

Editorials & comments

Gyrodyne revisions should have been revealed, discussed

The St. James-Head of the Harbor Neighborhood Preservation Coalition has a valid grievance about the Smithtown Planning Board's handling of the Gyrodyne industrial development plan.

At the very least, just good, fair government dictates that there should have been some level of public notice and discussion of the revisions made to the Gyrodyne application prior to the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) being accepted by the planning board March 10. As the Coalition argues, it also seems that the revisions that have been made to the plan without notice to the public are significant enough that there should have been additional environmental review or there should be a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) prepared prior to final approval.

The Gyrodyne subdivision application is one of the most significant development proposals in the Town of Smithtown in a long time and it is one of the last proposals this town will see in one of the most bucolic and historic places left in the town. As a result, it has come under intense public scrutiny.

To have voted March 10 to accept the FEIS without notice to the public, or even a mention, that the plan has been revised is unjustifiable. The planning board should have disclosed that revisions had been made to the plan, they should have had a cogent discussion about what those revisions mean in terms of the overall project and the ongoing environmental review.

That is the absolute least that should be expected by the public in terms of a project of this magnitude and importance.

As to the Coalition's call for additional environmental review or the preparation of an SEIS, the significance of the revisions that have been made to the plan should be the standard used. Of course what is significant is always going to be debatable, but it seems hard to justify that the modifications that have been made to the Gyrodyne plan are so insignificant that no public notice was necessary and no further environmental review should be expected.

One of the modifications is an increase of 45,000-square-feet in medical office space, from 130,000 to 175,000. That alone is significant enough to trigger the need for additional review and analysis of the impact it will have on traffic, sewage, the environment, etc.

Another of the modifications is an increase in the number of assisted living units from 220 to 250,

which is a 12% increase. Again, that is a significant increase in development that should trigger a need for additional review and analysis about the impact it will have on traffic, sewage, the environment, etc.

These are critical impacts with the potential to upend the quality of life in St. James.

In an attempt to offset these significant modifications, and make the development plan appear less intensive, Gyrodyne has proposed to modify the hotel that is proposed on the site, reducing the number of rooms from 150 to 125 rooms, eliminating the 10,000 square foot day spa, eliminating the 500-seat convention center, and adding a 4,000-square-foot multipurpose room. While it would appear to be less overall, and that's what Gyrodyne is trying to portray of course, it's hard to say that for sure.

The idea of a 10,000-square-foot "day spa" seemed

ambiguous from the outset of the plan five years ago. Therefore, it's hard to determine if removing 500 hypothetical seats and a 10,000-square-foot day spa and adding a 4,000-square-foot multipurpose room will have more or less impact. Certainly it will depend on what goes on in the 4,000 square-foot multipurpose room and how many seats can fit in it.

So this, too, is a modification that should trigger additional review and analysis.

Why the planning board decided to withhold these revisions from the public, why the planning board rushed to judgement without undertaking a due diligent review and analysis of the revisions, and why the planning board rushed to judgement March 10 after nearly five years, is fodder for the conspiracy theorists. In sum, though, it sure seems to justify the grievance of the St. James-Head of the Harbor Neighborhood Preservation Coalition.

Letters from our readers

Proposed recycling bill will deal devastating blow to newspapers...

New York State Senator Todd Kaminsky (D-Rockville Centre) and a host of colleagues have introduced legislation that shifts the responsibility and costs of recycling from municipalities to the producers of packaging and paper products. The legislation is called the Extended Producer Responsibility Act, and in other countries around the world, newspapers have been exempted from these recycling initiatives. New York should follow suit.

In Canada, this product-focused approach is referred to as product stewardship. And while each Canadian province has adopted different stewardship models, there are strong similarities in how newspapers are treated. Their approach is consistent with how newspapers are managed in recycling regimes all over the world. Newspapers have been treated differently in recognition of the fact that they provide a public benefit, that they can make a significant contribution to public education on recycling, and that they are not a packaged good like other materials in the recycling stream.

Newspapers perform an important role in our democracy, and they are not a consumable product - there are no contents and no packaging - the two are indistinguishable. Treating newspapers like packaged goods discriminates unfairly against newspapers - the packaged goods industry makes no investment in contents of their packages, just the packaging itself.

Further, newspapers have been good stewards of the environment for decades. In 1989 New York's newspaper industry entered into a voluntary agreement with the State of New York to increase their usage of recycled newsprint to 40% by the year 2000. Recycling damages the fiber in newsprint, so a minimum of 50% new fiber is required to maintain quality. Newsprint with too little new fiber tears when the presses

are running and causes the ink to blot.

Newsprint accounts for less than 7% of solid waste in a typical community.

Newspapers are environmentally sound—publisher use the remains of what other industries discard, recycled fiber. Newspapers are compostable (you can use them in your vegetable garden), they are re-manufactured (used to produce home insulation and packaging materials). They are reusable, biodegradable, and the ink is non-toxic - made from organic materials such as soy and linseed oil.

In November 2020, the EPA reported the following recycling rates: plastic 8.5%, aluminum 17.2%, rubber/leather 18.2%, glass 25%, and newspapers - 68.2%. Newspapers should be exempted from this legislation because they already recycle at a rate far higher than any other recyclable product.

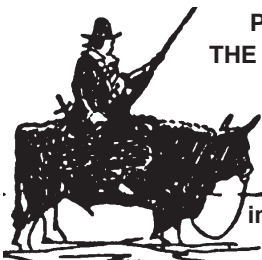
The proposed legislation will not increase or improve the recycling of newspapers—it will simply shift the cost of recycling from municipalities to newspapers. Newspapers are already suffering from revenue declines caused by COVID 19 and big tech platforms. Burdening newspapers with the cost of recycling will result in layoffs, further eroding citizen access to essential local news and information.

Newspapers are good citizens, and they are cheerleaders and watchdogs for the communities they serve. New York's newspapers will be pleased to enter into a voluntary agreement to support, promote and educate readers and community leaders about the importance of recycling. New York's legislators should consider the devastating impact this legislation will have on newspapers, and subsequently, citizens' access to local journalism.

Editor Note: This editorial was submitted by the New York Press Association, which represents community newspapers across New York State.)

The Smithtown News

PUBLICATION NUMBER: (USPS 499-240)



Published Every Thursday
THE SMITHTOWN NEWS, INC.
One Brookside Drive
P.O. Box 805
Smithtown, NY 11787
(631) 265-2100
info@smithtownnews.com

Bernard Paley Editor and Publisher
Jennifer Paley Associate Publisher
David Ambro Managing Editor

Periodicals postage paid at the Smithtown, NY
Post Office under the act of March 3, 1879

Subscription	Advertising Rates
\$28.00 One Year	on Request
\$45.00 Two Years	631-265-2100

Robert James Malone
Founder Editor and Publisher, 1945-1966

COMPOSITION RESPONSIBILITY
This newspaper will not be responsible for any error
in advertising beyond the cost of the space occupied by the error.

WRITE!

Send letters to the editor to:
info@smithtownnews.com