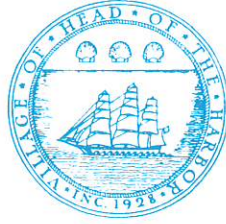


Village of Head-of-the-Harbor



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March 28, 2022

VIA EMAIL AND US POSTAL SERVICE

Supervisor Edward R. Wehrheim, supervisor@smithtownny.gov

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Hon. Edward R. Wehrheim, Town Supervisor

99 West Main Street

P.O. Box 575

Smithtown, NY 11787

RE: Gyrodyne Subdivision #1178

Dear Supervisor Wehrheim:

Below are my remarks that will be made to the Planning Board at their meeting of March 30, 2022.

How did we all get into this situation? How was it determined that the Flowerfield property, located in a bucolic, historic residential and farming community should be zoned industrial? It is wrong. The Environmental Impact Statement skates over the below points.

If Flowerfield was located within the boundaries of either the Village of Head of the Harbor or the Village of Nissequogue we wouldn't be here. Both villages have zoning laws that are designed to protect the character of our villages from being forever changed by unwanted commercial development.

We all live in the same community. The Town as the lead agency on this application has the responsibility to protect our community's character. We ask that the members of the Planning Board be open minded on this issue. Follow the Town's Master Plan that promotes retaining open space and maintaining the character of a community.

I speak to you as a neighbor and as a resident of both the Town of Smithtown and the Village of Head of the Harbor.

Our Village is just across the street from Flowerfield. We are directly impacted by what Gyrodyne does as it liquidates. When you drive on 25A, do you know when you are in St. James, or when you are in Head of the Harbor, or in Brookhaven? Probably not. These areas are all part of the same community and all of the people who live in this community will be impacted by the proposed subdivision. Overwhelmingly the residents say this proposed development is not right for our area.

This is not a commercial area. All of the land uses on the north side of Flowerfield along 25A consist of low density residential, a nature preserve and agricultural land. Gyrodyne's proposed commercial development is completely inconsistent with the character of the surrounding land use.

25A is the primary thoroughfare serving our Village. It splits the Village and on this road are many historic structures.

To emphasize the importance of the character of the Route 25A corridor the Village established the North Country Road Historic District which extends 500 feet along all property in the Village along 25A. Flowerfield is located well within the 500-foot historic district that would otherwise apply if the site was in the Village.

Smithtown represented by its Planning Board should have the same strong feeling as our residents do for the last 75 acres of open space in the Town. This property should be used to attract families for generations and put St. James on the map, not to create an eyesore with traffic lights and turning lanes. Both Villages of Head of the Harbor and Nissequogue are valued and sought for their historic, rural character. There are no traffic lights, sidewalks, and no street lighting in either village for a reason. The proposed Gyrodyne development right next door will detract and lower our property values.

Commuters today drive north to 25A to escape driving on 347. Add additional traffic on 25A and the commuters will try and cut through our Village. This will affect the safety of pedestrians entrancing Avalon Park as well as the pedestrians walking on Main Street to and from the quaint Stony Brook Village shopping center.

For five years our Village has been pointing out our concerns to the County and to the Town of Smithtown about this commercial project. We have asked the leadership of the Town of Smithtown to act in the interests of our community. Tonight, the Planning Board represents the Town leadership and we ask you to represent our Village in this important matter. We assume members of the Planning Board have made a site visit and understand that the area infrastructure is just not suited for the proposed development. Mills Pond Road is only 19 feet wide, narrow and winding. North Country Road is only 22 feet wide and winding and already challenged by overcapacity traffic. Adding traffic signals and turning lanes will cause more commuter aggravation despite what the applicant's traffic study indicates. And what about the unsafe Stony Brook Road intersection?

We have proposed a much better way that will put St. James on the map as a destination and will enhance St. James property values.

The residents of St. James will truly benefit if the Flowerfield property, the last 75 acres of open space, becomes a public open-space park. Forget for the moment that the Town would have to buy the Flowerfield property. Every day the Feds and NY State give away millions and billions of dollars for projects. Right now the Governor and the NYS legislature are talking about a multibillion-dollar environmental bond fund package. We ask the Town leadership to take the initiative and ask for funding to buy Flowerfield. There is no excuse not to try.

Think what a park would be for the community. A large open space for all. A place for people to engage in recreation, a picnic, open air concerts, farmers markets like the Bethpage market where local restaurants and farms participate, walking trails, a dog park. All of these activities will attract people to the benefit of local businesses.

We know that community parks increase property values. A park also protects natural ecosystems. Natural habitats for native wildlife are protected and air pollution is removed by trees. Trees also collect stormwater and limit erosion damage from stormwater runoff.

Open space improves our physical and psychological health and makes our neighborhoods more attractive places to live. A park provides opportunities for parents to bond with children and for children to make new friends in the neighborhood.

In today's world more office buildings are not needed. Existing commercial spaces, such as the Smithtown Mall are either empty or being re-purposed. A few weeks ago, I went to CityMD at the mall for many years that was Toys R Us.

Think about the changes from Covid and technology like zoom, and you know why more commercial space doesn't make sense. Can you think of young people saying wow! I want to live near an office complex and drive in traffic, or would they more likely say I want to live near a park!

Smithtown has an extensive system of well-maintained parks, but I looked for open space parks near St. James and I found nothing.

I looked for horseback riding and found in the Town's Recreation Guide on page 33 it says "Breathe in the fresh air and feel the stress disappear as you enjoy an hour-long horseback ride in the beautiful, tranquil Connetquot River State Park Preserve, not in St. James, but in Central Islip.

A fabulous park owned by Smithtown with history, nature, concerts, trails, sports and farm education is the 136-acre Hoyt Farm. But the Hoyt Farm is located in South Commack, not in St. James.

A park at Flowerfield would be a destination for our community. I'm talking about the entire Flowerfield property as an open space park not just squeezing a space next to a commercial development.

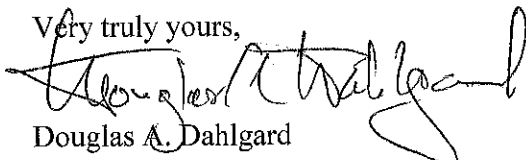
I also want to point to the Suffolk County Equestrian Task Force Report that was created after public hearings. The report pointed out the lack of equestrian venues, and the limited trail network in the County is causing horse owners to relocate out of state. Smithtown has a long history of riding and horse shows. Let's bring it back.

The Flowerfield property is large enough to handle an equestrian center to hold events similar to the Hamptons Classic. Imagine a St. James Classic horse show and how it would put St. James on the map as a destination. We have people in our community with the expertise to create a St. James Classic - if Flowerfield can be saved.

Saved is the right word. Long Island is almost gone. I grew up in Queens in the 1950's next to Horace Harding Boulevard, a tree lined east west road. There were still farms in Queens. Horace Harding Boulevard soon became the Long Island Expressway. Most of Queens was eventually paved over, but open space parks like Cunningham and Alley Pond remained. Nassau was paved over but there was always Bethpage Park. Suffolk, as it used to be, is nearly gone, almost paved over, A chance to save the last open space in the St. James area is in your hands. We hope members of the Planning Board are open minded and take into account the impact of the Gyrodyne liquidation. Please help our community save Flowerfield as open space parkland.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,



Douglas A. Dahlgard
Mayor

Cc: Town Planning Board, Town of Smithtown