

September 16, 2019

Dear Town of Guilderland Planning Board,

I am writing to you as a taxpayer in Guilderland who was fortunate enough to have grown up enjoying the Pine Bush area before it was so heavily developed but more importantly as a citizen of the planet.

I want you to know I have read the Draft Scoping Document many times over and this is about the third version of this letter I have drafted to you . This is not something I know how to do so bear with me. I hope I have added some ideas to consider along the way here .

What I feel is most important to all of us right now is the issue of global warming and the threatened mass extinction that scientists tell us is well under way and unfortunately both are likely to exponentially speed up over time mostly due to the cumulative actions of human behavior across the planet. This warming must be stopped.

There is MASSIVE development proposed in Guilderland. It is very frightening to me to see the natural resources being decimated in Guilderland and beyond. What are we leaving the future generations ?

I believe that each person must take bold and immediate action to slow the process in every way they can figure out and every town, state, country and so on must also do their part. Speaking for myself I have invested in solar panels, an all electric car, I compost, do not fly, have not eaten meat in decades, reduce my consumption in every way I can think of and more. For Guilderland there must transparency about all this development and the impact which may be hard to quantify and is cumulative. So what may start out here as a 20 acre parcel and seem small is just one part of a whole bigger picture.

The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) projection was that "we " had 12 years to decrease our (global warming etc.) impact before it is too late and that was a year ago. Since releasing this they indicated it was a conservative estimate and likely there is less time.

Looking at the purpose of this scoping document I see the " DEIS will analyze the potential significant cumulative adverse impacts of the undeveloped lands " which I believe means the impact of development on the undeveloped lands. While I think it is hard to predict and hard to prove what some of the impacts will be, I believe scientific data and rapidly changing developments all around us warn us

that "we" all need to have a moratorium on destruction of remaining undeveloped land until more is understood about what is happening and how to slow it. Especially, to me, land near such a unique habitat as the Pine Bush Preserve which has already been degraded to only a tiny portion of what it was. Habitat rarely found on the planet of inland pine barrens and ecosystems that are so sensitive and fragile, as you know .

I will try to relate some of what I see and fear regarding specific areas in the document.

First of all I see "detailed description " section 2.3, but in the description of the action there are references to future possible development ie: under area 3: "This development will include as possible future development 115,000 SF of retail space, 50,000 SF of office space, and 48 multi-family apartments". It seems there may be adverse impacts from this development that need to be addressed as a separate entity altogether .

There is a similar statement about site 1 "The northern portion of Site 1 also includes a potential future development area. While no plans currently exist for this area, an additional 90 apartment units will be analyzed for purposes of the DEIS. " This also to me seems like something that should be dealt with for clarity and accuracy as a separate issue.

In site 2, I wonder about the potential impacts of a fueling station on groundwater and how to guarantee there would be no leakage, especially as we are told to expect worsening storms as the climate warms. 100 and 500 year storms are reoccurring now over and over across the planet. I know first hand as my parents home in Guilderland Center was damaged with Hurricane Irene in 2011 that devastated the region. Now we are post Hurricane Dorian ,the worst national disaster to affect the Bahamas, post Hurricane Sandy that brought unprecedented storm surges and devastation to NYC and beyond and on and on we go. If the developers really feel that there is a need for another gas station they could buy and rehab the one that is non- operating on Western Avenue now. Section 2.3 also mentions "lawns and landscaping ". I can't help but wonder about runoff of chemicals, I recently read that there is a 41% rise in lymphoma, attributed to Round Up the article said. My oldest friend was just diagnosed with lymphoma, I have lost friends to it and many other friends are survivors. Will the runoff affect the Pine Bush Preserve? Now humankind and wildlife are being found to have all kinds of chemicals and plastics in our bodies. Rachel Carson warned us in "Silent Spring". We did not listen, now our nest is soiled badly.

In 2.4 the proposed need to me is very interesting . First of all to develop land when there is already a huge spacious , mall with acres and acres of pavement absorbing heat, running off rain water, no doubt adding to warming given the cumulative effect of pavement on the earth surface makes no sense to me. We

know that this mall eventually will be less and less needed as we see with struggling malls across the country. It could be converted into many of the buildings sought by the developers as the stores vacate rather than trying to figure out what to do with it once it is a ghost town like Berkshire Mall, a big scar on a beautiful hilltop, now mostly abandoned just soaking up heat and using resources to heat and cool it.

On September 13, 2019 Marketplace, a program on NPR, did a program about dying malls. Some are now adding go-kart tracks, residential space, a medical center, library, senior center on and on because the stores are leaving. Forever 21 the latest chain failing. Who would have thought we would lose Sears? The developer said the tenants of the new buildings would likely use the bus (I was there in the audience for the presentation) so I cannot see why so much parking is proposed and the use of the current acres of empty parking around Crossgates would solve that. If this is approved the parking lots should be dirt to absorb water and heat. They are easy to repair as well, that is what I have where I live, a dirt road.

