

Editorials & comments

Don't extend Gyrodyne subdivision

The Smithtown Planning Board will hold a hearing Wednesday, October 8, to consider “retroactively” extending the controversial Gyrodyne LLC preliminary industrial subdivision approval.

Why?

The preliminary approval subdivides the 75-acre Gyrodyne property at the southeast corner of North Country Road (Route 25A) and Mills Pond Road in St. James, also known as the historic Flowerfield Fairground, for a 125-room hotel, 250 units of assisted living, 153,110 square feet of medical office buildings, and an 87,591-gallon-per-day sewage treatment plant. It's a terrible plan, an intense overdevelopment of industrial and institutional uses in a historic residential community that never should have been approved by the Planning Board.

The Planning Board decision has been the subject of a lawsuit in New York State Supreme Court since April 26, 2022. The case is brought by the St. James-Head of the Harbor Neighborhood Preservation Coalition, a group of area residents created to fight the proposal. It also faces intense community opposition.

That the Planning Board is considering a request to “retroactively extend” the preliminary approval for 180 days, six months, to March 30, 2026, suggests that it has expired. Good. Listen to the voice and the will of the people and let it remain expired rather than extending the approval.

The October 8 planning board hearing is at 6 p.m. at the Eugene Cannataro Smithtown Senior Citizen Center at 420 Middle Country Road, Smithtown. Residents should make it a point to attend the meeting to encourage the Planning Board not to extend the preliminary subdivision approval. Their reply will likely be that they have to because of the litigation, but that is just bureaucratic rhetoric and excuse-making.

In a letter to the Planning Board April 13, 2021, Suffolk County Executive Edward Romaine articulated the voice of the opposition and made it clear what a terrible plan this is. Mr. Romaine was the Brookhaven Town supervisor at the time, and he expressed his opposition primarily on environmental grounds, arguing that the project would destroy Stony Brook Harbor and the neighborhoods around the site.

“The placement of the sewage treatment plant immediately adjacent to single-family homes is

unacceptable,” Mr. Romaine writes. “Furthermore, the proposed sewage treatment plan with a 100% expansion capacity for 200,000 gallons per day of sanitary effluent to be released to the subsurface leaching fields will taint Stony Brook Harbor for generations and perpetuate the current status quo of harmful toxic algal blooms, low dissolved oxygen, fish kills, and water closed to shellfishing.”

Those are serious concerns by the top elected official in Suffolk County, and they should be shared with the Planning Board by residents at the October 8 meeting. It is a strong and compelling case to leave the preliminary subdivision approval expired and reject the six-month extension.

There's more.

"The impacts that this project will have on the adjacent communities in the Town of Brookhaven will be far-reaching for our residents. Please consider a true alternative that represents the rural and bucolic nature of the community while preserving natural resources for future generations, rather than the monstrosity that is the FEIS development plan." Those are the words of Mr. Romaine when he was Brookhaven town supervisor and a parochial interest, but the concerns that he expresses apply similarly to the communities of St. James, Head of the Harbor, Nissequogue, and Stony Brook.

This is an application that never should have been approved in the first place, and the Planning Board should use this opportunity to rectify its



FIGHT BACK: St. James-Head of the Harbor Neighborhood Preservation Coalition spokesperson Judith Ogden in April 2022 announcing litigation against the Town of Smithtown to try to block the Gyrodyne subdivision.

-David Ambro photo

mistake and turn down any new extensions. And, the residents should get to the October 8 meeting to demand no less.

Letters from our readers

Mad mindset...

Editor, The NEWS:

I am exhausted, and truthfully, pained by partisan politics. Recently, Supervisor Ed Wehrheim called Rob Trotta a “traitor” to the Republican Party simply because Trotta’s policies do not align with his own, and align more closely with those who stand up against irresponsible development in the Town of Smithtown.

It shakes me that we have reached a place where disagreement is treated as betrayal. Disagreement is not treason. It is human. It is also necessary if we want a healthy and thriving community.

This mindset, where every dissenting voice is silenced, is why every Town Council vote ends up 5 to 0. On the surface, that may look like unity. But true unity comes from valuing differences of opinion, not avoiding them. Different perspectives spark better solutions. Honest disagreement builds balance. Respectful debate creates trust. It is through open conversation and differing viewpoints that a community grows stronger.

This kind of tribalism does not have to define us. We should be able to disagree without tearing each other down. We should be able to value different opinions without slapping people with labels.

We all want the same thing: a safe, strong, welcoming community where families can flourish. We will not get there by shutting each other out. We will get there by listening, compromising, and remembering that before anything else, we are neighbors.

Michael Catalanotto
Smithtown

(Editor's note: The writer is a Democratic Party candidate for the Smithtown Town Board.)

Vaunted veteran...

Editor, The NEWS:

On September 21, Suffolk Legislator Chad Lennon and several supporters completed a nearly 26-hour, 66-mile walk, which began at the Orient Point Firehouse and ended at the Veterans' Plaza in Hauppauge, to raise awareness about veteran suicide. Mr. Lennon, a lieutenant colonel in the United States Marine Corps Reserves, sought to highlight that not all wounds suffered by military personnel are visible. It is important to honor those who have served, those currently serving, and to remember those who passed while struggling with mental health issues.

Bravo to everyone who completed the full 66 miles. I showed my support by walking 25 miles. As a member of the armed forces, I served alongside a diverse group of men and women who shared the common commitment to honor their oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution. This walk was a way for me to continue supporting that oath and to show solidarity with those in need.

Moreover, it was a unifying moment, demonstrating that people genuinely care about struggling veterans. Thanks to everyone who provided support along the route. It has been an honor to walk with those willing to sacrifice their time and endure pain for individuals who have already sacrificed so much to preserve, defend, and protect our fragile freedoms and liberty.

Pete Scott
Centerport

The Smithtown News

PUBLICATION NUMBER: (USPS 499-240)



Published Every Thursday
THE SMITHTOWN NEWS, INC.
18 Lawrence Avenue
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
\$30.00 One Year	on Request
\$48.00 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.

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