

1 PLANNING BOARD COUNTY OF ALBANY

2 TOWN OF COLONIE

3 *****

4 RV PARKING LOT
5 34 RENSSELAER AVENUE
6 APPLICATION FOR CONCEPT ACCEPTANCE
7 *****

8 THE STENOGRAPHIC MINUTES of the above entitled
9 matter by NANCY STRANG-VANDEBOGART, a Shorthand
10 Reporter, commencing on April 14, 2015 at 7:36 p.m.
11 at The Public Operations Center, 347 Old Niskayuna
12 Road, Latham, New York

13 BOARD MEMBERS:
14 PETER STUTO, CHAIRMAN
15 LOU MION
16 BRIAN AUSTIN
17 SUSAN MILSTEIN
18 TIMOTHY LANE
19 KATHY DALTON
20 CRAIG SHAMLIAN

21 ALSO PRESENT:

22 Joseph LaCivita, Director, Planning and Economic
23 Development

24 Joseph Bianchini, PE, ABD Engineers

25 Mary Elizabeth Slevin, Esq., Stocki Greene & Slevin

Chuck Voss, PE, Barton and Loguidice

1 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Albany RV Parking Lot, 34
2 Rensselaer Avenue. This is an application for concept
3 acceptance. This is 177 RV parking lot.

4 Joe, do you have any introductory remarks?

5 MR. LACIVITA: Sure. Just to refresh the Board's
6 memory, the Zoning Board granted the special use permit
7 to allow for the parking to happen on this lot next to
8 the current Albany RV. We sent the applicant back to go
9 over the overall merging of the lots, the discussion of
10 the paper street component and some of the visual
11 impacts that can be seen from the Northway. The
12 applicant is back before us tonight to address all three
13 of those issues. They do have some visuals which are in
14 your packet, both before and after, and also Joe
15 Bianchini will go over the overall plan and paper
16 streets.

17 MR. BIANCHINI: Thank you Joe.

18 I'm Joe Bianchini from ABD Engineers
19 representing Strollo Development. The site here is
20 outlined in red which is what we are talking about.
21 The existing site is to the south that has already
22 been developed. The new site is just under 10
23 acres; 9.99 acres and it's in the airport business
24 area zoning, so it's an allowed use.

25 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Can you show us where the Northway

1 is again?

2 MR. BIANCHINI: Sure. This is our site here and
3 this is the Northway and this is the existing site here
4 (Indicating). The Northway is way down here. So, this
5 is strictly for RV and employee parking. There is no
6 buildings, no sewer connection and no water connection.
7 The only thing that we'll have is some stormwater
8 facilities and lighting within the parking area and
9 landscaping. Basically, this whole site is a hill
10 backed up in here (Indicating) and it kind of drains in
11 an easterly direction. The layout is such that the RVs
12 will park there and there will be no new curb cuts.
13 They'll all go through the existing site to get to this
14 site. The parking is all for new RVs. There are no
15 used RVs. There is no camping here and there is no
16 storage other than for new inventory. The purpose is to
17 eliminate three parking areas here now within the Town,
18 so that they can consolidate everything here for
19 security reasons at this site and eliminate the other
20 three sites that are scattered throughout the Town.

21 There was some concerns with regard to the
22 view. This is Route 7 and you can't see the site
23 from Route 7 at all. The only place that you can
24 see it from is Rensselaer Avenue as you come down
25 Rensselaer Avenue and from the Northway. From the

1 Northway on the southbound lane, you can't really
2 see our site until you get almost perpendicular.
3 Then, you can see it 640 feet looking backwards on
4 the southbound lane. Our site on the southbound
5 lane is at the closest 730 feet and to the very back
6 is almost 1,200 feet - 1,190 feet to the back. You
7 can see it on the northbound lane, once you get so
8 that you can see past the building. Then you'll see
9 back up into here (Indicating) and then you'll again
10 see it when you're down here and you lose it right
11 in here (Indicating). So, you're only going to see
12 it again for 500 or 600 feet and traveling at 60
13 miles an hour, that's only a few seconds. Again,
14 it's quite a ways away. The existing RV is only 150
15 feet. We did a before and after. I don't know if
16 everybody has one in their handout. You can see
17 that before it shows it as snow and that was three
18 weeks ago. Now, you can see a green berm in the
19 background and that's right in this area here
20 (Indicating). Essentially what we would be doing is
21 moving that berm and it will be back here, and we
22 will be putting some pine trees on the top of that.
23 All you are going to see if you look at the before
24 and after is you'll see the tops of the RVs that
25 will be parked through here (Indicating). Again,

1 it's quite a distance away. You're not really going
2 to see much.

