

Village of Head-of-the-Harbor



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August 2, 2021

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Hon. Town Council
99 West Main Street
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Re: Comments for the August 3rd Public Meeting on the Draft Master Plan for the Town
of Smithtown.

Dear Supervisor Wehrheim and Town Council Members:

As Mayor of Head of the Harbor I am sending congratulations on your initiative to create a Master Plan for guiding Smithtown's future. We recognize that the leadership of Smithtown has devoted significant amounts of time and energy to the development of the Plan. The engagement in this process by residents from each of the Town's hamlets has been commendable.

Please accept the below comments from our Village:

The three villages in Smithtown were excluded from the Smithtown Master Plan because each village has its own zoning law. However, we do not live in Wyoming where towns are separated by vast open spaces. As one travels around Smithtown it is frequently difficult to point out the border that separates the Town from the three villages. There is certainly a closeness of Town and Village that can easily result in an impact by an action on one side of the border on the municipality on the other side. In this regard our major concern is the proposed development of the 75-acre Gyrodyne parcel. The Gyrodyne land is surrounded on the North and West by working farms in Head of the Harbor and by residential housing and historic buildings. Village residents depend on access to North Country Road to travel and deliver farm and nursery produce. To the South of the Gyrodyne property borders a St. James residential area, Mills Pond Estates. The Mills Pond Estate residents in this community can only rely on Mills Pond Road to exit and enter their community. Mills Pond Road is a former cattle path that remains today as narrow and winding.

Many community residents recognize that the proposed Gyrodyne commercial development is in the wrong place and will disturb their quality of life.

The Gyrodyne parcel is the last large parcel of open space remaining in Smithtown and once developed the opportunity to create an openspace park that could be a “destination”. It will be a shame and a loss to Smithtown if this opportunity is not acted on. If the property is commercially developed, a traffic nightmare will be imposed on an otherwise bucolic community. Added traffic on North Country Road, Mills Pond Road and Stony Brook roads, and the potential cut through traffic on the narrow and winding Head of the Harbor Village roads will forever change this part of Head of the Harbor and St. James.

The residents of this community do not believe that a traffic light and new turning lanes would handle the increase in traffic. Just imagine the frustration of local residents facing a dark winter evening with snow and long lines of traffic trying to feed onto narrow Mills Pond Road from the Gyrodyne parking lots and being stopped by a long line of cars trying to turn onto North Country Road.

We also note that the Guiding Principles of the draft Plan encourage preserving the beauty of our natural environment and that open space and parks are integral parts of our community’s fabric. We ask that this Guiding Principle will be followed in the future planning process especially with regard to the Gyrodyne parcel.

Our point is an open space park would be preferable for the Gyrodyne property. An open space park could be a “destination” with features such as an equestrian center that would attract people to St. James for years to come. A “destination” that will add to the existing destinations of the St. James General Store, the Deep Wells Park, and the vibrant Lake Avenue downtown that you are creating. A group of office buildings in the North Country Road/Mills Pond historic corridor certainly would not be a destination that would provide a sense of community and a place for future generations to enjoy.

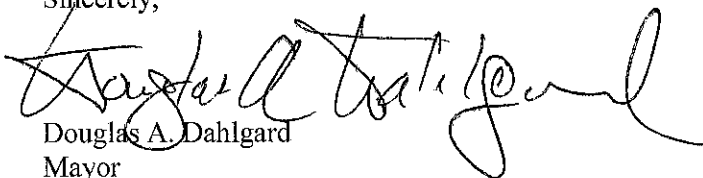
We note further that Planning Director Peter Hans recommended on June 2nd that the draft plan be amended. Proposed amendment 16 recommends the Gyrodyne sewage treatment plant should not be zoned Park. This makes sense and also it is sensible that the 200-foot buffer that is attached to the Gyrodyne parcel should remain untouched, natural, and not be used for leaching fields or parking.

Amendment 16 also says that the Gyrodyne site design should maintain the character of the historic North Country Road corridor and Mills Pond Historic District. We would agree that the amendment is proper and in line with the Guiding Principle of “preserving, protect and enhance the historic, scenic, cultural and architectural character of Smithtown”

Finally, we point out on page 29 of the Plan the statement “there are no known negative land use impacts occurring between the Town and the Village of Head of the Harbor.” Please note that if this is meant to mean the proposed Gyrodyne commercial development is not a negative land use impact on the residents of the Village of Head of the Harbor, it is incorrect and should be eliminated from the Plan document.

Again, we send our congratulations to you and to the members of the Town Council and Planning Department on the creation of the draft Master Plan for Smithtown that will guide Smithtown’s Future.

Sincerely,



Douglas A. Dahlgard
Mayor