

Testimony of a Public Hearing of the Town of Union Planning Board held at the Town Office Building, 3111 East Main Street, Endwell, NY, Tuesday, April 11, 2017, at 7:38 pm.

PRESENT:

Members present: L. Miller
L. Cicciarelli
S. McLain
A. Elwood
T. Crowley
S. Forster
S. Daglio

Others present: Marina Lane
Paul Nelson
James Wheelock
Tracy Severson

MS. MILLER: Now we'll open the Public Hearing for Floodplain Development and I will read the public hearing notice.

The Town of Union Planning Board will conduct a public hearing relative to an application by the Town of Union for the Village of Johnson City Water Department for a special permit to develop in the 100-year floodplain for a new Water Department office building, located at 44 Camden Street (property tax map # 143.61-1-24).

The public hearing will take place on Tuesday, April 11, 2017, at 7:05 PM in the Town Board Meeting Room on the second floor of the Town of Union Office Building located at 3111 East Main Street, Endwell, New York. The application is available for review in the Town of Union Planning Department (at the address listed above) during normal business hours (8 AM to 4PM).

Individuals with special needs requiring accommodations may contact the Planning Department at 607 786-2985 at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled public hearing. – Paul A. Nelson, Secretary

MR. NELSON: Okay. Just for the record, my name is Paul Nelson, I am the Director of Planning for the Town of Union, and my office functions as the grant administrator for the Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery grant that the town received after the 2011 flood. As mentioned during the SEQRA review of the application, just to go over this very quickly again, the site was flooded in 2011 and it really

had impacted operations for several days during the flood event. Therefore, after the water receded and the grant funds became available, the plan was to start to harden a lot of the critical facilities throughout the town.

We did another project in the Village of Endicott, that I think I may have mentioned to you before, to put in backup generators because many of these facilities did not have an alternate power source when NYSEG cut the power; a lot of these pumps went out of service because they didn't have backup generators. That has been resolved as part of the new construction that the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery has already completed on the east side of the driveway as you come in off Camden Street. So there is a new operations and new administration building that have already been built, and the three well houses that are on this side (east) have already been flood-proofed with barriers that can be deployed in anticipation of a flood event; so it keeps the flood water out of the well houses themselves.

The reason that they moved the operations and administration buildings across the driveway is because this is a higher elevation, so they were able to get the buildings up higher and above the base flood elevation as required by the code. That left the low side of the site for the new maintenance building, and the problem is they have to get trucks in and out of this building so there is only so far that they can raise the building because the site is so constrained by the levee on this side (east) and the street. If they raise the building then they are going to be going up ramps and trying to get into the building. So what they are doing is the first floor elevation will be slightly higher than it is in the existing building here. They can only go up about a foot with the first floor elevation, which obviously creates problems because under the HUD guidelines if you can't get three feet above the base flood elevation you have to cover flood insurance. So what they have elected to do on this project is that this building will be completely demolished, and the foundation will be salvaged, and the new building will be built on the existing foundation because it's actually pretty sound. The unique thing about this building, I don't know if anyone has ever been in it, but it actually has an 18-foot deep basement in it. So one of the things that they are going to do is that they are going to run what they call an EPDM membrane. They'll excavate around the foundation, and they will apply this membrane so that water can't get through the building, and that will also be applied to the existing floor in the basement, and then that will be back filled up to grade. What they will do is that they will continue that membrane up the side of the new building. I think you have the elevations.

MR. CICCARELLI: They are going to fill that eighteen feet, Paul?

MR. NELSON: Yes.

MR. CICCARELLI: They are going to fill that in.

MR. NELSON: Yes, within the foundation wall. So they are salvaging that, and the reason they are doing that is because it's so close to the water table that they are afraid that if they disturb that protection that you are going to get even more water coming up through that. So their plan is to work to keep the water from coming through the slab as it is. Sheet number A200 shows the elevations of what the new building will look like. It is not the hanging gardens of Babylon, it is a utility type building, and what will happen is that in order to meet the insurance requirements, and not have to carry any flood insurance, they will actually be extending a concrete wall up four feet above the slab that will go around the entire building. All of the openings in the building that you see for the garage doors and the pedestrian doors will be constructed with channels on either side of them so that in the event of a storm event, they can put panels in place that will block those entrances off. They will now be flood proofed, not only above the existing base flood elevation; they will be about a foot and half above the flood of record, which is the 2011 flood. So it is a fairly straightforward building. The plans that they have right now are preliminary, but what this building would look like is that it will have a concrete wall around the outside, and you then will have a masonry building above that, probably concrete block, and then that will have a metal skin attached to it. It will be a metal-sided building just above that four-foot concrete wall. That is pretty much it. Again they cannot raise the building too much so they have to take other measures to flood proof it so that they do not have to carry flood insurance.

The confusing thing on this project is that during the reviews the cost estimates that we had for this building, we had allocated approximately seven hundred thousand dollars for the demolition of the building and the construction of the new one. The cost estimates that they are getting right now are somewhere between eight hundred thousand and a million. I do not think that they are going to come in that high, but Johnson City has asked the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery to use some leftover money that they had from that grant to make up the difference. We are not entirely comfortable with that because it triggers a whole bunch of other regulations. We still have two projects Brixius Creek and Patterson Creek that we already have permits for and we are still waiting for them to finish all of the final approvals on them. We are going on three years now for

those two projects, so we concerned and we certainly do not want this to drag on indefinitely. In any case, the big problem when the state is doing their environmental review, the issue is that the parcel boundaries, technically as Marina mentioned before, technically this parcel touches the 100-year floodplain but it is bisected by the levee. Therefore, the portion of the site that is on the protected side is actually not in the 100-year floodplain and that is where the building is going. They kept saying over and over again oh they are going to have to carry flood insurance if they cannot elevate it three feet; and we are trying to explain it to them and I think we finally gotten through to them. Some of those issues have been taken care of during the bid process as far as how the funding is allocated to specific activities of construction.

We already have asbestos testing done for the building prior to demolition. So any removal that has to be done has already been identified; so whoever wins the contract will be responsible for the demolition and then the new construction. As I said, fairly straightforward but this will certainly give the Village a lot more operational stability in the event that we get another big flood.

MR. CICCARELLI: This is just a curiosity question. What did they use that big deep basement for in the past?

MR. NELSON: Rumor has it that they played basketball in it on occasion. That is how deep it was. The guy I was asking said that during lunch break they had hoops set up down there and they could actually play basketball down there, that's how deep it was.

MS. LANE: They stored plans and things down there.

MR. CICCARELLI: Okay.

MR. NELSON: Basically It was used primarily for storage.

MR. CICCARELLI: No particular function of the building though?

MR. NELSON: No. There was no equipment related to the services.

MR. CICCARELLI: So they are not going to miss it.

MR. NELSON: Right. Okay, so anyway, that is it in a nutshell.

MS. MILLER: Do you have any questions?

MS. SEVERSON: Well, I already knew the building was going to go up. When I saw your sign and it said floodplain development, my concern was that if it floods again is this going to divert the water differently, and am I going to flood differently. Or I also wondered about how much noise and construction debris in the air; I have asthma and my husband has COPD and we are right on the corner; and also the stability of the dike for the next flood. It's getting squishy.

MR. NELSON: Right. The levee has already been inspected for the entire length from Fifth Street where it meets the railroad tracks, and back around and up through Home Depot where it ties back into Main Street. The Army Corp of Engineers and DEC were both out after the 2011 flood event, and actually all of the earthen levees in the town and in Broome County performed marvelously during that storm event. They are actually in very good condition.

MS. SEVERSON: Good.

MR. NELSON: The levee that went around the former BAE facility, there are some low spots in it because the levee is made out of earth materials. So over the years since it's been built, there are some spots that have settled and we're working with the Army Corp of Engineers and DEC now to go back, and at a minimum, get those low spots levelled out and if we can, try to put some additional height on the levees to provide added protection. There are many factors that go into whether or not we can do that, but at a minimum take it back to the original height that it was built at.

MS. SEVERSON: Okay.

MS. LANE: So the footprint of the new building is what I was showing you there, and almost the same as before, so it will not have any effect on you.

MS. SEVERSON: Is something happening soon though where Elgon Street will not be accessible for a short period of time? I spoke to Josh about that. Is that happening in the next month?

MR. NELSON: No. This will not start construction probably until late summer at the earliest.

MS. SEVERSON: Okay.

MR. NELSON: You got a notice saying that they are to close portions of it?

MS. SEVERSON: No. You know, Josh, I cannot remember his last name, and he just said that for a couple of days we would have to park on Camden

because something would be going on on Elgon Street. Even though I thought it was going to start by now, because it's April now, but it has not.

MS. LANE: You should call the Village of Johnson City because it might be something unrelated that we do not know about.

MS. SEVERSON: Okay.

MR. NELSON: They just opened these new buildings. They transferred all of the equipment over so the buildings have been operational only since the middle to late November. So they took longer to do the construction there than anticipated.

MS. SEVERSON: And that really was not as disruptive as we thought it was going to be. It was not that bad.

MR. NELSON: There will be truck traffic in and out, and there will be noise and some disturbance during construction obviously. During demolition, they are required to have water trucks there and wet it down as they are doing the demolition.

MS. SEVERSON: During the asbestos removal?

MR. NELSON: Yes. There was not a whole lot, but anything that they found in the report has to be remediated before they can start demolition; and they have to do air sampling while they are doing it to make sure there is no particulate matter that is escaping off the site.

MS. SEVERSON: Okay.

MS. MILLER: Is there an estimated construction time?

MS. SEVERSON: Yes, how long will this take?

MS. MILLER: Like a timetable.

MR. NELSON: It is really going to depend... I think the tricky part is going to be the waterproofing and everything of the existing foundation. I do not have an exact time for construction, but typically, a building like this does not take more than a few months to construct. They are not building a hospital that has all this complicated equipment in it. It is basically an open space inside the four walls; there is a little bit of office space and bathroom facilities.

MR. CROWLEY: Paul, if I understand this correctly, underneath the building that they are going to tear down there is an eighteen-foot high basement. Okay, now when they tear down the upper building, they are going to go ahead and put water on it. Are you still going to be able to do that with the basement?

MR. NELSON: Yes.

MR. CROWLEY: Are they going to be able to block things off?

MR. NELSON: They are going to put a membrane down on the concrete floor that is already there.

MR. CROWLEY: Before they start tearing it down.

MR. NELSON: Well, no, because you do not want any debris falling into that.

MR. CROWLEY: That is what I am trying to figure out. If they are going to put water on it, they are going to use a lot of water right where they have an eighteen-foot hole.

MR. NELSON: Right. It is not a ton of water that they put on it. It is a light spray.

MR. CROWLEY: That keeps the dust down, so you do not get a lot of dust. I was just concerned, is that going to restrict them as to how much water they are going to put on to control the dust?

MR. NELSON: I do not believe so. Well, it is not as if they can fill up an eighteen-foot deep space in the span of a two-day demolition.

MR. CICCARELLI: Scott said that they should probably just use the brick for fill.

MR. NELSON: They might; I do not know. It depends on who wins the contract.

MR. CICCARELLI: Great. It is definitely the way to go.

MR. NELSON: I think they learned a lesson with the BAE demolition. Apparently, there was an issue when the timbers, or whatever, were taken out of there.

MS. SEVERSON: How will we know the dates that this is going to happen, if we did decide to go camping for a week to get out of the area?

MR. NELSON: They are still working on the final building drawings itself so they can finish the bid package. I would not expect this to be out to bid until probably sometime in maybe late April or mid-May.

MS. SEVERSON: So that is when you start construction?

MS. LANE: You really should call the Village of Johnson City because right now they are going through an approval process here because it is located in the Town of Union. But no specific details are being figured out in the Town of Union. Therefore, you could just call periodically to them and say that you live nearby and that you just would like to get an estimate for when the starting date might be.

MS. MILLER: Or maybe even tell them that they could call you when they know.

MS. LANE: No.

MR. CICCARELLI: That will be posted in the press anyway, won't it?

MR. NELSON: Well, yes.

MS. SEVERSON: So I call the Village, not the Town.

MS. LANE: The Village of Johnson City Engineering Department.

MR. NELSON: Actually, the bids are going to come out of our office, the bid packages themselves.

MS. LANE: But that is the bid package. That is not deciding when the construction will start.

MR. NELSON: We will actually be doing the contract for it, the Town Board will.

MS. LANE: So you will know when the construction begins.

MR. NELSON: Yes.

MS. LANE: Oh, well then, you can call Paul Nelson.

MR. NELSON: Right (laugh).

MR. FORSTER: Or his assistant, Marina.

MS. LANE: Not me. I am not involved.

MR. NELSON: We will have a pre-construction meeting, and once we have that, the contractor will generally give us their estimate of a start date, because they have to submit all kinds of insurance and bonds and everything. So even though the Village of Johnson City owns this project, the Town is the grant recipient so the Town Board will actually be awarding the contract, and so we will be administering it.

MS. LANE: So if you just call the Planning Department you will get Carol's number and then she would direct you to Paul. I think it was under CDBG. I don't know what it is under now, anyway, someone in the Planning Department, or CDBG, or you can call downstairs and say could I speak to Paul Nelson.

MS. MILLER: Any other questions? Well then, we will close the public hearing.

Meeting concluded: 7:56 pm.

I, CAROL M. KRAWCZYK, do hereby certify that the foregoing transcript of a Public Hearing of the Town of Union Planning Board is a true, accurate, and complete transcript of my stenographic notes/tape taken at the above time and place.

CAROL M. KRAWCZYK