3 CHAIRMAN STUTO: While you're on that topic, I know
4 that Craig had some opinions on that. Did you want to
5 ask some questions, Craig?

6 MR. SHAMLIAN: It's okay. Let him finish, please.

7 MR. BIANCHINI: That's pretty much the viewshed.
8 If you do have questions on that, we can go over them
9 now.

10 MR. SHAMLIAN: I guess that my questions are tied
11 to a couple of things. Right now there is a gravel
12 area. Show us where that is on the map.

13 MR. BIANCHINI: That is right in here (Indicating).

14 MR. SHAMLIAN: That's on the property that we are
15 talking about. That's already been cleared.

16 MR. BIANCHINI: It was cleared last winter
17 sometime.

18 MR. SHAMLIAN: So, the berm that is there currently
19 - you're talking about moving that?

20 MR. BIANCHINI: That berm is right along in through
21 here (Indicating). What we are doing is taking that,
22 and the excavated material that comes out of this area
23 for the parking area will be made into a berm back here
24 so that we don't have to haul any material off-site.
25 This berm will be 10 or 12 feet high.

1 MR. SHAMLIAN: We're jumping ahead but in my
2 opinion, as I stated the last time that you were here,
3 that whole new area - I don't want to see that from the
4 Northway. You're going to see the tops of the RVs.
5 Personally, I want to see a tree line along that property
6 line so that we don't see them from the Northway.

7 MR. BIANCHINI: What property line?

8 MR. SHAMLIAN: This property line (Indicating). I
9 don't want to see one more RV from the Northway. I
10 don't care whether it's one second or three seconds. I
11 don't want to see it.

12 MR. AUSTIN: I think that way back when we were
13 first looking at this project, it was kind of presented
14 to us that there would be screening so that there would
15 be no RVs seen from the Northway. They look great and
16 you can see them really good. They are very visible.
17 There is not much screening there left. We were also
18 told -- I could be wrong -- that the new facility with
19 the existing parking was enough to accommodate the three
20 existing sites around the Town. That was the general
21 thought that they were all going to be compiled there on
22 one site.

23 MS. SLEVIN: I'm Mary Beth Slevin, counsel for the
24 applicant.

25 The very original application did contemplate

1 that all of the RVs would be able to be accommodated
2 on this site, however, that was before we were
3 required to leave approximately six acres
4 undeveloped on the southern end of the property with
5 the restrictions for the Army Corp. That's really
6 what changed that plan and required the preservation
7 of the existing facilities for Albany RV. It's just
8 not working. Security is a significant problem at
9 those locations. It has been and it continues to be
10 and that's really part of what is driving the desire
11 to do this, in addition to the fact that it's just a
12 better model for the business. I hope that helps.

13 MR. AUSTIN: Sort of. I mean, obviously the
14 business has expanded a lot and that's great. I think
15 that's really good. But those other three facilities
16 are still open.

17 MS. SLEVIN: They are. One of them is a rented
18 space which is subject to being withdrawn at any time.
19 There on a month to month basis - their primary
20 location. The other ones are similarly on a month to
21 month lease and they don't have the ability to have
22 long-term commitments.

23 MR. AUSTIN: I think that where I'm going is: Are
24 those facilities full?

25 MS. SLEVIN: They are.

1 MR. AUSTIN: Once you try to compile the existing
2 three or four areas that Albany RV had in the Town or
3 the city or wherever they were located into this new
4 area -- now those three facilities are still open and
5 still full. Now, we have this massive RV facility here,
6 as well, selling a lot of RVs, both new and used.

