

Community-led lawsuit delays Flowerfield subdivision approval

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Concerned local property owners were joined by members of Saint James-Head of the Harbor Neighborhood Preservation Coalition and other representatives to block the planned subdivision by Gyrodyne to repurpose the 63-acre Flowerfield site. A legal challenge was filed April 26 to overturn the March 30 preliminary subdivision approval by the Town of Smithtown Planning Board.

The application proposal from Gyrodyne included a multistory 125-room hotel along with 250 assisted living housing units, 175,000 square feet of office space, parking to accommodate over 2,000 cars and a 7-acre sewage plant.

Among those who spoke at Tuesday's press conference on the corner of Mills Pond Road and Route 25A outside of Flowerfield were local attorney Joseph Bollhofer; Town of Brookhaven Councilmember Jonathan Kornreich (D-Stony Brook); legal counselor E. Christopher Murray; and Judy Ogden, Head of the Harbor village trustee and neighborhood preservation coalition spokesperson.

"Our lawsuit has been filed and the decision to file this litigation against the Smithtown government was not made lightly," Bollhofer said. "Like many of you, I love this town. I grew up here, my wife was born in St. James. In the 1970s, I did my Eagle Scout project for the benefit of the people in this town."

Bollhofer went on to say that the "Smithtown government is doing a very good job" yet its handling of the Gyrodyne application has been bungled. "It's been our hope that we are able to preserve this property," he added. "We've been doing our best to get the people involved with this to come together to try and find a way to get the money to pay Gyrodyne fair compensation for this open space."

Representing Three Village Civic Association was Herb Mones. "Smithtown has to go back and review its determinations on this property," he said, while also saying that



Clockwise from top, Attorney Joseph Bollhofer; Three Village Civic Association member Herb Mones and Jessica Jones; Head of the Harbor village trustee and neighborhood preservation coalition spokesperson, Judy Ogden. Photos by Chris Mellides

in the opinion of many in the civic association, the Town of Smithtown did not pay close enough attention to the law that required them to "carefully review what the buildout would mean to the surrounding community."

Living just 600 feet up the road from Flowerfield, Ogden spoke on behalf of residents in the communities of both St. James and Head of the Harbor. Together, Ogden said community members have been speaking publicly against the Gyrodyne subdivision application for the past two years.

"We've been speaking at public forums, at Zoom meetings, writing letters and sending emails at every opportunity that has been provided to express our concerns with the proposed Gyrodyne megadevelopment," she said. "But no matter what we say or how many people show up, our voices have been ignored."

For more than a year, opponents to the subdivision application have said that the

environmental impacts of changes Gyrodyne made to its original plan after the initial environmental review was completed have not been evaluated and "did not comply with state law," according to a press release issued on the day of the event.

"The role of government is to show leadership, which represents all people of the community and follows a comprehensive plan steering development in the right direction, while preserving and enhancing the nature of our community and natural resources," said Ogden.



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