

## Perspective

### Follow through will be critical for success of new Gyrodyne compromise plan

BY JUDY OGDEN

Now that there is a broadly-supported alternative plan to allow reasonable development at the Gyrodyne site in St. James while preserving Flowerfield Fairgrounds for use by the community, it is critically important for elected officials to make sure that this common-sense plan is implemented, which will be a win-win for the community and Gyrodyne, and will avoid years of uncertainty and litigation.

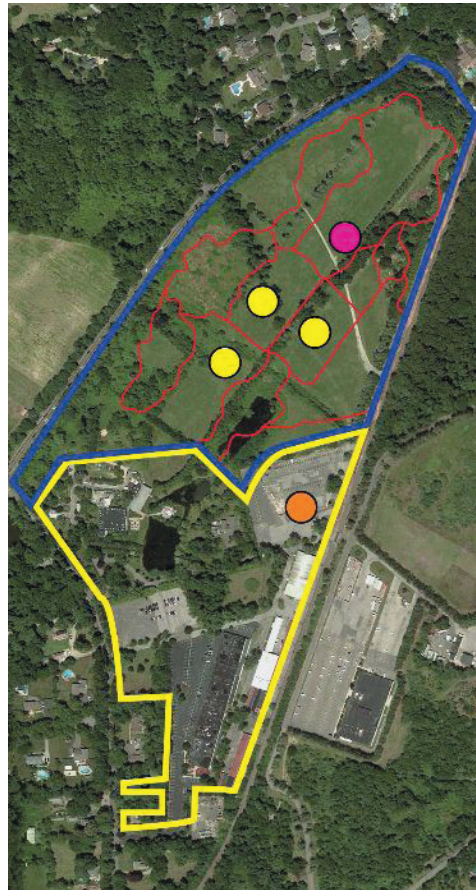
It should come as no surprise that support has grown very quickly for the Compromise Plan. It has been clear from the outset that Gyrodyne's plan for a hotel, 250 assisted living units and 175,000 square feet of medical offices on the last remaining open space in St. James is simply too much development for the site and would completely destroy the character of the community and overwhelm the surrounding roads.

But with intelligent planning, there is no reason why we can't have reasonable development of the Gyrodyne site while also preserving Flowerfield Fairgrounds. That is why a diverse group of stakeholders including Suffolk County Legislator Rob Trotta (R-Fort Salonga) and state Assemblyman Steve Englebright (D-Setauket) have expressed support for an alternative plan that would cluster development on part of the 75-acre property while preserving the Flowerfield Fairgrounds portion for passive recreation and community events.

Head of the Harbor trustees have pointed out repeatedly that Gyrodyne's massive proposal is in direct conflict with key recommendations contained in the Town's new Draft Comprehensive Plan. A key finding of the Draft Comprehensive Plan is that the St. James community severely lacks open space compared to other areas of Smithtown. Under the new Compromise Plan, the Fairgrounds would become a new open space and made available for events such as the car shows that are already held there and other community events, addressing the need identified in the Town's Plan.

Head of the Harbor Mayor Douglas Dahlgard has called for the property to be preserved in its entirety as a park. If that turns out not to be possible, however, there is still a way to preserve much of the property while allowing reasonable development that would have less of an impact on the environment and the community.

Now there is a realistic solution to the problem that can benefit all parties, including Gyrodyne. But that solution can only be successful if Smithtown Supervisor Ed Wehrheim (R) and members of the Town Board exercise strong leadership by joining other elected officials who are already supporting the Compromise Plan.



**Saint James** – Head of the Harbor Neighborhood Preservation Coalition has proposed an alternative plan for the Gyrodyne property. Image from Saint James – Head of the Harbor Neighborhood Preservation Coalition; larger map can be viewed on [tbnnewsmedia.com](http://tbnnewsmedia.com)

The beauty of the Gyrodyne Compromise Plan is that it would require relatively minor changes to Gyrodyne's subdivision proposal but would address many of the community's most serious concerns, avoiding the possibility of costly litigation that could tie the property up for years. Our elected officials need to hear from the community regarding the importance of the Gyrodyne Compromise Plan and work hard to see it to fruition. There are several ways to let your voice be heard.

First, the Town of Smithtown Planning Board will meet via Zoom at 6 p.m. on March 30 to consider preliminary approval of the original Gyrodyne subdivision. The meeting is open to the public and a great opportunity to urge the Planning Board not to approve Gyrodyne's subdivision plan and support the new Compromise Plan instead. The meeting link can be found on the town's website, [smithtownny.gov](http://smithtownny.gov).

Residents can also directly e-mail the supervisor and members of the Town Board and urge them to show leadership by working to support the Gyrodyne Compromise Plan. For more information, go to [stjameshohnpc.org](http://stjameshohnpc.org).

*Judy Ogden is a Head of the Harbor trustee and founding member of Saint James – Head of the Harbor Neighborhood Preservation Coalition.*

## Obituary

### Lee Koppelman, Long Island planner, dies at 94

Lee Koppelman, 94, of South Setauket, died on March 21 at Stony Brook University Hospital.

Born in Harlem, New York, May 19, 1927, Koppelman served as the first Suffolk County regional planning board director for 28 years and also served as a regional planner for Suffolk and Nassau counties for 41 years. He was an early advocate for the preservation of open space and was responsible for drawing up Suffolk's first comprehensive master plan in 1970.

Koppelman was a professor emeritus at Stony Brook University where he taught until last semester, according to his son Keith, and was the director of the Center for Regional Policy Studies at the school. A parcel of land on the Stony Brook campus is named after him. He was also chairman emeritus of the Town of Brookhaven Open Space and Farmland Acquisition Advisory Committee.

Koppelman is survived by his four children Lesli, Claudia, Laurel and Keith; and three grandchildren Ezra, Ora and Dara.



**Lee Koppelman.** Photo from Jefferson's Ferry

A funeral will be held Thursday, March 24, at Shalom Memorial Chapels in Smithtown at 11 a.m. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Hadassah or Doctors Connie and Lee Koppelman Endowed Fellowship Fund in Political Science through the Stony Brook Foundation.

*Look for an extended article on Koppelman's life in an upcoming edition of The Village Times Herald.*

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