7 MS. SLEVIN: And that's the reason why the
8 application for the additional parking is needed because
9 my client needs that in order to accommodate that
10 additional inventory.

11 MR. LACIVITA: Are there people on those sites that
12 are salesman, or are the salesmen here and if someone
13 likes a vehicle over there, they'll take someone over to
14 show them a vehicle?

15 MS. SLEVIN: All the sales people are on the
16 location of Rensselaer Avenue and they take folks over
17 to take a look at the inventory, if they need to.

18 MR. LACIVITA: So, what really changed during the
19 course of this was the complexity with the Army Corp
20 that actually shrunk down the original intent of the
21 amount of parking to aggregate everybody onto one site.

22 MS. SLEVIN: That's correct.

23 MR. LACIVITA: That failed from the original point.
24 So, here we are today to look at the expansion to
25 accommodate the original goal which was to bring

1 everything on-site.

2 MS. SLEVIN: That's correct.

3 MR. SHAMLIAN: I think that it's great that the
4 business is doing well and that you also want to
5 consolidate. I have no problem with consolidation. I
6 just don't want to see all those additional RVs from the
7 Northway.

8 MS. SLEVIN: Understood.

9 CHAIRMAN STUTO: We want to mitigate the initial
10 impact. We'll come back to the visual. Do you want to
11 answer the other issues?

12 MR. BIANCHINI: The other issue was the paper
13 streets. Again, there is a handout there with the paper
14 streets. The red is the outline of the 10 acres, and
15 there is Bleaker Street which is a paper street.
16 Greenbush Street goes through it. There's Watervliet
17 Street and Ives Street. Of these 10 acres, there are
18 three parcels that have held out and haven't sold.

19 CHAIRMAN STUTO: You can't locate the owners?

20 MR. BIANCHINI: Oh no. We did acquire one parcel
21 since the last time that we talked and that was up in
22 this area here (Indicating). Those other parcels have
23 to have access by the paper streets. So, each one of
24 these can use Bleaker Street (Indicating) over to
25 Greenbush to get to that. The can use Bleaker Street to

1 get over to Watervliet Avenue and then Rensselaer is
2 actually the driveway to the existing site. So, their
3 access is still there and will be preserved. Their
4 access is actually better now because we're developing
5 the site and right now this is all wetlands through here
6 (Indicating). It's all federal wetlands. The only way
7 that you can get to it at any point would be to walk to
8 it.

9 CHAIRMAN STUTO: So, what are you consolidating?

10 MR. BIANCHINI: We haven't consolidated anything
11 yet.

12 Mary Beth, do you want to speak to that?

13 MS. SLEVIN: What we would be able to do is
14 initially merge the lots that are controlled by Strollo
15 Development in Latham which includes all the lots that
16 you see outlined in the red area, minus the three green
17 parcels that are outlined. As far as abandonment of
18 paper streets, we would be able to abandon Greenbush and
19 Ives and we would have to maintain Watervliet Avenue for
20 that access that is required for that one lot.

21 CHAIRMAN STUTO: You own Greenbush and Ives, right?

22 MS. SLEVIN: That's correct. The proposal would be
23 to merge all of those lots, again, except for the ones
24 that are outlined in green and then to abandon the paper
25 streets; Ives and Greenbush.

1 MR. SHAMLIAN: Are you keeping Bleaker?

2 MS. SLEVIN: We have to keep Bleaker because it
3 fronts on lots that are not even owned by our client and
4 that's the only access that those lots have.

5 CHAIRMAN STUTO: If I understand it correctly,
6 you're paving over -- it is a question that I sent out
7 to Joe and Chuck. That's probably yours to answer.
8 You're paving over the paper streets, right?

9 MS. SLEVIN: The paper streets, yes.

10 CHAIRMAN STUTO: And you're permitted to do that?
11 You don't think that's a violation -

12 MS. SLEVIN: It's not. Under New York Town Law,
13 you are prohibited from putting a building within a
14 paper street but there is no prohibition against
15 pavement.

