
Planning Board virtual hearing public comments

1 message

Diana Wright <comphomellc@gmail.com>
To: Kenneth Kovalchik <kovalchikk@togny.org>

Wed, May 13, 2020 at 5:04 PM

Dear Ken - I will be unable to attend the virtual hearing this evening regarding the proposed expansion of Crossgates Mall into the Pine Bush.

I would like to comment for the record that I am opposed to the current plan on many levels. I applaud the initial theory behind the expansion which was to create a community of residences and stores that would reduce the need for individual transportation between these commercial and residential uses, thus reducing GHG emissions and creating a forward thinking community that could actually use less land space.

However the plan seems to have gone awry with the addition of 800 parking spaces!! which will cause the paving over of precious pine bush natural habitat. And the building of not just new residential high rises, but a Costco which has a huge negative environmental and physical footprint.

I believe that the current plan was devised because it was the easiest to complete in the quickest amount of time so that Crossgates could start seeing revenue increases in their current downturn in which malls across the country are losing stores because of on line ordering.

There are other options which need to be discussed with the community, environmentalists and Crossgates investors which will have less environmental impact, and use existing store space and parking areas. For instance, possibly build up along the I-87 side of the complex, and utilize the existing commercial buildings along Western Ave: Dunkin Donuts, Northeast Jewelers and the Sunoco for instance and build there with those stores on the ground floors level, and residences above. Crossgates could also re envision a lot of their empty store space and put the Costco inside the existing mall. This would assist in the high turnover of commercial tenants, as there would be 1 tenant to deal with on a long term lease instead of 50 smaller ones who are also being impacted by on line ordering and have unstable futures.

There is a huge problem with national corporate businesses coming in and promising all sorts of economic windfall to the impacted community, which all turn out to be over exaggerated and sometimes outright lies. Leaving the community with a large negative scar on their neighborhood and the environment that can't be undone. Furthermore they believe they are above the law and cut down acres of trees without a permit so that they can beat the nesting season of native bird species. They get a small fine and a slap on the wrist and continue on with business as usual. And that "business" is to pad their pockets by growing at the expense of the environment and the residents who lost their homes.

Is this the legacy you want to leave under your watch as Town planner? Or would you like to be able to tell your kids and the residents of Guilderland that you made the hard decision to slow down and really look at all the options to make sure that the plan that moves forward has the least impact on the environment, and the most benefit to the community as a whole.

We should not be enemies here. That those trees were cut down illegally so they could get them down before their window closed is despicable and they should not be rewarded by continuing as planned without a serious pause in what is being planned here and what is at stake. A commission needs to be formed that includes ALL interested parties and all of their ideas and expertise and input so that the plan that is approved works for everyone and will be a project that will reflect the sustainability needed to assure a healthy future for the next generation.

A good plan is worth working on. If we rush this through without REALLY looking at ALL of the impacts, good and bad, in 5-10 years we are going to be looking at an empty warehouse and vacancy rates at the new apartment complex so high they can't be sustained. All of this for nothing.

This is an enormous project that needs to be thought through carefully, not rushed through during a pandemic when we can't even meet in person to make public comments.

SLOW DOWN, let's do this right.

(please read my signature quote - it is very appropriate here)

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Diana L. Wright

Completely Home Real Estate LLC

Licensed Real Estate Broker, CBR

Certified Real Estate Appraiser

518-465-9748 office

518-813-5764 cell- text

Authorized Agent for Common Energy

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<https://www.commonenergy.us/diana>

Only after the last tree has been cut down
Only after the last river has been poisoned
Only after the last fish has been caught
Only then will you find that money can not be eaten.
Cree Indian Prophecy