMENTS:

One word here: KA-CHING. A lot of attorneys and a lot of engineers made a lot of dough last night. It was almost like watching a bad People's Court as attorney after attorney came up to plead their client's case. Jeeze, a whole lot of whining going on.

I'm not going to delve too much into the sign legislation. Suffice it to say no one's really happy with the proposed regs. By caving after the first really stringent proposals nothing got better. Because the compromises proposed don't appear to please anyone. The sign regs have become one big lose/lose debacle.

For the most part the Town Board remained respectful although Supervisor Dunford kind of lost it when he asked Envirostar attorney Hollis if his clients had a C/O. A small dust-up ensued as Mr. Hollis was forced to admit they didn't but since the Board had asked that courtesy prevail shouldn't they abide by the same rules. It appeared that Assemblyman and Town Attorney was less than thrilled with my opening remarks mouthing a less than flattering epithet.

As for Mr. Hahn's suggestion that a DEIS be prepared on all this. I was under the impression that a DEIS was only necessary if negative environmental impacts might ensue. In this case it's clear that negative environmental impacts will not follow.

Mr. Rossi's not-so-veiled innuendo that the town might be succumbing to 'environmental group' pressure was kind of

lame. And, as I'm quite sure that Mr. Rossi possesses a healthy triple digit IQ he should be able to grasp the concept that 'environmental groups' are no longer 'fringe committees' consisting of a few loud kooks.

As the recent Trust for Public Land poll proved, Open Space is the number one concern throughout Putnam County. And that's 4 percentage points above taxes. This is really amazing given the number of disgruntled tax payers to whom I've spoken. Ah, and just wait until all those new residential units are built. Why do I suddenly see torches and pitchforks in our future... But I digress.

In any case, the majority of residents are very concerned with the pace of development throughout Southeast and Putnam. If they weren't last Thursday's zoning changes would have been a moot point. The Town Board has put themselves between a rock and a hard place. Do they now serve the 'special interests/economic concerns' or do they serve those who elected them?

It's becoming increasingly difficult to serve two masters.

As always please feel free to e-mail me with any questions or comments that you may have. If anyone would like to read the letter CRSE submitted to the Town Board I'd be happy to forward it on to you. Just let me know.

With best regards,
Lynne Eckardt

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