

Guilderland supervisor asserts EnCon shifting 'onus' of mall

By EDWARD CAREY

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GUILDERLAND — Town Supervisor Carl Walters, saying the state Department of Environmental Conservation is

"trying to put the onus on the town," is formulating his response to a request by EnCon Commissioner Robert Flacke for additional infor-



Carl Walters

mation about traffic along Western Avenue near the site of the proposed Crossgates mall.

In a letter dated April 17, Flacke asks Walters four specific questions:

- Does the town have a plan that addresses compatibility between future growth and the level of service for traffic along Western Avenue?
- If no such plan exists, does the town have or is the town preparing a position on the question of the compatibility?
- Has the town evaluated traffic projections associated with commercial and residential growth — both with and without Crossgates — over the next several years in the vicinity of Western Avenue in the town?
- Does the town have any alternative

proposals to Crossgates traffic plan alternate 4?

Flacke's letter comes after the Town Board sent a letter to the commissioner March 25 opposing increased traffic on Western Avenue. Current proposals for handling traffic around the mall, to be built by the Pyramid Crossgates Co., rely heavily on the use of Western Avenue under a plan called alternate 4.

Alternate 4 is the only one of five traffic plans proposed by the mall's developer which has not been ruled out.

Walters noted that, as far as he is concerned, "the ball is in their court," referring to EnCon.

Flacke has until April 28 to take one of three routes: Close the hearing to public record on the mall and decide whether to issue permits within 60 days, ask for more information from the developers, or reopen hearings on the proposal.

Flacke's letter asks Walters to respond by Friday because of this time limit.

Walters said, "I'm certainly going to give him something by Friday. I don't know what I'm going to give him that will help him, though."

Walters contends EnCon has "the benefit of expert testing, expert staff and other state departments," and that the town has no information that would be beneficial to Flacke that it has not already brought forth.

"We've made our master plan availa-

ble to the state since 1969. Despite what adverseries say, we haven't changed the master plan along Western Avenue that much," Walters said.

He noted the master plan is "very broad-brush," and does not contain answers to the specific traffic questions raised by Flacke in the letter.

Last November, Richard Persico, an EnCon deputy commissioner, accused Guilderland town officials of refusing to take an active role in last year's environmental hearings on the \$85 million mall. Persico said the refusal by the town to take an active role was its way of avoiding the controversial project.

Walters, however, said the town has cooperated with the state and has "made suggestions to them," referring to last month's letter expressing concern over traffic on Western Avenue.

When asked why he thought Flacke is asking for more information at this late date, Walters said, "I have no idea. It's a monumental decision he has to make, and he's doing everything humanly possible — groping at every straw. I think he's to be commended for trying to solicit any input possible."

Flacke was not available for comment Tuesday, but EnCon spokesman John Moore said Flacke's letter to Walters was "simply a response to their (the Town Board's March) letter. The traffic situation has great bearing on the whole issue of Crossgates, and the commissioner felt he should raise these questions at this time."