

SAVE Colonie Report  
Jan 9, 2018 Planning Bd Meeting

General editorial comments:

*It's a good thing that the Town is slowing down the pace of development while the Comprehensive Planning process proceeds. Otherwise we all could have been stuck in that hot airless room, with poor audio and visual access, even past 11:30 Tuesday night!*

*Kudos to all who made it through the night, and the seven Planning Board (PB) members, Supervisor Mahan, Town Board members Whalen, Murphy, Jeffers-Von Dollen, and Rosano, and CAC Chair Ellen Rosano.*

*PEDD Director LaCivita was not present. PEDD staffer Mike Tengeler asked the PB to schedule a special PB meeting Feb 13th to consider 4 new project sketch plan reviews (no notices to neighbors needed). Query: When will the public get notified of these projects?*

*Just prior to the meeting, board members were handed a stack of records for this evening's four major projects. One hopes PB members had already somehow been able to work through these documents before the meeting. If not, our town and its residents are not being well-served.*

## Report

The microphones were not working properly throughout the meeting, which caused delays and hampered presentations and comments. Sadly, comments by residents were not always welcomed, appreciated, or sometimes tolerated well by officials. Town Attny Magguilli, sitting in again for Attny Marinelli, was unnecessarily challenging, antagonistic, and impatient, and frequently talked over commenting residents. We hope the Chair will control this type of behavior in future to assure that residents' comments are respected and encouraged. Perhaps televised meetings would result in better manners by some.

### On the Farm Sketch Plan Review

261 & 261 A Troy-Schenectady Rd., 63 lot SFR, 1 commercial lot subdivision

At the PB's suggestion, the developer had revised the prior site plan to concentrate construction on smaller "conservation" lots to preserve 18 acres for open space/walking paths for surrounding neighborhood and local elementary school. Discussion concerned density, house size, cul de sac, permanent vs emergency access to Silvan Ave. There was no discussion of the "commercial lot subdivision." Why not?

This project will now be publicly noticed for Concept Approval, which will allow neighborhood participation. Originally scheduled for PB review on Feb 9th, the PEDD website did not reflect this scheduling.

Public comments were reserved for Concept.

Lecce Office (office/retail?) Building Concept Approval  
1209 Troy Schenectady Rd, next to RiteAid

Issues: Excessive traffic on Rt 7; number of curb cut/access to Rt 7; access through existing easements would save trees (old growth maples & mature fruit trees on site) and eliminate curb cut of concern to DOT; clearing w/o grading permit (see also Maxwell Village); historic & archeological resources on site & at "blue house nearby"; Drainage; whether building is sited far enough back from Rt 7; why the site plan did not reflect a deeded permanent greenspace easement; whether the greenspace shown on the site plan on site is also counted as Rite Aid greenspace; whether Lecce is amending the site plan to allow retail and therefore should do a traffic study (the narrative did not include "retail" use).

The PB had no information about Lecce's 24 unit apartment complex proposed for a site immediately adjacent at the rear of the instant project, or that the Town of Niskayuna was requiring a traffic study for the Rt 7/Rosendale Rd intersection. When this issue was raised, Lecce incorrectly advised the PB that he'd withdrawn his Town of Niskayuna application. (*A phone call determined that Lecce withdrew the app by letter **the following day.***) PB member Dalton asked the PB to delay its vote as a courtesy to the Town of Niskayuna, who had commented to the PEDD about possible flooding from a proposed project drainage basin.

Despite these and many other questions, as well as negative public comments, the Board voted 4 to 3 to Approve this concept, contingent upon further information being provided. (*No comment.*)

DePaula Maserati/Alfa Romeo Concept Approval

947 Troy-Schenectady Rd and Mill Rd (SFR area)

21,636 sq ft low-volume car dealership, parking for 190 + cars; redevelopment project.

Issues: DOT allowing right in - right out only, but this will result in unsafe Rt 7 & Mill Rd traffic; noise & lights detrimental to residences w/i 50 ft on Mill Rd; insufficient buffering to protect residences; too many parking spaces for alleged 40 car sales per month; golf course owner disputed "agreement on buffer" stated by App's engineer. Conclusion stated several times: this is not a good location for a car dealership/service facility. Several neighbors bravely spoke in opposition; several board members raised serious traffic safety issues on Mill Rd and Rt 7, but the Town attorney maintained their "concept approval really doesn't mean anything....." Result: Concept Approved (by unanimous vote!!!)

*Note: Should this low volume dealership be approved, constructed, and then fold, any other larger-volume dealer could take over without Planning Bd review.*

Starlite Office Park Redevelopment PHASE 1/Ayco/ Galesi Concept Approval

629 Columbia St (Rt 9R)

5 story 150K sq ft 800 employee office building now, to double in future, with 931 parking spaces now and a decked garage later. Project almost entirely within a DEC Type II mapped/regulated wetland and buffer area (App states Jan 18th will be a DEC / Army Corps site walk-around) Connector Rd proposed, following 1991 Boght Rd GEIS, using 77% private \$\$\$ and 23% public. (*Query: How do the tax abatements and public grants being sought by the developer figure into these calculations?*)

Issues: TRAFFIC TRAFFIC TRAFFIC. Nearby residents and business owners confirmed that this Rt 9/Rt 9R/Northway connection is already overly congested. Current morning and afternoon peak traffic now would make it impossible for projected Ayco office workers to join the traffic queue. TDE Grasso, whose employer Cough Harbour conducted the Boght Rd GEIS review for the TOC, accepted the applicant's projection of only 150 additional trips peak hours. Residents questioned the accuracy of this projection, since with 800 office workers in Phase 1, plus 800 more in Phase 2, plus 3000 housing units planned nearby. TDE Grasso, admittedly NOT a traffic engineer, stated that the proposed "connector road" had been identified in the 1991 Boght Rd GEIS as the proper "fix" for long-standing traffic woes at this location. Kevin Bette, local developer and nearby property owner *and* traffic engineer, challenged the feasibility of the proposed connector road, persevering despite querulous testy questions from Attorney Magguilli. Bette also pointed out that there is an extensive DEC Type II regulated wetland & buffer on site which, in other cases, would never be considered for development. Bette also questioned why public money via GEIS mitigation fees are being spent for what is essentially an access driveway for Ayco's project. Bette noted that his project on Auto Park Drive did not receive any GEIS mitigation fees for a required site access road to Route 9. AYCO has a habit of moving every 10 years to where a better "municipal" deal is found, Bette said; he worried that if the traffic concerns are borne out and the connector road does not alleviate the traffic as promised, AYCO will most likely abandon this site at the end of its lease, leaving another large built-to-suit complex vacant in Colonie.

PB Member Dalton asked whether AYCO would adopt provisions to deal with the traffic congestion issue, such as a traffic management plan to bus in office workers from a remote location. The applicant's consultant stated that his client would not be in favor of such a plan as they must be operational at all hours of the day. Kevin Bette reiterated that this project would dump 800 vehicles into an already untenable transportation corridor, while the proposed "connector road" does nothing to address existing traffic problems at the I-87 interchange OR to assist Ayco workers to reach I-87. Again, Magguilli stated that the Bd's concept acceptance has virtually no impact. Chairman Stuto noted that despite traffic being "a huge issue" he was personally in favor of this project.

Result: Concept Approved (with a unanimous vote!!!)