

Lancaster Economic Development Committee

09/01/2021 Meeting minutes

Meeting convened at 7:04 PM by Chair

Committee members present:

Phil Eugene, Chair	Joe D'Eramo, member	Roy Mirabito, member
Rebecca Young-Jones, member	George Frantz, member	Glenn Fratto, member
Mark Grasso, member (joined at 7:34 PM)		

Chair: This is an informational meeting only, not a public hearing. There will be no vote taken on the Capital Group proposal. Because of number of residents offering comment, please limit to < 3 minutes.

Joe D'Eramo suggested moving public comments to the beginning of the agenda.

Rebecca – committee not following our charter, changes being made to the proposed bylaw without input from the committee, two days' notice before a meeting is insufficient.

Roy – (1) notes he is Vice-Chair of the Planning Board (PB). Felt the PB should be the review agency for all proposed changes, not the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). Criticized open ended comments in the proposal, such as "... conserve open space where possible." Cited traffic flow, grants of benefits to town as items that must be clear, not ambiguous. (2) criticized EDC process, failure to publish meeting minutes. Need fiscal impacts and peer review of traffic study to move forward.

Phil – Lancaster has missed out on many opportunities because of slow moving process.

Roy – the request for MEPA review was filed in August; essential to see this before move forward

Becca – the deadlines seem to be Capital Group's, not the town's. We've had no input to process since June.

Phil – the process has been cooperative. The developer eliminated the auto sales portion after our objection, now includes affordable housing. Project is potentially win-win.

George – believes the committee business of review and comment should occur first, not public comments, many of which are misinformed, generated in response to PB chair's email.

Bob (Cap Grp) – hoped to file the MEPA report by Aug. 30; didn't happen. Planning on submitting September 30, 2021.

Mark – received 34 emails, exclusively negative, but the comments were of value. Residents believe this was a done deal. There are things the committee needs to discuss before we receive resident comments.

Vote: Propose to move public comment to the head of the agenda: 4-yes; 2-no; 1-abstain.
Public comments will be received before committee business.

Russ Williston – sent long comments re: process of making law, checked for meeting minutes – missing, filed open meeting complaint and a records request for meeting videos. The draft bylaw is nowhere close to being ready to present to town. Review and approval should come from PB, not ZBA.

Lois Wortley – not anti-development, but residents of Pond areas feel they have been sold out by the town and long-term environmental consequences not weighted.

Cara Sanford – the ACEC is town's most important wildlife area. Proposal strips environmental protection for heavy development interests. No real outreach to explain to residents.

Kathy Hughes – no information provided by EDC in last few months, shows distrust. Need to improve communication and build trust with residents.

Jean Knapp – is it normal for a developer to draft bylaw proposals? Feels like EDC is a marketing prop for Capital Group, giving the developer a direct line to "certain people." Why would town counsel recommend removal of section prohibiting medium and heavy industry?

Phil – we ran the proposals by town counsel because we're not lawyers and wanted to be sure we understood what was being proposed.

Stan McCarty – need to create a document clarifying the approval process, listing the proposal, approving authority and timeline. Does the proposal allow "by right" use? Are concerns being addressed? Such a document would help people understand the process.

Chris Quill – are we considering the 10 to 20 year impacts and not just short-term? The cost-benefit study and peer review of traffic are critical.

John L (?) – process is not transparent. What is Cap Grp's reputation? Have they kept promises they made in other towns? The town (?) and PB have both said no to this project, why is it still here?

Bob DiPietri – Cap Grp has honored all our promises. Talk to any of the 40-50 towns where they've had projects.

Rob Zidek – doesn't (or shouldn't) a peer review include residents? Rt. 70 is the only connection between North and South Lancaster. Must protect the access, provide for pedestrian safety.

Phil – traffic study peer review, done by professional traffic engineers – will be done next week.

Lauren Robison – health issues; cites traffic fumes in North Pond area, concerned this will only get worse.

Victoria Petracca – Aff. Housing Trust concerned with pedestrian safety. Clarified the design of a peer review process.

Jane Birtwell – what will this project do to improve quality of life in Lancaster? Look around Lancaster, no real restaurants, no supermarkets. Need to go to other towns for these things. Need to emphasize Q of L.

Kathy Hughes – after peer review is received, make it available to public.

Phil – will do as soon as we receive it.

George – thanks residents for their sincerity and concern. Commits committee to correcting open meeting issues.

Phil – move to close public comment and return to EDC agenda (time?)

Discussion – some felt approval should be from PB, not ZBA or hybrid. Some said a decision of the draft proposal is premature until we have economic impact and traffic studies. Move that we table the matter until next meeting on 09-15-2021. (Unanimous approval)

Status of RKG economic impact study?

George – draft failed to address question of potential impact of this development on housing values in North Lancaster.

Phil – will call, ask them to include is possible.

Meeting adjourned at 9:08 PM