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PLANNING BOARD COUNTY OF ALBANY

TOWN OF COLONIE

ALBANY RV
48 RENSSELAER AVENUE
APPLICATION FOR CONCEPT ACCEPTANCE

THE STENOGRAPHIC MINUTES of the above
entitled matter by NANCY STRANG-VANDEBOGART, a
Shorthand Reporter, commencing on April 23, 2013
at 8:11 p.m. at The Public Operations Center, 347
Old Niskayuna Road, Latham, New York.

BOARD MEMBERS:
PETER STUTO, CHAIRMAN
LOU MION, (Recused)
BRIAN AUSTIN
SUSAN MILSTEIN
TIMOTHY LANE
KATHY DALTON

ALSO PRESENT:
Elena Vaida, Esq., Counsel to the Planning Board
Joe LaCivita, Director, Planning and Economic
Development
Dan Strollo, Albany RV
Chuck Voss, PE, Barton and Loguidice
John Fahey
Mary Elizabeth Slevin, Esq.

1 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Okay, we'll continue now. Lou
2 Mion has recused himself.

3 This is Albany RV, 48 Rensselaer Avenue.
4 This is an application for concept acceptance.
5 This is a three-story, 40,891 square foot RV sales
6 and service.

7 We've seen this at sketch plan.

8 Joe LaCivita, would you like to give us an
9 introduction on this?

10 MR. LACIVITA: Peter, I think that you've covered
11 it very well. The only thing that I'd like to add into
12 this is that it was at the DCC on November 28, 2012.

13 There are several people here from Albany RV.
14 Welcome to all of you. Mary Beth Slevin is here,
15 and also Dan Hershberg.

16 MR. HERSHBERG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm
17 still Daniel Hershberg from Hershberg and Hershberg.
18 With me is Dan Strollo and Mr. DiVitro and Mary
19 Elizabeth Slevin, their attorney. In the back row is
20 Pat Conway, the architect.

21 MR. LACIVITA: And we also have the young one
22 there.

23 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Let's get her name on the record.
24 What is her name?

25 MR. STROLLO: Serena.

1 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Hi, Serena.

2 MR. HERSHBERG: At the last meeting you requested
3 for us to provide a photographic representation of
4 where the site was so that everyone can visualize it.
5 It's at the end of Rensselaer Avenue, but that didn't
6 mean much to anybody. Rensselaer Avenue is the short
7 street which stops at the Microtel currently at this
8 point here (Indicating). Here is Route 87 northbound
9 and Route 87 southbound, and Exit 6 you all will
10 recognize. This is the site.

11 The other site that we mentioned in our
12 application is 50 Avis Drive. That's the site
13 that we're using for wetland mitigation. No
14 development takes place there, but in order to
15 mitigate the loss of wetlands on the site, we
16 offered to create additional wetlands, get rid of
17 fragmites, the invasive species on this wetland
18 and improve the buffer area.

19 This plan has been in the works since March
20 of 2007. We made an application to DEC and the
21 Army Corps of Engineers and we have our sixth year
22 anniversary and we're very close to getting a
23 memorandum of understanding from the Army Corps of
24 Engineers. I understand that it's just about
25 ready to be signed. We went though, for the

1 record, seven different reviewers at the Army
2 Corps of Engineers at the Watervliet Office.
3 Everybody in the office has seen this plan once.
4 I think that it's probably the longest permit
5 application that they've seen. Why is that? We
6 don't know. We gave them everything that they
7 needed as soon as they asked for it, but it took a
8 long time. In order to do that, we did have to
9 compromise the original plan.

10 You may recall that on the original plan we
11 had the building located on this side of
12 Rensselaer Avenue (Indicating) and that is a
13 public roadway going all the way through the site
14 and going into Avis Drive. All of those things --
15 when the Army Corps got done with this, it
16 couldn't happen. We had to move the building over
17 here because they wanted to preserve this piece of
18 wetland (Indicating). The roadway going through
19 here would have impacted too much federal wetland
20 and buffer areas. So, they asked us to do away
21 with it. In there interim, that Avis Drive
22 connection was an integral part of a
23 transportation study that was made in 2001 or 2002
24 that said that connection should be made. Since
25 that time, the geometry made that a much less

1 desirable location to have. It turns out that our
2 proposal is to make this from the end of a public
3 roadway at that point and to make it a private
4 driveway in and give no connection into Avis
5 Drive. The only connection of Avis Drive would be
6 the watermain. We are going to take the water
7 main from its current area at the Mircortel and
8 run it to our site and over to Avis Drive. That
9 requires only a minor or temporary impact on any
10 wetlands, so that the Army Corps is okay with
11 that.

