

Town

Gyrodyne slightly revises plan before environmental review vote

BY RITA J. EGAN
RITA@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Despite opposition from some residents, the proposed plan to subdivide the Gyrodyne LLC property in St. James for development continues.

At the March 10 Smithtown Planning Board meeting, Gyrodyne's Final Environmental Impact Statement was accepted, 3-0, with board member Desmond Ryan abstaining. The acceptance allows for the public consideration period to begin.

Recently, the company revised its site plan. The revisions come after public outreach meetings held for Smithtown's draft comprehensive master plan were held in January and February. The St. James meeting for the plan was held Jan. 28.

The Gyrodyne changes include the preservation of slightly more than 15 acres to be a separate lot, and the proposed sewage treatment plant will be on a separate lot of more than 7 acres. Originally, the plan was for the plant to be on the open space lot. The proposed medical building will be 175,000 square feet instead of 130,000, and there will be an increase of 30 units in the proposed assisted living building, from 220 units to 250.

Despite the increase in size of the medical

and assisted living structures, the revised plan calls for the reduction of the proposed hotel from 150 rooms to 125. Gyrodyne has also eliminated from the plan a proposed 150-seat restaurant, a foot day spa and a 500-seat conference center for the hotel. Instead the hotel will include a 133-seat, 4,000-square-foot multipurpose room.

Gyrodyne's proposed plans have received criticism from local residents, including community advocacy groups We Are Smithtown and the newly formed Saint James-Head of the Harbor Neighborhood Preservation Coalition.

The coalition sent out a press release March 9 stating that there have been "grossly misleading" statements attributed to Town of Smithtown officials in media accounts of recent public meetings.

The group believes comments made have led residents to believe that there is a definite plan for the Lake Avenue Business District to hook up to the proposed sewage treatment plant on the Gyrodyne property. They are asking town officials to state that there is no established plan to do so. They also are requesting the town organizes a group that would include business owners "to clarify the cost to property owners of completing those connections."

"The people, who have put their sweat and equity into making St. James the special place it is deserve honesty and transparency from government officials, not vague but fantastically misleading statements that have no connection to reality," spokeswoman Judith Ogden said. "We need straight talk and a real plan to get businesses in St. James connected to sewers."

The coalition took exception with a quote in the Feb. 18 The Times of Smithtown from the town's public information officer Nicole Garguilo where she said if the town built even one sewer treatment facility with taxpayer money, the total amount of required finances would be roughly estimated at \$157 million. Garguilo said that it is a matter of a 20-to-30-year option versus a three-year option. The latter being a route that costs the taxpayers of Smithtown nothing since the said sewer treatment facility would be developed in a private sector of land.

"This paragraph is completely untethered to reality and can only have misled and misinformed anyone who happened to read it," Ogden said. "Not only is there not any plan or proposal to connect Lake Avenue businesses to sewers at Gyrodyne at no cost, but there has not been an analysis of alternatives to connect those businesses to sewers that suggests that an alternative plan would cost

\$157 million. These misleading statements are an affront to people who rely on government officials to tell them the truth about issues that will affect their financial future."

In an email to TBR News Media, Garguilo said "the \$157 million figure came from [Department of Environment & Waterways,] while attempting to apply for a federal grant about two years back."

In the FEIS, the possible hooking up of businesses along Lake Avenue to the Gyrodyne STP is addressed in Volume 1, page 44.

"Should the St. James Business District incorporate its own sewer district, Gyrodyne LLC has previously stated that it is amenable to discussing connection, pursuant to Suffolk County and Town of Smithtown requirements."

The statement is based on a response by John Cameron of Cameron Engineering, which has been hired to design the site, during the Jan. 8, 2020, Draft Environmental Impact Statement public hearing

The FEIS is available on the town's website, www.smithtownny.gov.

The town's Department of Environment & Waterways will take public comments on the plan from residents until 5 p.m. Wednesday, March 31.

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*to those risking their lives and
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During these difficult times, tips to reduce anxiety:

- Practice deep breathing and relaxation
- Meditate
- Connect with friends and family by telephone or online
- Use visualization & guided imagery
- Exercise, try to take a walk
- Distract yourself by setting small goals
- Mindfulness

**REMEMBER TO KEEP SOCIAL DISTANCING
AND THAT THIS WILL END**

If you would like a confidential, compassionate professional person to talk to, I am a psychotherapist working with adults, couples and families who are dealing with anxiety, depression, bereavement and trauma.

Wishing you serenity and good health,

Nancy F. Solomon, LCSW, P.C.
47 Route 25A
Setauket, NY 11733
631-941-0400



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