



August 11, 2020

VIA EMAIL ONLY: kovalchikk@togny.org

Kenneth Kovalchik, AICP
Town Planner
Guilderland Town Hall – 2nd Floor
5209 Western Turnpike
P.O. Box 339
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Dear Ken,

We are in receipt of your e-mail correspondence of July 31, 2020, directed to Christopher Spencer, Chief Planning Official for the City of Albany, which states the following:

If the City of Albany is unwilling to work with the Town and accept either of these alternatives, the Town's next preferred alternative would be Alternative 9, which is located wholly within the Town. The Town requests the City of Albany to provide a written statement to the Town by end of business on August 14th as to which of these 3 alternatives is your preference, 5A, 5D or 9, so as to be incorporated into the EIS Findings Statement.

The purpose of this letter is for Rapp Road Historical Association (“RRHA”) to offer the comments on the three traffic mitigation proposals mentioned in your email.

As you are aware, Albany’s Rapp Road is a rare example of a community that was settled during the Great Migration of African Americans from the Southern to the Northern United States that remains intact today, and it is listed on the Federal and State Historic Registries. Until 1960’s, the relative isolation of this community on the outskirts of Albany meant that Rapp Road itself—a formerly one lane road--was used almost exclusively by residents of the community. The heavy use of Rapp Road by non-residents started in the 1970’s with the completion of Washington Avenue Extension and the expansion of residential and commercial developments along Washington Avenue Extension. It has since accelerated, and now Rapp Road is a cut-through for north and south bound traffic generated by

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Washington Avenue Extension, Western Avenue, Gipp Road and Crossgates Mall. The traffic inundation results in bumper to bumper traffic during peak hours and cars moving well in excess of the speed limit at other times. In addition, backing out of driveways onto Rapp Road in the face of this traffic has been a constant, time-consuming and hazardous challenge for our residents.

For close to 50 years, one of the core objectives of RRHA has been to convince the City of Albany to take concrete steps to relieve the traffic congestion on Rapp Road. To date, our efforts have met with little to no success. Since the need for mitigation measures will grow even more urgent with Pyramid's planned development of 222 housing units in Guilderland and the planned addition of Costco to the Crossgates Mall, it is imperative that both Guilderland and Albany agree on a plan that would effectively mitigate the traffic congestion and then implement the agreed upon plan. To that end, we are providing you our comments to the proposals referenced above, and we will be meeting with your counterparts in the Albany planning department.

Proposal 5A is the preferred option of RRHA because it would be least disruptive of the Rapp Road community and would effectively address the traffic from the southern portion of Rapp Road heading north.. We believe that with the installation of additional signage at the northern end of Rapp Road—such as “Local Traffic Only” and “Dead End”—would reduce traffic from inadvertently heading north to south on Rapp Road, only to turn around and go back the way they came. Another suggestion to improve the proposal 5A would be to incorporate an element from proposal 5, specifically a moveable gate system that would allow for adequate fire and emergency services to pass through to Gipp Road and Wilan Lane without interruption. This would help quell concerns about interruption in services for these two roads.

Proposal 5D, which would convert Springsteen Road from a one way road to a two-way road, would exacerbate congestion on Rapp Road, because it would make access to Rapp Road easier from both directions. Further, this plan would make exiting from the driveway serving Emma Dickson's day care substantially more hazardous because parents would be backing onto a two-way road rather than a one-way road. Similarly, 21 Rapp Road, a residential group home for developmentally delayed adults in the heart of the historic neighborhood, relies on buses and vans entering and exiting throughout each day. These buses and vans would face similar hazards exiting onto a two-way road.

Proposal 9 is also not acceptable to RRHA in its current form. Although this alternative helps with traffic generated from the proposed 222 unit apartment complex, it still leaves the historical district open to traffic from all directions, specifically Gipp Road, north and southbound traffic on Rapp Road, plus traffic generated by the Crossgates Mall ring road.

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In closing, we sincerely hope the City of Albany and the Town of Guilderland can agree on a traffic mitigation plan that will accomplish our long sought after goal of reducing traffic in the Rapp Road Historic District.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Beverly Bardequez

President

Rapp Road Historical Association

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