12 The Plan has evolved also. In order to honor
13 the buffers, we did have to congest some of our
14 parking in order to relieve some of the pavement
15 concerns. In this area where there is a large
16 number of RVs that have to be stored, they'll have
17 to be stored here. They're not moved very often.
18 They get moved over to here for more display
19 capability (Indicating). The way that this site
20 works is people will come in Rensselaer Avenue,
21 come into the site, customer parking is here and
22 they enter the building. They enter the building
23 at this point here. If they're bringing one in
24 for service, they'll come in here and the service
25 entrance is over here (Indicating). The primary

1 part here will be those vehicles that are for sale
2 including both new and used RVs and a few under
3 repair. After repair, they sometimes wait awhile.
4 Sometimes somebody has to wait to come and pick
5 them up. This area here will be for storing
6 inventory. It's a business where it's not a
7 single dealership. Albany RV carries virtually
8 every brand of RV that's made in the world. They
9 have an awful lot of RVs there. Consequently,
10 there are a whole bunch of different things that
11 they all have to show.

12 It's not like when I go buy a Camry, I don't
13 even go look at them. I know what the Camry looks
14 like. I tell them: What color do you have?
15 Okay, you have a white one and I'll come and pick
16 it up. Every RV is somewhat unique. They all
17 have different finishes and interiors, so quite
18 often each model has to have something on site to
19 show them. This question was raised by the Army
20 Corps of Engineers. Why do you have to store so
21 many vehicles there? We'd like to get it on
22 record now so that it's clear why you have to do
23 that. You have to be able to store a lot of
24 different types of RVs for people to show.

25 The question was raised also about the use.

1 Pat Conway has prepared these renderings. I think
2 that these are views of the building. Here is the
3 rendering. This is the view from the Northway
4 heading south (Indicating). That view only opens
5 up when you get about here. When you're back
6 here, you're looking across a whole bunch of
7 wooded space behind the Microtel. You won't even
8 see that building until you arrive here.

9 From the south it's different. This building
10 will become visible from a point probably about
11 here through here (Indicating). I know that this
12 is a little hard to see, so I'm going to bring it
13 up so people can pass it around and see it up
14 close.

15 As this project developed, we changed things.
16 The building footprint changed. The building
17 height changed. A whole bunch of changes were
18 made. However, the primary use has stayed the
19 same all along; it's for sales and service and for
20 RV vehicles.

21 Albany RV, as you may know, currently
22 occupies four different places; two in the Town of
23 Colonie and two in the in the City of Albany.
24 They have a place on Central Avenue. They have a
25 large storage space on Exchange Street and they

1 have their offices out on Madison Avenue Extension
2 and they have their repair on Vatrano Lane.
3 That's a very tough way to run a business.
4 They're anxious to go to one location. This is
5 the one location that they picked and we've been
6 working pretty hard.

7 I have to take my hat off to Don Strollo.
8 He's got the staying power. I don't know a lot of
9 people that would stand for a six year waiting
10 period to get us through. We, as you may know,
11 went through a concept approval at the early
12 stages just before or just after the 2007 Land Use
13 Law went into place we were granted concept
14 approval. Unfortunately, that went stale and
15 expired. Finally, the concept has changed. We
16 have changed the building and we changed the
17 roadway. We think that it's still a good project
18 and we think that it's a good use of the site. It
19 allows us to maintain a significant area of
20 wetlands, provide a significant buffer for
21 wetlands and make up for those wetlands that we
22 are disturbing. So, I'm prepared to answer any
23 questions that the Board may have.

24 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Chuck Voss, you're our Town
25 Designated Engineer. Do you want to give your

1 comments?

2 MR. VOSS: Sure, Peter; thank you.

3 We looked at this project at the concept
4 review level. I believe that the Board has a copy
5 of our letter dated April 15th where we provided
6 our comments. As typical with most projects in
7 the early stages, we didn't get into the real
8 heavy technical review end of thing yet, but we
9 looked at the actual interconnections of water
10 systems and sewer systems.

