

WI
West Islip Public Schools
COMMUNITY FORUM
MASERA PROPERTY
February 25, 2020 – West Islip High School Auditorium

PRESENT: Mr. Gellar, Mr. Maginniss, Mr. Antonello, Mr. Compitello, Mr. McCann, Mr. Michaluk

ABSENT: Mrs. LaRosa

ADMINISTRATORS: Mrs. Burns, Mrs. Morrison, Mrs. Pellati, Mr. Taylor

ABSENT: None

ATTORNEY: Mr. Vigliotta

Forum was called to order at 8:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge.

Mr. Gellar advised the audience that the presentation by the developer delayed while the Board continues to do its due diligence to protect the wishes of the community. There are still some critical components that need to be agreed upon. Since negotiations are still ongoing, the District is not able to have the Developer present at this time but will continue to keep the community as well informed as possible.

PRESENTATION:

Mrs. Burns gave a presentation on the history of the Emil D. Masera Elementary School property.

The following residents wished to speak regarding the Masera property:

Mr. Shawn Gallagher - 154 West 3rd Street, West Islip - Mr. Gallagher expressed concern about the size of the development and feels it would overburden the community with traffic. He asked when the next meeting would take place and Mr. Gellar explained that the next meeting will be scheduled when more information can be shared with the community.

Mrs. Rosalie Buttacavoli, 8 Elizabeth Place, West Islip - Mrs. Buttacavoli would like the community to support senior citizens and feels a 55+ development would be good; but shared concern about low-income housing. Mr. Gellar explained the difference between affordable and low-income housing.

Mrs. Eileen Swailes, 22 Udalia Road, West Islip - Mrs. Swailes had environmental concerns and stated that Suffolk County has a very high rate of pollution. She asked how the traffic flow will be managed especially with Good Samaritan building a new edition. Mr. Gellar responded that the Town of Islip would conduct a traffic study.

Mrs. Erica Lattuga, 1661 Fairfax Avenue, West Islip - Mrs. Lattuga inquired as to when the vote on the Masera property would take place; Mr. Gellar explained that the district hopes to have it the same day as the May school budget vote but that may change. Mrs. Lattuga also inquired about poll watchers at the voting site. The district will look into that. She also asked about the cost of affordable housing and Mr. Gellar said with rent and utilities the cost would be approximately \$2,400 monthly and explained that it Town of Islip law mandates that 10% of the units must be set aside for affordable housing.

Mr. Bob Ferraro, 6 Dunwoodie Road, West Islip - Mr. Ferraro has change of zone and variance concerns. He asked about the value of the property and if there was a bid on individual homes. Mr. Gellar explained that there would be a difference of six to seven million dollars in the sale price and less property taxes. He also explained that the Board has a fiduciary responsibility to the community.

Mr. Adam Semcken, 1715 N. Monroe Avenue, West Islip - Mr. Semcken asked if there was a guarantee provision and expressed concern about the project size and time for completion. Mr. Semcken also asked if

the smaller firehouse would oversee the development. West Islip Fire Chief Kevin Parrett explained that the fire department is one department that covers the entire town. Mr. Semcken asked if the district owned the Senior Citizen Center; Mrs. Burns explained that the Town of Islip owns the Higbie Lane Center but the school district owns the property in the back.

Mr. Ed Ragan, 294 Hunter Avenue, West Islip - Mr. Ragan asked if any longitudinal studies had recently been completed. Mrs. Burns responded that a demographic study was done in 2011 and was updated in 2016. Mrs. Burns advised that enrollment continues to decline and the district monitors enrollment closely. Mr. Gellar explained that there are two additional buildings that are being leased until 2027 and 2028 and if enrollment changes, they can be repurposed. Mr. Ragan asked if there was a financial projection on renting vs. selling the property; Mr. Gellar responded that the Masera building is in need of costly repairs that would have to be made to rent the property, so selling is in the best interest of the community.

