



LANCASTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (EDC)
Meeting Minutes
Of Wednesday, November 17, 2021

I. CALL TO ORDER

Available by Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83426231890?pwd=U0M2VzIzQ2lSWjFqbGVObDU5MGRrZz09>

Meeting ID: 834 2623 1890

See Meeting Material Directory on the Economic Development Web Page, Nov 17 meeting folder

GFI ALTA Survey Draft- Fort Pond Lancaster.pdf

GFI Site Design_Fort Pond Rd.pdf

Meeting called to order at 7:01 pm.

Phil read guidelines for meeting and said that the meeting was being recorded.

Roll call taken.

Present: George Frantz

Phil Eugene

Joe D'Eramo

Rebecca Young Jones

Lenay Yorko

Roy Mirabito

Glenn Fratto

II. REVIEW MINUTES – NONE

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Presentation by Hayley Palazola, from GFI Partners, regarding the Warehouse development Project at 695 Fort Pond. Rd. With her from GFI Partners were Steve Goodman and Bob LaRochelle.

Proposed are 2 Warehouses totaling 894K sq ft.

Items covered:

About GFI Partners

Similar Speculative warehouse development projects

Updated proposed concept plan with parking numbers, loading docks, trailer storage, proposed access and the site's context

Update on utilities for the proposed project

Preliminary Economic and Fiscal Impacts of the proposed project

The Project's next steps with local permitting in Lancaster

IV. DISCUSSION BY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, AND
V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Phil asked if a MEPA study would be done. Hayley said that at this point the project doesn't need any state permits, so a MEPA filing would not be needed.

Phil asked about an area reserved for a future well. Hayley said that this area is on Dan Chisholm's property so it's not a part of the GFI project, but Dan is reserving it for a future well location. Phil asked if this needs an agreement with the Town. Hayley said she's not aware of all those conversations because it's not her property, but she will speak to the Shirley Water District and follow up with Phil.

George asked if the PowerPoint could be made available. She emailed it to Phil this evening, he has it and will put it on the website. George asked if she was prepared to discuss truck trips and traffic volume. She is not prepared to discuss this now but they are having a traffic study done and will be presenting it to the Planning Board, with a goal of filing before year end, although it might be the first meeting of the New Year. A traffic engineer has already been engaged.

Lenay said she's received lots of emails from residents (Evelyn Place) behind the proposed project, and they're worried about the safety of their children. Will they see the gate, the warehouse, and the idling trucks from their homes? GFI will present site views to the Planning Board. There is an existing tree line next to the power line easement. There is a 300 foot buffer. They have had discussions with nearby residents and will offer a variety of security options to make them comfortable. Lenay said she's getting emails with lots of numbers; Hayley said these kinds of warehouses typically run 24/7, but there is no tenant at this point, so traffic rumors right now are just rumors. Hayley explained that this site was attractive to them because the zoning is in place for what they would like to do, and therefore is in line with the Town's economic goals. Lenay asked if in cases where GFI had built next to residential properties, have they seen property values decrease. Hayley said that if homes are built next to existing zoned industrial sites, then GFI has not seen a decrease in property values; she will look into building this question into their more formal presentation.

Phil recognized Kristen Saunders, 32 Evelyn Place. She wanted to clarify that they are not being given a 350 foot buffer, that they are 350 feet from the building but the entrance road is directly behind her property, and potentially abutting her property. She is concerned

about her children's safety and noise and truck pollution. Kristen's husband wants to know more about what mitigation GFI is considering. Hayley explained that at this moment she cannot commit to an exact solution, but she is committed to working with the Planning Board, and will consider options like fencing, landscape buffers, screening, and will commission a noise study.

Roy wanted to talk about traffic because Lancaster is lacking in roadway capabilities. He talked about other projects currently in the works. He noted that the Planning Board can demand a traffic rating of "B" or better in the enterprise zone, asking her to keep that in mind. Hayley asked if they could write a letter to GFI or to the EDC before the Planning Board meeting. Roy will forward this to Phil who will forward to Hayley.

Cara Saunders, 350 Hill Road read a comment letter regarding a project being built in Charlton by GFI.

Kathy Hughes asked about tax revenue and GFI's policy about who pays, the owner or the tenant. She is concerned about negotiating with the Town for a lower tax rate. She asks if GFI would guarantee the tax revenue with a surety bond. Hayley replied that the owner is responsible for paying the taxes. Steve Goodman (GFI) said that as a property owner, they are ultimately responsible for paying the taxes; if a tenant doesn't pay, whether or not there's a triple net lease, the owner is responsible. He continued saying that they have not asked for a TIF. He explained that Tax Incentive Financing is a tool sometimes used for economic development by a town, but that is not in the picture right now. He explained that on a project in Worcester, GFI rehabilitated an old, unused factory site, and worked with the City, using a TIF, to help the City rehab, and they were able to pass on the cost to the tenants. The project was later awarded Worcester's Project of the Year, creating over 500 new jobs and huge tax revenues. He said TIFs can be a great tool, but they're not proposing one. A tenant would certainly have the right to ask the Town for a TIF, but that would be a decision that the Town would make at that time.

Anne Ogilvie (she/her) would like details on how a noise study works and how is noise around the ponds taken into consideration. She also wants more details on the height of the building that will cause GFI to have to go to the ZBA. Hayley explained that she's not a noise engineer but at the formal presentation will have their noise engineer present their findings. The height will be more formally addressed, but typically this type of building needs a 40' clear inside the building, so that with 4' loading docks and a slight pitch to the roof, it will slightly exceed the 40' requirement.