11 Dan, thank you for providing those visual
12 images. Those are one of the issues that we had.

13 Just to give the Board a sense of how the
14 project might look from off site, there is
15 existing capacity for sewer and water on the site,
16 as the applicant mentioned. Having the sewer
17 drainage through the site or will traverse through
18 the site is a significant impact in a positive way
19 to have the water extension through that area.
20 So, we'll be curious to see the interconnections
21 and how that works. Subject to as the
22 applications come though, the Board does grant
23 concept approval and we'll certainly take a hard
24 look at those issues.

25 With stormwater on site, they're required to

1 mitigate any and all stormwater on site.
2 Certainly, as we get into the more detailed plans,
3 we'll see how that proposed stormwater management
4 facility goes. But really on the surface now it
5 looks like they have adequate space and adequate
6 capacity to be able to deal with those issues on
7 site. Access certainly is there with the proposed
8 new project. We don't see any issues there,
9 initially.

10 Landscaping will certainly be sufficient.
11 They were looking at a 53 percent greenspace where
12 only 35 percent is required. That's a significant
13 benefit certainly to the site. It looks like
14 they're certainly avoiding as per their Army Corps
15 permit for the wetlands on the site -- it's
16 certainly a valuable asset to the community. In
17 addition to the limits, as Dan mentioned earlier,
18 they're providing new wetlands; not on this site
19 but on a relatively close or nearby site off of
20 Avis Drive. So, that's certainly a significant
21 benefit in terms of providing new wetlands to the
22 wetlands complex out there. That's really about
23 it at this point. Other than that, it looks like
24 a good plan so far and it all fits well.

25 MR. LANE: Pete had a family emergency and he

1 might be back, but he had to leave.

2 That being said, is there anybody from the
3 public that has questions on the project?

4 MR. FAHEY: There's not much to work with.

5 Usually, I jump up and down about traffic. I
6 don't really get RVs going in and out of here, but
7 that's DOT's call.

8 Back when the Comprehensive Plan was begin
9 revised about three years ago, one of the words
10 that was really going around was gateways to the
11 Town. Since this has been redone, this has become
12 a major gateway. My concern at this stage of the
13 game is what the people going through or people
14 coming to this gateway are going to see over here
15 (Indicating). All I can think of Alpin Haus out
16 by Amsterdam, or what used to be just south of
17 Exit 9 on the Northway. It was a sea of white
18 vehicles going nowhere. I understand that you
19 need inventory, but how about screening? Is there
20 going to be screening, or is that the view of what
21 your bill board will be, so to speak? As this
22 goes forward and as you're going to final, every
23 consideration that you can give for that screening
24 available and in place to kind of skewer that view
25 without having to glare back -

1 MR. LANE: Well, it's understood that the building
2 is going to be visible.

3 MR. FAHEY: Buildings are one thing. It's that
4 sea of white RVs parked side by side by side. If you
5 go out by Amsterdam, Alpin Haus is a classic example of
6 what you shouldn't have.

7 MR. AUSTIN: Mr. Fahey, I agree with you, but
8 there's another place up there on the Northway -

9 MR. FAHEY: Right, but whatever you can do to
10 preserve the view, I think that everybody would greatly
11 appreciate that. That's all I've got. Good luck,
12 going forward.

13 MR. LACIVITA: I also think that when you talk
14 about the screening, you also have to look at it from
15 the other side and that's that it is a permitted use
16 and you also have to look at the level of investment
17 that is coming into bare naked land. It is a
18 trade-off, but I think that what you see here - the
19 level of investment, the architecture that's planned
20 here from something that is currently non-existent and
21 what could potentially be, I think that we can take
22 into consideration what you said and we'll look at
23 screening moving forward.

24 MR. AUSTIN: I think that you have to have some
25 view of the RVs as well. That's part of the sales.

1 You're advertising via the Northway.

2 MR. STROLLO: I'm Don Strollo from Albany RV. I
3 appreciate the comments. I agree and understand. Part
4 of our business is to look good. One thing that I'll
5 say that's huge and that is that we take a lot of pride
6 in being different from our competitors.