Michele and Bob Punzi, 1824 Jackson Avenue, West Islip - Mr. and Mrs. Punzi do not trust the Town of Islip and Atlantic Auto Mall (their backdoor neighbor). They do not have a problem with senior housing but are concerned about traffic on the side streets. Mr. Gellar advised that there would be no entrances or exits on any of the side streets.

Mr. Edward Donohue, 148 Dunwoodie, West Islip - Mr. Donohue asked if two schools could be consolidated and Masera reopened. Mr. Gellar spoke about the upgrades already done in the other district buildings and that it would not be beneficial to the community to invest in Masera.

Mr. John Howard, 36 Penny Street, West Islip - Mr. Howard asked if the Board or administration had any previous dealings with the developer; Mr. Gellar responded no and said the developer was highly regarded. Mr. Howard inquired as to when the longitudinal surveys were completed. Mrs. Burns responded. He asked who maintains and inspects the building and why isn't it economical to renovate; Mrs. Burns explained that district staff maintains the building and inspects the premises regularly and also in accordance with state and county requirements.

Karen Boyle, 37 Anderson Avenue, N. Babylon - Mrs. Boyle expressed the many problems her community has with drugs and alcohol and was projecting these problems could occur in West Islip if there was low income housing. Mr. Gellar explained that the 55+ development would have an allotment for affordable housing and explained the difference between affordable housing and low-income housing.

Mrs. Angela Demeo, West Islip - Mrs. Demeo complained about the many issues where she lives: intoxicated people near her home, urgent care, community dealership, sober house, homeless man at bus stop. She feels a 55 + development still has many people going to work and traffic would be a problem and inquired as to why the traffic study would be done after the developer gets the bid and not before.

Mr. Bill Gaeta, 94 Jean Road, West Islip – Mr. Gaeta had tax abatement questions and Mr. Gellar explained that this topic falls under the authority of the Town of Islip.

Mr. Michael Santos, 26 Harvest Lane, West Islip - Mr. Santos asked who paid for repairs at Masera; Mr. Gellar responded that BOCES paid for all repairs. Mr. Santos asked if the district floated a bond; Mr. Gellar responded that the community approved a bond in 2015 and the work continues. Mr. Santos asked if his tax bill would be reduced by proceeds from the sale; Mrs. Pellati explained that the revenue would be placed in a Reserve for Tax Reduction to offset the tax levy over a period of up to 10 years.

Mrs. Maria Pecorale, 15 Celano Lane, West Islip - Mrs. Pecorale wanted to respond to the derogatory comments about senior housing. Mrs. Pecorale raised her children here and recently lost her husband. She would rather see a senior development than a strip mall. She does not feel seniors will bring drugs to the community and instead will be taking naps and watching television. Mrs. Pecorale feels a senior development will be positive for the community.

John Delaney, West Islip - Mr. Delaney stated Paumanok Elementary Sschool had 500 students and 40 buses a day and that a senior development would not impact the area any more than in the past and would help the community. He expressed how he would like to stay in West Islip but \$2,400 a month is still not affordable.

Mr. Ingargiola - Mr. Ingargiola asked if residents would get preference to purchase/rent units; Mr. Vigliotta, the school attorney, explained the Federal Statue and Fair Housing Act which prohibit such a practice. This resident also asked about asbestos removal; Mr. Gellar said it would be done carefully. He also asked about construction time; Mr. Gellar responded that the developer has stated that it would be two years.

Roy Tarantola - Mr. Tarantola asked if the property is definitely being sold; Mr. Gellar explained that a decision was made to sell the property. Voters will make the final determination about selling the property. The resident asked about leasing vs. selling; Mrs. Winkler advised there was not a market for a lease and the building needs repairs. The resident asked about poll watchers and Mr. Vigliotta explained poll watchers are for candidates running for the Board not for propositions on the ballot. This resident did not get a postcard in the mail regarding the forum; Mr. Gellar told him to give his address to Mrs. Burns and she will follow up.

Mr. Gellar informed the audience that until contract issues are resolved, there is no date for another forum. He thanked everyone for attending and advised the next Regular Board Meeting will take place March 12, 2020.

The forum ended at 9:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,



Mary Hock
District Clerk