16 CHAIRMAN STUTO: That's a lot better than last
17 time. I appreciate that.

18 MR. LACIVITA: So, you don't have control over
19 these green outlined parcels?

20 MR. BIANCHINI: Correct.

21 MR. LACIVITA: So, they are to remain treed and
22 help with a visual buffer at that point in time. Should
23 you be in control, do you need that space or can those
24 remain a buffer from visual impacts?

25 MS. SLEVIN: It would probably remain a buffer from

1 visual impacts.

2 MR. LACIVITA: So, the big one that Craig just
3 mentioned, Joe, doesn't have anything on it right now?

4 MR. BIANCHINI: Not other than some pine trees.

5 CHAIRMAN STUTO: We do have a Town Designated
6 Engineer.

7 Chuck, I think that the remaining issue is the
8 visual impact. Can you help us with that?

9 MR. VOSS: Yes, Peter, in our comment letter dated
10 April 8th, basically it's our typical concept review for
11 something like this. It's a parking lot. That's really
12 what it is. So, we are focused more on stormwater.
13 There is no building layout here to worry about. Access
14 is already there. They are basically attaching to
15 existing parking areas that are already constructed out
16 there for the existing new business. So, we're really
17 going to be focused more on the stormwater of the site.

18 We have met with Joe already to kind of talk
19 conceptually about how that is going to work. We
20 feel that at least at this point that they can
21 certainly accommodate the size of the parking area
22 and the design of the parking area from a stormwater
23 management standpoint. They can certainly tie it in
24 a couple of locations and we'll get the details as
25 we certainly move forward as the project advances.

1 They can accommodate everything on this parcel per
2 se. They also have designs to tie into the existing
3 new facility which anticipated potential expansion
4 areas for stormwater management so they have that
5 designed into the existing site. Most likely it
6 will be done at Rensselaer Boulevard. That's most
7 likely the flow of the entire site.

8 I think that I agree with the Board. I think
9 that the visual impacts are really going to be
10 something that you'll want to focus on. I think
11 that there is probably opportunity given the site
12 layout and Joe can certainly look at this in some
13 more detail and future submissions for some enhanced
14 landscaping. We were looking at the visual
15 simulations and there are some opportunities out
16 front, maybe along Rensselaer Boulevard, either on
17 both sides for some additional landscaping to go in
18 there. I think that the other thing is that it's a
19 brand new site and it hasn't had the opportunity
20 since it went under construction last to really
21 green out yet. We haven't seen it in its full kind
22 of summer greening yet. I would imagine that some
23 of that buffering will continue. When you look at
24 this after-visual simulation, those wetland areas
25 and those grasses grow 15 or 20 feet tall which will

1 really obscure your view into the site during the
2 summer months. I agree that there should be some
3 additional looks at some additional screening there.
4 Other than that, we'll wait until we see more
5 advanced plans from Joe and his folks.

6 CHAIRMAN STUTO: This is only concept and it has to
7 come back.

8 MR. VOSS: Correct; yes.

9 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Any members of the public looking
10 to be heard on this project?

11 (There was no response.)

12 Okay, anything else from the Board?

13 (There was no response.)

14 Okay, does somebody want to make a motion for
15 concept acceptance with the provisions that they
16 will consolidate and maintain the streets as
17 described and after listening to the comments, they
18 have to come back for final, anyway. We would have
19 to look at screening at that point.

20 MR. MION: I'll make a motion.

21 MR. SHAMLIAN: I'll second.

22 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Any comments or questions?

23 (There was no response.)

24 All those in favor say aye.

25 MR. MION: Aye.

1 MR. AUSTIN: Aye.

2 MS. DALTON: Aye.

3 MR. SHAMLIAN: Aye.

4 CHAIRMAN STUTO: All those opposed say nay.

5 MR. LANE: Nay.

6 MS. MILSTEIN: Nay.

7 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Okay, we have two nays.

8 Thank you.

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11 (Whereas the above referenced proceeding was
12 concluded at 7:50 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 8, 2015