John Lewis asked more about no state permitting required, because he cannot imagine this project working without massive changes to state roadways. He asked if there might be semi's coming and going but also smaller delivery trucks, which would cause even more traffic. Hayley answered that as we sit here today we do not trigger any requirements for state permits. We are in process of a full traffic study analysis. If mitigation and improvements are required on the Route 2 corridor, then it would trigger a need for state involvement. Regarding traffic, she talked about GFI's commitment to a Land Use Code. If there's anything over expected trip generation GFI will go back to the Planning Board.

Phil asked GFI if when they start having conversations with tenants if the Town would be part of the conversation. Hayley explained that typically a prospective tenant has GFI sign a confidentiality or non-disclosure agreement, but as soon as it is allowed, they will share information with the Town. Phil asked what the timeframe is for presenting a fiscal impact study. She expects to do this with the Site Plan application, and as soon as it's ready she will share it with the EDC. If the Town would like a Peer Review, they will pay for that as well.

--- Saunders asked if there was a chance to move the access road away from the neighborhood. Hayley said they looked at options for access and will continue to do so.

Kristin Hera (she/her/he...), 156 Grant Way. She asked if it was possible that the warehouse would be built and there would be difficulty finding tenants so there was a big empty warehouse with little tax revenue. Hayley said right now, with current demand and proximity to Route 2, this is not a possibility. She noted that tenant or not, the property owner still has to pay the property tax bill to the Town.

Kevin Hinckley, Grant Way, said he's directly across from the buffer zone. He asked if this was a "cross dock" warehouse. He is concerned about noise and doesn't believe the noise will not be a problem. He asks GFI to guarantee that 200 feet from the building he will not hear any noise. Hayley confirmed that loading is on two, not four sides.

Greg Klouda, Grant Way, asked about the "cross dock" concept. Steve Goodman explained. These are high bay warehouses used by retailers for product that has to be stored and moved to other purposeful warehouses. What used to be retail shelf space is now in warehouses. Greg asked about plans for water and sewer. The sewer design is a private system on-site, so they no longer need a connection to Devens through Shirley. Steve said that they're in the Shirley Water District, so they're entitled to water from Shirley.

Roy will forward the Disturbance Control bylaw and the Setbacks for Enterprise versus residential zoning to Hayley.

John Lewis asked Steve if he thinks in the future that rail service might tie into this environment. Steve explained that they're one of the largest rail developers in the area and rail is very valuable for certain commodities and certain types of products but doesn't meet the close to consumer needs that trucking can meet.

Joe D'Eramo asked about the second, smaller warehouse and its proximity to a potential well. Hayley answered that all of the stormwater systems will comply entirely with DEP guidelines. Steve said that when you're in a water resource district, everything you do has to be protected. Setbacks, guidelines, regulations all have to be met. Part of the plan will be to help facilitate this future well going to the district along with some access rights that the Shirley Water District will need for a new wellhead.

At 8:30, Steve asked if they could be done. Steve noted this is the beginning of a long process and looks forward to presenting the benefits that this project can bring.

George noted there are lots of objections to this project and the Capital Group project. He asks attending residents what they would like to see developed in these two areas.

John Lewis said a good model was Route 70 with Kimball's, the gas station, and businesses that would serve commuters or serving people using the soccer fields. George will see what revenues would come from this kind of business. Phil noted that with existing zoning that's it's very important to be aware of landowner rights. He also said that retail across from Kimball's would be part of the 40R concept.

Martha Moore, 130 Center Bridge Road, said she thinks there needs to be a look at all the potential developments in town and how they will impact the town collectively. She thinks that multiple small businesses might bring in the same tax revenue as multiple "monstrosities" and that they would cause fewer environmental concerns.

Kevin Hinckley says that it's too much for residents to deal with 24/7 businesses, and that businesses going in need to abide by town ordinances that prohibit this.

Heidi Cloutier says that the problem with this project is the size and the proximity to residential areas. The scope and the 24/7 are problems. Smaller would be great. Robert Cloutier said that Unified Packaging, where Rockport used to be, is a good example. These projects are an order of magnitude above this.

Anne Ogilvie has issues with the scale and character of these businesses, referencing the Town's Master Plan. She said that in the case of Capital Group, the Town is being asked to do much more than is allowed by rights, and in the case of the GFI project, the incursions into the water resource protection district, she thinks they will be asking for more as well. She thinks that it's unfortunate that the ponds area was zoned industrial 30 years ago when no one could have anticipated projects of this scope.

Lenay would like to understand why the area was zoned as Enterprise in 2009. Phil speculates that it was to allow sand and gravel removal. Lenay asked about Kathy Hughes' earlier comment that Lancaster doesn't want these kinds of jobs. Kathy said we don't have an unemployment rate that needs 1,500 positions. Kathy and Lenay debated this. Lenay is disturbed negativity and thinks the community needs to look at the positive.

Greg Klouda echoes previous comments, citing the Master Plan and saying that the Rockport facility is a good neighbor and that when the Enterprise Zoning was created these projects could not have been anticipated.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Next meeting scheduled for December 2.

George moved to adjourn; Joe seconded.
George, Aye.

Roy, Aye.
Joe, Aye.
Rebecca, Aye.
Glenn, Aye.
Lenay, Aye.
Phil, Aye. Meeting adjourned at 9:03 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Doiron

Phil Eugene, Chair
Approved and accepted: