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Fallsburg Awash In Developments

By Dan Hust

South Fallsburg – What could have been expected to be the largest issue in front of the Fallsburg Planning Board January 13 turned out to be one of the most minor of the evening.

Officials representing the Glen Wild Industrial Park project were at the meeting in South Fallsburg to talk of traffic, which has been one of several contentious issues with neighbors over the past few months.

A traffic engineer, however, told the board that studies he undertook showed 222 trips during peak evening hours on the nearby county route in Glen Wild, considered minimal by stat standards.

He assured the board that the truck traffic generated by the proposed industrial park wouldn't have a significant impact on volume due to the already low count.

Additionally, the project has been sized down from nine lots to six, clocking in at 270,000 square feet – all done, said attorney Jacob Billig, to mitigate some of the impacts residents are concerned about.

Although one planning board member expressed continuing concern about the project, the board as a whole felt that the road conditions were the only remaining factor. It was subsequently stated that both the towns of Thompson and Fallsburg are working on speeding up plans to rehabilitate area roadways.

Billig said he would return next month to seek the board's final approval on the matter.

The largest issue of the evening, it turned out, concerned **Walden Pond**, a proposed residential development off Route 52 near Woodbourne.

Developers and father/son **Jerry** and **Jeremy Gorelick** were in attendance to ask for a zoning change from REC-1/2, which permits mobile home, to HR-1, which permits single- and multi-family townhouses and condos.

The **Gorelicks** and their attorney explained to the board that they want to build 575 units and utilize up to 45,000 square feet of commercial space on nearly 200 acres of land. The homes would range in price from \$120,000-\$400,000.

No homes would be rented, and a homeowners' association would oversee operations. Fifteen to 20 percent of the homes would be sold to senior citizens only.

The density concerned board members, but the developers said that was needed to make water/sewer service (and creation of a sewer plant) affordable for residents. The more people paying for the services, the more the costs can be spread out.

The town board had heard this appeal but had referred the **Gorelicks** to the planning board, seeking its opinion. (The town board can make its decision with or without planning board support).

Planning board member Ira Steingart was particularly concerned about the rural nature of the area proposed for development, saying in essence that the developers were creating a new hamlet instead of one inside, say, near Woodbourne.

"I just don't think it's a prudent thing to do," he remarked.

The **Gorelicks** reminded the board that they could currently erect hundreds of mobile homes there, according to present zoning, but they didn't want to go that route.

However, Planning Board Chair Arthur Rosenshein wasn't willing to go their route either.

"One of the things we actually do not need...is moderate-income housing," he said, adding that approximately 95 percent of the available housing in Fallsburg fits that scale. "What we don't have is the higher end."

He said he would be more comfortable with a 400-unit Planned Unit Development (PUD), but the **Gorelicks** didn't think they could make a go of it.

Sullivan County Partnership President Marc Baez, who was in attendance, registered his support for the **Gorelicks** and their project, explaining that a mixed-use residential/commercial community should be considered a good thing, even outside normal hamlet boundaries.

Jerry Gorelick added that the town board seems to support the project.

"You're asking us to take the entire zoning of Fallsburg and toss it," responded Rosenshein. "That tail is going to wag our dog."

Assistant Town Attorney Ron Hiatt recommended the planning board let the town board know its feelings and proceed from there – even perhaps considering zoning laws.

Rosenshein said he wanted to first know more about the environmental aspects of the project. However, he ended up polling the board, which unanimously agreed that 575 units were too much. Members differed, though, on how much less they would be willing to consider.

"Quite frankly, I'm not interested in another hamlet," said Rosenshein, but he did promise to recommend a 400-unit plan to the town board.

In other business, the board gave preliminary approval to the Mountaindale Estates development plan near Mountaindale and discussed at length the Pulte Homes development proposal near Morningside Park in Hurleyville.

The condominium association would be open only to residents 55 years of age or older, and the development would consist of 5,000 square-foot lots featuring 427 single family homes on close to 200 acres. The roads would be privately maintained with town easements.

Upon recommendation of counsel, the board agreed to set a public hearing on the matter for its February meeting.