

Documents Against Crossgates Filed

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By CARLO WOLFF
Gazette Reporter

ALBANY — An inch-thick stack of documents containing information designed to prove that the proposed Crossgates mall would harm the area economy and environment is being reviewed by officials of the state Department of Environmental Conservation and by representatives of Pyramid Crossgates Co.

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The stack consists of letters from such longtime opponents of the proposed \$85 million mall as Concerned Citizens Against Crossgates and Save the Pine Bush.

Robert F. Flacke, DEC commissioner, has until Friday to decide whether the information in the letters warrants reconvening a public hearing on Crossgates on Tuesday, April 28.

Letters from Concerned Citizens representatives Rhonda Childs, her husband Lindsay and attorneys John Shea and Bruce Phillips reiterate arguments made during Crossgates hearings last year.

Concerned Citizens has published a slick leaflet designed to fuel anti-Crossgates sentiment. They are being circulated throughout the area.

The letters ask Flacke to reconvene the public hearing, as the anti-Crossgates spokesmen contend they still do not have sufficient information on the traffic increase the mall would generate or on the mall's impact on area air quality.

If Flacke decides to hold the public hearing, it will be held at the Ramada Inn on Western Avenue in Albany, starting at 10 a.m.

The state environmental agency has yet to decide on issuing 11 environmental permits Pyramid Crossgates needs before it can approach the Guilderland Zoning Board for variances and special use permits. The DEC permits may be approved or rejected by late June.

DEC officials said yesterday if the hearing is reconvened, it will probably be held under the auspices of DEC administrative law judge William J. Dickerson, who presided over the 84 days of public hearings on the matter that stretched from February to August last year.

Yesterday was the deadline in a DEC timetable requiring parties to the Crossgates matter to submit information countering data Pyramid Crossgates sub-

mitted to DEC in February on traffic changes the mall might spur.

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Keystone in the anti-Crossgates sentiment expressed in the letters is protest of "Alternate 4," a highway plan proposed by Pyramid Crossgates and in effect approved by the state Department of Transportation.

Alternate 4 calls for construction of a new, four-lane bridge carrying Western Avenue over the Thruway adjacent to the existing Western Avenue bridge. It also proposes widening the southbound ramp from Fuller Road to Western to provide a direct right turn onto a new ramp leading to a county road to be built along the western edge of the \$85-million shopping mall.

The plan would also necessitate construction of an underpass from Washington Avenue Extension west to the proposed county road, additional lanes from Fuller Road a short distance west and at least one new traffic signal on Western.

Several letters also question the Pyramid claim that the mall would close a Capital District "shoppers goods sales gap" of \$150 million. During last year's hearings, Pyramid spokesmen asserted the mall would pump that amount of money into the local economy, money which Pyramid claimed is now being spent in shopping centers outside the Capital District.

But Albany State University Economics Prof. Donald J. Reeb and Edward D. Fogerty of Albany, claim that that \$150 million would be canceled out by the mall increasing fuel and education costs and contribution to a jump in the cost of living and state and local taxes. They also assert the mall would not create any permanent new jobs.

Letters from Helen B. Hill of Save the Pine Bush and Save the Pine Bush attorney Lewis B. Oliver reaffirm their contention that the mall would harm the ecology of the Pine Bush section and threaten the quality of the aquifer there.