

Editorials & comments

Traffic from Gyrodyne plan is understated

Beware of the traffic impacts from Gyrodyne.

Lurking in the future if the Town of Smithtown Planning Board approves the controversial light industrial (LI) subdivision of the 75-acre Gyrodyne property on the southeast corner of North Country Road (Route 25A) and Mills Pond Road is a potential traffic impact, the likes of which have not been adequately analyzed.

Gyrodyne has proposed to subdivide the property into lots for a hotel, two assisted living facilities and two office buildings. It is an application that resulted in a positive declaration by the planning board, which required that an environmental impact statement be prepared.

The EIS has been accepted by the planning board but not yet approved. The July 14 board meeting was cancelled and the next planning board meeting at which the EIS can be acted upon is August 18. If the planning board accepts the EIS, it will be based on an analysis of traffic that is based on the plans for a hotel, two assisted living facilities, and two office buildings.

The dilemma is that Gyrodyne has made no secret of the fact that after it subdivides the land it intends to sell off the lots to individual developers. If that is the case, the buyers of those sites will be required to apply to the Town of Smithtown for site plan approval, and for the hotel and assisted living facilities the applicants will need special exception permits from the town.

It is possible that rather than apply for the special exception, the lot owners will instead apply to the town to build office buildings, the result of which will be a lot more traffic than was analyzed in the environmental impact statement.

The town should require that there be a supplemental environmental impact statement prepared with a traffic study that explores the worst

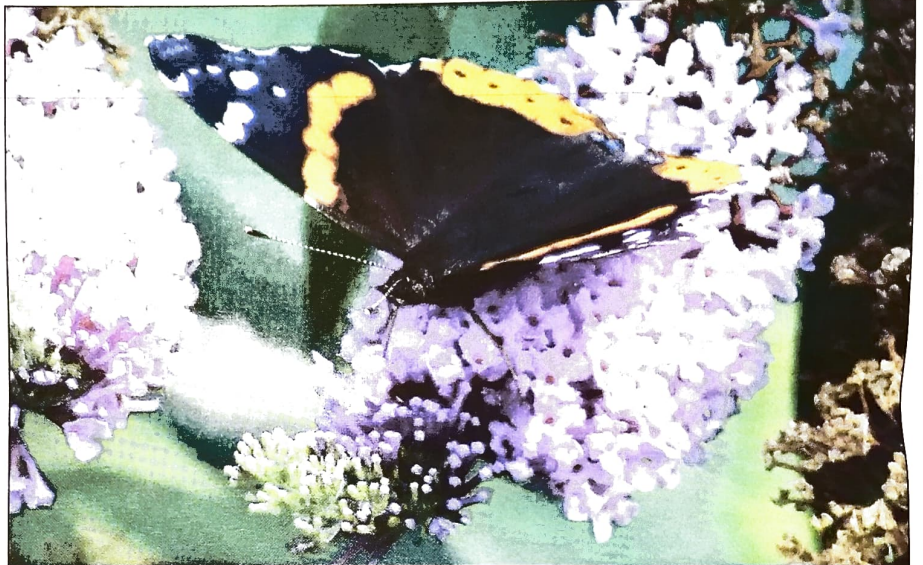
case scenario for traffic under the current zoning, which is light industrial. Gyrodyne likely did not take that approach and instead elected to study only land uses with lesser traffic volumes, such as a hotel and assisted living, because a decade ago its expert witnesses testified at trial about the devastating impact light industrial development of the site would have on the community.

Office buildings have a significantly different traffic impact than a hotel and an assisted living facility. That may be what Gyrodyne would like to see developed on the site but once it gets the subdivision approval and sells off the lots, Gyrodyne will have no control over what's built there.

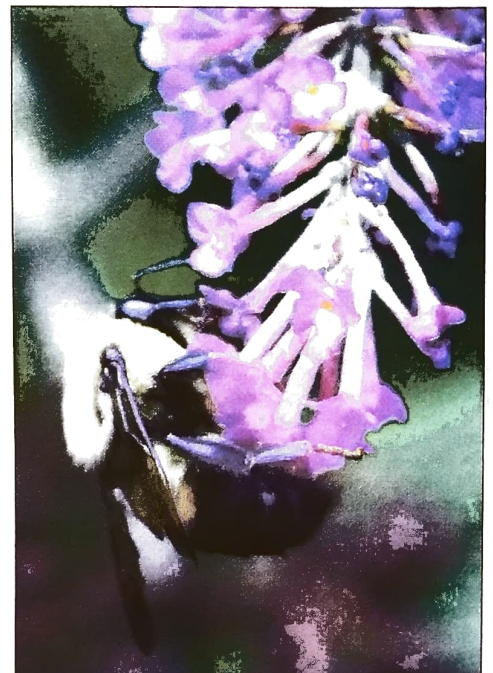
According to a traffic expert for Gyrodyne, when the property was the subject of litigation with the state more than a decade ago, the difference between the

no build scenario and light industrial development is a 3,200% increase in traffic while the difference between no build and residential development is a 338% increase in traffic. In other words, there could be 10 times more traffic with light industrial development if there are going to be office buildings instead of a hotel and assisted living facilities, which may just well be.

Since there is a chance the property will someday see light industrial development, and there is a possibility that will not include a hotel and assisted living facilities and instead could become an office building complex, the worst-case traffic scenario should be taken into account in the environmental impact statement and steps should be articulated to remediate that impact on the St. James community.



'TIS THE SEASON: The pollinators are back in full force.



Correction:

A story in last week's edition of **The Smithtown News** said President Patricia Clark had been an employee of Celebrate St. James prior to becoming president. Ms. Clark was not an employee of Celebrate St. James. She was a volunteer who received no compensation.

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