7 There is a huge difference between us and the
8 other place that you mentioned. All of their
9 inventory is against the road. Almost all of our
10 inventory is behind our building here. That's a
11 big, big difference. I don't just work here, but
12 I live here in the Town as well so I want it to
13 look good.

14 One of our current locations is also a
15 gateway to the Town as well. Where we're at right
16 now, it looks great and if anyone knows what was
17 there, it looks good and we take a lot of pride in
18 it. We definitely hear your concern and obviously
19 the Board is always going to tell us how they want
20 it to look, but I'll tell you that it's going to
21 look extremely different than our competitors.
22 Our inventory is going to be behind the building.
23 You mentioned out in Amsterdam, everything is in
24 front of the building.

25 MR. FAHEY: I was mistaken. I thought that you

1 identified everything as being in that lower lot.

2 MR. HERSHBERG: I'd like to point out that we did
3 propose to have a half a dozen vehicles parked in this
4 location that may be visible from I87, and there was
5 significant screening of this area here as well as
6 landscaping for the building. We did want to limit it,
7 but we did think that we should be entitled to having a
8 few RVs visible from the road. We certainly don't want
9 the sea of RVs. That's not the view that we want and
10 that's not the view that Don Stollo wants. He wants
11 that building, and he spent a lot of effort to have
12 that building done properly. That's what we were
13 trying to represent with these views is that we did add
14 landscaping on this side here which is the screening of
15 that parking of that inventory, but the view of the
16 building is still going to be coming. The main view of
17 this building is heading north because heading south,
18 you don't see it until you get past Microtel because
19 you'll be looking over your shoulder before you can see
20 it. When you head north, you'll have a reasonable view
21 of that building, but we don't think very much of the
22 RV lot.

23 MR. FAHEY: I have no problem with the building.
24 I think that it's gorgeous.

25 MR. LACIVITA: I think that one of the other key

1 components to this site in particular and surrounding
2 it is that it's a wetland area. It's something that
3 you're really making something beautiful in returning
4 something beautiful to the site that could potentially
5 be left wet.

6 If you talk about a gateway, that level of
7 investment and what you're going to see there - I
8 think that it's a substantial use of what could
9 otherwise potentially be there as well.

10 MR. AUSTIN: I think that Mr. Fahey's concern is
11 not the RVs which I assume will be most of the newer
12 ones that are behind the existing building, but the
13 ones on the gravel which I assume are going to be the
14 used inventory.

15 MR. STROLLO: To kind of clarify what Dan said,
16 Dan was accurate in what he said. We're in the
17 business every day and he says the term storage, but we
18 turn our inventory over six times a year, so the
19 maximum that something would sit there would be two
20 months. It's generally new stuff that's coming in, so
21 what happens is a lot of times consumers will purchase
22 vehicles at a show. We do shows during the wintertime.
23 So, we'll do shows as Hudson Valley Community College
24 and someone purchases it and they don't want to pick it
25 up until March or April. What happens is we're holding

1 on to it, but not forever. Generally the mix between
2 new and used - there is no certain area where new is
3 going to be or used is going to be. The majority of it
4 will be the sides and the back of the building.

5 MR. LANE: How are the vehicles conveyed on and
6 off the lot?

7 MR. STROLLO: They're pulled in to the access to
8 the parcel. What's really interesting is that we
9 access our site right now with almost no median and
10 we've been there for 13 years. So, this is going to be
11 considerably easier for us. I've driven this countless
12 times. I'm kind of excited. I've sat down with
13 several gentlemen from DOT and they raised medians
14 behind Rensselaer Avenue, so that we can access this
15 site because this site at that time was in front of the
16 Board. I'm excited about the access. Access with any
17 RV at any point in time is something to be concerned
18 with because they are big. What's great about them is
19 that if we have five customers for the day, we're very
20 happy. It's a low impact use. What's interesting is
21 when you think about UPS, their vehicles are bigger and
22 probably one-thousand times more active and five
23 vehicles for us a day is a great day. The access here
24 is going to be a lot easier than Central Avenue.

25 MS. SLEVIN: One of the points that I wanted to

1 make is this area here and the areas through the mid
2 part of the site are subject to the Army Corps. There
3 is a permanent restriction there and the vegetation
4 that is there will be preserved as well.

