

**VILLAGE OF NEW PALTZ PLANNING BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING MARCH 18, 2006**

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 9:29 a.m.

Members Present: George Danskin, Chair; Ray Curran, Marion DuBois, Laura Heady.

Members Absent: Ruth Elwell

Also present: George Sifre, Barry Medenbach, Ed Sprague, David Clouser, Ted Fink, Dennis Doyle (Director, Ulster County Planning Board), Erin Quinn, reporter, Michael Zierler; Village Trustee and Planning Board Liaison, and other members of the public.

Announcement:

The Chair said the meeting will adjourn at 11:30 am so the Planning Board could conduct a site visit to Mr. Tosconi's property at 123 Main Street.

Pending Application:

PB04-16: George Sifre/Seakill Custom Home Builders. Victorian Square, LLC. South Manheim Blvd. (NYS Route 32). Site Plan/Special Use Permit
Discussion regarding preparation of FEIS and alternatives analysis.
Applicant Present: George Sifre; Barry Medenbach and Ed Sprague (Medenbach & Eggers), t
Planning Board Consultants: David Clouser (Engineer); Ted Fink (Planner)

The Chair announced that in addition to the applicant, David Clouser and Ted Fink (two planning board consultants) and Dennis Doyle, Director of the UCPB were invited to participate in today's discussion.

The goals for today's meeting are (1) to understand how to progress from the DEIS to the FEIS and (2) to discuss and clarify what constitutes a reasonable and viable alternative scheme for developing the site without any loss/impact to wetlands. The Chair said that Mr. Clouser had prepared a rough sketch of the zero impact alternative which had been distributed to the applicant and Board members previously.

Mr. Medenbach reviewed the history of the project for the benefit of the newer board members, enumerating the changes and reduction in building location and number of units over the past 18 months in response to the environmental concerns expressed by the Planning Board and the compromises agreed upon from series of facilitated meetings held between the developer and the community.

There was discussion on the "no wetlands impact" alternative including the pros and cons of relocating the footprints of the buildings, reducing the number of buildings and increasing the height of the remaining buildings, utilizing the areas previously overlooked due to the agreements with the neighbors, preserving the buffer area between the development and the wetlands, identifying locations for mitigation and other related topics.

The applicant noted they were initially requested not to build on certain areas of the property and then were criticized for not presenting alternatives using those locations. In reviewing the DEIS and the current requested changes, Mr. Danskin asked the Board to acknowledge the previous commitments made by the Board. Mr. Curran felt this was a negotiation process and that no alternatives should be rejected.

The applicant said that any further reduction in rental units would impact on the cost of development and the rental cost of the units themselves. (The applicant's original proposal of 100 units has been reduced to 84. The maximum build out under present zoning is 140 units which includes the senior resident density incentive.)

Although both Mr. Fink and Mr. Doyle advocated higher buildings to maintain the number of units and felt the increased height would be acceptable since it was adjacent to the university's tall buildings, neither could cite any recent practical experience with four story developments. Most of the Board members said they would be interested in seeing such an analysis. The applicant said two-story buildings were designed so as not to impose more large structures on the community and noted that four story buildings would require a variance as well as additional construction and maintenance costs.

The Chair said the Board has to weigh the impact of the loss of any wetlands against the prospect of gained housing, and noted the current housing shortage in New Paltz. Mr. Doyle added that there is a housing shortage throughout the entire County.

The Chair would like the applicant to walk away with a clear understanding of what further analysis is needed to complete the FEIS, by defining the alternatives instead of assuming an infinite number of

alternatives. To make this decision, some Board members wanted a further level of analysis of ecological areas and functions (water quality, wetland, wildlife, hydrology). Mr. Medenbach stated that these analyses had been done and therefore the applicant had identified and proposed disturbing the lowest quality of wetland; and not disturbing the highest quality wetlands. Mr. Danskin said he didn't think there was any strong benefit in developing the property near Joalyn and reminded the Board that it had responded favorably to the previous analyses which led to the elimination of structures on the easterly portion of the site.

The applicant said they will be mitigating all wetlands disturbances and that saving the low quality wetlands (which were previous filled) would require them to lose 40 units. The Board was asked to consider the implications of losing these units and/or creating taller buildings near the community and university against maintaining that particular strip of wetlands (currently filled with shale and dirt) and having units in character with the neighboring houses.

Mr. Danskin noted that the wooded wetlands, north of the proposed housing, buffer neighborhoods from each other and from the school and that the applicant would be restoring the filled portions of the wetland and creating open space to be protected into perpetuity. He expressed his opinion that this is liked to be the most important function served by wetlands on this site. Mr. Curran said that reducing the wetland disturbance and restoring some of the low-grade wetlands could be achieved and balanced with the creation of taller buildings in combination with smaller units representative of the character of the residential neighborhood. He would like to see the number of units achieved without increasing the encroachment on the wetlands given the flexibility of using three story buildings in some or the entire project. Mr. Fink felt that the right direction was to decrease the footprint by using taller buildings and a mix of housing styles.

Mr. Doyle talked about design versus environmental objectives, diversity versus density for building types and livability versus functionality and felt that design objectives should be established from the start. He again stated the absolute need for housing in Ulster County and the need to construct more units. He felt that the Board should not preclude withdrawing the prohibition on using Cicero as a connecting road to create a long-term benefit by reducing the traffic on Main Street and providing better local access for local residents. He proposed using alternate route systems for a variety of neighborhoods as a means to help reduce the overall traffic problem in the village and provide a more mature transportation grid. Mr. Danskin asked the neighbors to think about repealing the prohibition in return for moving the development away from Joalyn

Mr. Danskin stated that the EIS process must balance all the environmental factors with social and economic factors/benefits for the community noting that the development was in a prime location, connectable to the village water /sewer and within walking distance to SUNY and shopping. He said the PB has the opportunity to develop more pedestrian centered incentives that would reduce traffic such as rental incentives for SUNY employees who walk to work, extending/connecting the sidewalk on the east side of 32 to create a walking path for children to the middle school, creating a walkway connecting to Joalyn and the Cherry Hill Mall (enabling more pedestrian shoppers from the neighborhood and the university), providing bus service to the local community and connecting the water main to Joalyn and strengthening the village water supply system.

In conclusion the Chair summarized that the Board must decide if it is comfortable with the level of disturbance indicated in the FEIS. And if so, they would then begin to address the diversity vs. density issue. The Chair then confirmed that the applicant had enough direction to complete the FEIS

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:24am as members left to visit Mr. Toscani's site.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Shestakofsky
Secretary to Village Planning Board

Copies to Trustee Michael Zierler
Drayton Grant, Attorney
David Clouser, Engineer
Ted Fink, Planner
Bob Chamberlin, Traffic Engineer