

Flacke Letter Unveiled

By CARLO WOLFF
Gazette Reporter

GUILDERLAND — The Commissioner of the state Department of Environmental Conservation has asked Town Supervisor Carl J. Walters to inform him by Friday whether town officials plan an alternative traffic arrangement to the widening of Western Avenue proposed by Pyramid Crossgates Co. for its \$85-million Crossgates mall.

In a letter Robert Flacke sent Walters Friday, the state agency chief asked whether the town has developed plans addressing the "compatibility" between future commercial growth and Western Avenue traffic levels, and if so, what are the plans.

He also asked Walters for speculation on potential residential and commercial growth along Western, with or without Crossgates. Finally, he asked the town supervisor whether the town has proposed a substitute for Alternate 4. Alternate 4 calls for construction of a new, four-lane bridge carrying Western Avenue over the Thruway adjacent to the existing Western Avenue bridge, as well as widening of Western, construction of a county road along the western edge of the 150-store mall and construction of a ramp from Washington Avenue Extension to the proposed county road.

Flacke said Walters must respond by Friday, because by April 28 Flacke has to decide whether to reopen hearings on Crossgates, ask for additional information or close the record. If he chooses the last alternative, Flacke will have to make a decision on 11 environmental permits the developer needs before approaching the town Zoning Board of Appeals for Special Use Permits for setback and highway-widening variances.

Longtime Crossgates opponent Lindsay Childs unveiled Flacke's letter during a Democratic Committee forum at the Tom Sawyer Motor Inn last night. The forum was one of four aimed at developing a Town Democratic Committee platform. Town Democrats are preparing the platform and grooming Town Supervisor candidate William F. Aylward Jr. and Trustee candidates James Cleary and Mike Gardinier for the November elections.

Aylward is the former mayor of Altamont, Cleary is principal at Westmere Elementary School and Gardinier is director of the State Economics Board.

The forum drew about 35 people, many of whom spoke against Crossgates, saying it would exacerbate the problematic traffic situation along Western, lead to crime, strain the town's water capacity and cause a deterioration in residential property values in town.

Childs told the group they should watch town officials closely this week for their response to the Flacke letter. He and his wife, Rhonda, heads of

Concerned Citizens Against Crossgates, repeated their objections to the proposed mall, and were backed by various other town residents.

Mrs. Childs said she looks forward to a resolution of the Crossgates issue, hoping the mall will be defeated and she will be able to work to establish "mini-parks" every five blocks in town so aimless children and their families can "recreate together in a positive fashion."

Only Patrick Murdick said he favored Crossgates, claiming the drought Joseph Soffey said was a major problem in town was not one of water but of jobs.

Steve McGee also said he was against Crossgates, but he favored commercial and light industrial development as long as it were tied to a Master Plan corresponding to regional plans. His concerns were echoed by Michael Macaione, who said the Town Planning Board has no overall vision, treating planning proposals as spot-zoning items.

Macaione also said he opposed the creation of mini-parks, claiming they would become "hangouts for teen-agers."

The forum was merely a vehicle for discussion. None of the recommendations proposed last night will be formalized until the end of the forum series.

The next Town Democratic forum will be at Governors Inn on Western Avenue on Monday, April 27. There will be others on Sunday, May 3, at the Cellar for Teens on Route 155, and on Monday, May 11, at the Altamont Veterans Post. All will start at 7 p.m.

Decision Postponed

GUILDERLAND — The Town Planning Board last night postponed until May 4 a decision on granting final approval to the McKownville Development project off McKown Road and on rezoning a small parcel near the McDonald's Restaurant on Western. The board wants the Albany County Planning Board to review the McKownville project, consisting of 94 townhouses and 88 single-family homes on a little over 71 acres. Board Chairman Sal Amato said he expects final plans for the McDonald's project to be brought before the board May 4. Representatives of the restaurant want to build a drive-up window on the eastern side of the building.

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