5 MS. DALTON: I think that it's great project. Lou
6 and I went out and walked around, even though he's
7 recused himself from this issue. I do think that it's
8 a great use for this.

9 MS. MILSTEIN: Actually, I have one question. In
10 the lot where the building is not, how many vehicles
11 will be in that area?

12 MR. HERSHBERG: Our total count of vertices is we
13 have 380 for the total vehicles and 81 for customer
14 parking. I would think that around 180 vehicles are
15 between here and here. Again, our goal would be just
16 to screen most of this, allow visibility of a few RVs at
17 this point here and allow the viewing to the building.
18 We're not trying to make this a miserable presence
19 there. We would like the building to be visible.
20 That's why this site worked out pretty well.

21 MR. AUSTIN: I guess my question would be: How
22 many vehicles are on the site right now at the Central
23 Avenue and also Exchange Street?

24 MR. STROLLO: If you combine Exchange Street and
25 Central Avenue, we're right at that number. There is

1 about 180 to 200 on Central Avenue. One thing that I'd
2 like to mention is that as an applicant, we love your
3 constructive criticism because this is where all our
4 customers come from.

5 We are the only RV dealer in Albany. We've
6 been in business for 30 years. My father started
7 the company and he wanted it to look good. We
8 also own three other RV dealerships in other parts
9 of the state and the country. If anyone was to
10 walk around the dealerships they would know that
11 I'm probably the most picky person that you will
12 find. So, if you mentioned it, I probably have
13 addressed it.

14 MR. AUSTIN: I think that it's a great project.
15 As an RV owner, myself, I think that I'm excited
16 because I'm right around the corner.

17 Also, the Coleman's store looks very
18 exciting. It looks very, very nice.

19 MR. STROLLO: And we think that the customers are
20 going to be very turned on with the interior of the
21 building. It's not the exterior look of a bunch of RVs
22 parked. It's that Adirondack look and we're very
23 excited about that.

24 MS. MILSTEIN: I loved the graphic visualizations
25 because it really helped visualize what it's going to

1 look like. If you could tell in the next round or give
2 us what it's going to look like - that lot where the
3 RVs are going to sit, that would be really helpful to
4 me.

5 MR. HERSHBERG: We can, and I think more explicit
6 than that will be what landscaping we discussed with
7 the TDE to make it as permanent evergreen type of
8 landscaping that will survive so that we can get a
9 solvent screening of this lot here while using the
10 lower one.

11 MS. MILSTEIN: A visual will be extremely helpful.
12 Thank you.

13 MR. LANE: Joe, I note in our packet that the
14 SEQRA was done several years ago. With the amount of
15 time that lapsed and the land changes, would it require
16 something that would be updated?

17 MR. LACIVITA: I will let Chuck speak to that and
18 certainly Mary Beth, you could speak to it as well, but
19 with the change and the fact that this is reduced in
20 size and everything else, I think that this SEQRA is
21 still applicable.

22 MS. SLEVIN: The evaluation of impact has actually
23 been reduced. There is less wetland impacts than what
24 was originally proposed. There is less pervious
25 surface that is created and the visual impacts wouldn't

1 change because the building is now further away from
2 the main highway. So, if you look at the aggregate of
3 potential impacts, it's been significantly reduced in
4 this application. So, to the extent that a negative
5 declaration is revisited, the environmental impacts have
6 gotten better.

7 MR. LACIVITA: And we can discuss that in the
8 course of final review.

9 MS. SLEVIN: Yes, and the Town Attorney concurred
10 with that as well.

11 MR. LANE: It's good to get that on record though.
12 There are no other comments or questions?

13 (There was no response.)

14 MR. AUSTIN: I'll make a motion that we go along
15 with concept acceptance.

16 MS. GOMEZ: Second.

17 MR. LANE: All in favor?

18 (Ayes were recited.)

19 MR. HERSHBERG: Thank you.

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22 (Whereas the above proceeding was concluded
23 at 8:35 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATION

I, NANCY STRANG-VANDEBOGART, Shorthand Reporter and Notary Public in and for the State of New York, hereby CERTIFY that the record taken by me at the time and place noted in the heading hereof is a true and accurate transcript of same, to the best of my ability and belief.

NANCY STRANG-VANDEBOGART

Dated May 1, 2013