I do of course understand we need jobs such as construction and that would be beneficial if building solar farms and geothermal systems. Senior Housing in the mall space would be great for access to shopping, dining, safe surfaces for walking, maybe a Y with a pool and exercise classes could be added, and the bus service for seniors would be great too. If affordable housing were added as the mall fades young families could assist the seniors enhancing employment and quality of life for all including assisting young children while parents are working to provide supervision and the wisdom of elders. Office space in failed storefronts would become an easy commute to work and a protected and expanded Pine Bush Preserve nearby would be a real win win situation as the mall fails. Adding another level on some of the mall for housing and covering it with green garden roof tops and a solar farm would be amazing and decrease the carbon footprint. I bet a geothermal well or two could be added to heat and cool space and it should be required on ALL new building projects as we go forward, The cost would return in savings and the decreasing impact on the planet.

What is the occupancy rate or vacancy rate in our area for lodging? Hotels are going up everywhere. I recall decades ago asking why there were unneeded buildings going up and a smart person told me the corporate developers do not care. They get paid to build. They earn their pay developing. They don't care what happens after that, they got theirs. If the business does poorly that is a tax write off I guess. Buildings have to be heated, cooled, fossil fuels drilled, transported, spilled, burned, emitted, roof after roof absorbing the sun's rays, parking lot after parking lot...on and on. If these projects are approved and I hope they are not, again I feel geothermal and solar should be required.

Section 3.1 includes soil. As our soil becomes degraded by such threats as the spreading invasive Asian Jumping Worms, erosion, depletion of nutrients,

saturation with chemical herbicides , fertilizers and so on we may have less ability to grow safe food. Worsening heavy downpours threaten the surface layer of soil with erosion worsening the ability to farm. This is a reason that experts from The D.E.C should be the LEAD agency and these issues must all be addressed. We do not know what invasive will come next and we should be investing all we can in the future to be better able to cope with what may happen. The exponential massive effect of climate warming threatens us all including the threat of food insecurity and increasing climate refugees .

In section 3.2 the issues of ground water and storm run off are mentioned Clearly pavement cannot absorb water and rain water will evaporate quicker in warm weather. More cars ,more oil spills, more pollution in the ground water. Forests absorb water and decrease warming. The research on the Invasive Jumping Worms (as well as we see the tent caterpillars destroying trees such as in Ma.) predicts soil degradation along with tree loss ,soil that will not retain water, will run off, will not be able to nourish feeder roots to trees and will weaken our forests leading to further warming . All of these adverse factors will feed off each other coupled with increasing human activity and the cumulative effect is predicted to be catastrophic. What about the aquifer? We know there are projected water shortages in the future already .Will it be protected ? Isn't sand more porous ? We need to protect undeveloped land, a treasured resource and critical to survival , air purification and cooling.What are we leaving future generations?

Section 3.3 speaks to ecology. A staff member at the D.E.C. was telling me we are losing our amphibians rapidly, there is a fungus called chytrid that is devastating populations all around the earth. Add this to the worms devastating the habitat and it is overwhelming . We are facing the 6th Mass Extinction according to some and it seems to me that we need to act boldly and together to stop warming and try to preserve and heal what is left if we can for the sake of all species including our own children . How will we protect rare and endangered species that reside in and around the Pine Bush Preserve when we are losing species that used to be in abundance? What will be left for future generations. We lose things we don't even know exist on the planet. Maybe some would end diabetes or cancer. Gone is gone . Many are gone .

Section 3.4 speaks to Historical and Cultural aspects of the proposed development . Guilderland is blessed to have such a rich history, people of color seeking a better life were so overjoyed by the beauty of the Pine Bush they established homes here escaping slavery and hoping for a better life. I hope that you treasure and respect the Rapp Road Historical District listed n the National Register of Historic Places and preserve the surrounding area. As we work to repair and remember the past injustices in our society and country , may we create a better world for all. We all do better when we all do better .

Section 3.5 Traffic and Transportation. Aside from the obvious issue of congestion there is the concern over idling cars burning fossil fuels adding to global warming and increasing asthma rates and other illnesses. Increasing cars leaking oil and fluids are of concern as well. In the Purpose section the document I do not see a proposal to have an expert do an air quality such as the research done in Albany near the port . Children are experiencing more and more asthma such as in Albany around South Pearl Street. This should be taken into consideration, this is cumulative.

Section 3.8 Schools, services , facilities and services. I hope the Town(and City of Albany if applies) can support the need for so many more people that will need support, more buses , school taxes ,sewage and so forth. Seems like a better idea to rehab existing buildings in every community such as failing stores , huge warehouses near the river that are vacant and in disrepair rather than build new . It would seem perhaps people will have less children once us baby boomers are gone, will they need all these buildings? And what of more C and D trash as the building progresses? Where will it go? More dumps? More burning? Better to rehab existing rather than tear down and start over. There is no such thing as " away " when thinking about trash.

Now is not the time to destroy more of the planet , we do not need any more unavoidable impaction the planet, we need to pause and consider seriously what we are doing. We need more information .

Sincerely
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