

1 PLANNING BOARD COUNTY OF ALBANY

2 TOWN OF COLONIE

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NORTHERN PASS PDD
1226 LOUDON ROAD
BOARD UPDATE

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6 THE STENOGRAPHIC MINUTES of the above entitled
7 matter by NANCY STRANG-VANDEBOGART, a Shorthand
8 Reporter, commencing on April 14, 2015 at 7:51 p.m.
at The Public Operations Center, 347 Old Niskayuna
Road, Latham, New York

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

18 ALSO PRESENT:

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20 Joseph LaCivita, Director, Planning and Economic
21 Development

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23 Nick Costa, PE, Advanced Engineering

24 Joseph Grasso, PE, CHA

25 Richard Rosetti, Rosetti Home Builders

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1 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Next is Northern Pass PDD, 1226
2 Loudon Road. This is a Board update.

3 MR. GRASSO: This project has been approved once
4 by the Planning Board. In addition to the site plan
5 approval, it required approval for a PDD at the Town
6 Board. It went through years of review at both the
7 Planning Board and the Town Board level.

8 Tonight we're going to entertain a slight
9 change to the project regarding some additional
10 apartment units within the site. Procedurally, just
11 to go through some of the steps, we decided that it
12 would best to bring the application before the Board
13 for them to provide their first introduction of the
14 change and we can talk about the steps that are
15 going to be required as part of the process.
16 Because it's a PDD, there is a number of procedural
17 steps. Tonight there is no formal action, but we
18 would expect that it would come back before the
19 Planning Board for another SEQRA determination. The
20 Town Board referred this to the Planning Board for
21 review and recommendation on the PDD. So, that
22 would need to be done as well as concept review by
23 the Planning Board. Assuming that it gets a
24 favorable determination on those three things from
25 the Planning Board which we would like to possibly

1 do at the next Planning Board meeting, it would go
2 to the Town Board, they would schedule a public
3 hearing, hold the public hearing, take action on the
4 PDD and if that's favorable, come back for the
5 Planning Board for detailed site plan review. So,
6 this is our opportunity to hear from the applicant
7 regarding the proposed changes to the project.

8 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Okay, we'll turn it over to the
9 applicant.

10 MR. COSTA: My name is Nick Costa and I'm with
11 Advanced Engineering and we have prepared documents that
12 have been previously approved and that are here in front
13 of you to review for amendment.

14 The Northern Pass PDD project is located off of
15 Route 9. It encompasses about 50 acres. It was
16 previously approved for 96 units, 72 condominiums
17 and 24 apartment units being located in three
18 separate buildings. Those are located in this
19 general area and we're here presenting tonight the
20 request to increase the number of units in those
21 three buildings. Like I said, there were 24
22 apartment units in those three buildings and we
23 would like to request to increase those to 36 units.

24 The plans for the apartment buildings since the
25 time that we are presented to the Planning Board

1 have gone through a very major revision. These
2 right here were the approved apartment buildings.
3 These are the proposed apartment buildings. As you
4 can see, the new building has at the lower level
5 included garages so that the first level for each of
6 the buildings would have enclosed as part of the
7 building garages and they would have 12 additional
8 units over the three buildings. This is a site plan
9 that shows the change in the shape of the buildings.
10 Again, it's the same three buildings with the
11 exception that there would be 12 additional units.

12 MS. DALTON: Nick, can you walk that by because we
13 don't have that one?

14 CHAIRMAN STUTO: You started with three apartment
15 buildings and you're still going to have three, correct?

16 MR. COSTA: That's correct.

17 MS. DALTON: So, you're just expanding the foot
18 print of the apartment building?

19 MR. COSTA: Yes.

20 CHAIRMAN STUTO: And adding another basement level
21 floor; correct?

22 MR. COSTA: That's correct. The basement floor
23 would be utilized for garages and there would be
24 entrances off of Santononi Drive to access the garages
25 and then the building at the rear would have an access

1 drive through the side of that building. These
2 buildings would all be secure type buildings.

3 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Can we go over the number of units
4 again and do it either building by building or total?

5 MR. COSTA: Right now it's 24 units.

6 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Total?

7 MR. COSTA: Yes. Eight per building, and we are
8 asking for 36 units total. So, it would be 12
9 additional units; four for each building.

10 MS. DALTON: Well are you then going up, or going
11 out, or down or all of the above?

12 MR. COSTA: We're not necessarily going up. The
13 only exception is that we are adding that first level
14 which would be the garages.

15 MS. DALTON: Right, but that doesn't give you any
16 more apartments so where are you proposing to put the
17 additional apartments?

18 MR. COSTA: Within the internal layout of the
19 building. As shown, the footprint has expanded.

20 MS. DALTON: If the footprint has expanded then I
21 assume that the actual apartments that you're proposing
22 are going to be a little bit smaller to accommodate the
23 additional apartments?

24 MR. COSTA: No, I think that earlier footprint was
25 a little bit small.

1 MR. SHAMLIAN: So, the original square footage of
2 each building footprint was square footage. What's the
3 new one?

4 MR. COSTA: I don't have those numbers. It doesn't
5 vary that much. You can see just a gray outline versus
6 the red outline.

7 MR. SHAMLIAN: I wish I could see it.

8 MS. DALTON: I think that we have it in the
9 Planning Board packet.

10 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Can you show us the one that shows
11 us the layout of the whole property? Can you show us
12 where the three apartments are? I think that I know
13 where they are.

14 MR. COSTA: The three buildings are located right
15 here (Indicating). The access drive is off of Route 9.
16 This is Santononi, and Kilburn Court is located where
17 the three buildings are. We're talking about these
18 three buildings right here (Indicating).

19 MS. DALTON: So, the apartment buildings are
20 towards the front and then the condos are in back? Is
21 that the deal?

22 MR. COSTA: No, the apartment buildings are located
23 in the center part of the site. The condos are
24 throughout the remainder parts of the roadway system.

25 MS. DALTON: Is that the bike path through the

1 back?

2 MR. COSTA: That's correct. This is the bike path
3 and the Town Park is right there (Indicating). This is
4 where the bike path crosses Route 9 and the bike path
5 continues across Schermerhorn Road and continues west.

6 As part of the project, we were making some
7 accommodations right off of Route 9. There will be
8 a new parking area, an access drive and then there
9 will be a path to the bike path.

10 MS. DALTON: That's part of the community value?

11 MR. COSTA: That's correct. Another connection
12 that we have to the bike path is an emergency access
13 road that comes off of Old Loudon Road that will go
14 through the development and back down to the bike path.
15 That's the trail system highlighted in yellow - the
16 mountain bike trail system that's already developed
17 within the site that occupies about 25 acres that was
18 deeded to the Town as part of the public benefit of the
19 PDD.

20 Another public benefit for the site is the
21 re-routing of the sanitary force main that currently
22 goes down to the Shaker Drive pump station. We are
23 re-routing that through the bike path and up
24 Schermerhorn Road. This goes into a gravity manhole
25 in Schermerhorn Road which will alleviate quite a

1 bit of flow from going to the [SIC] Schaffer Drive
2 pump station which has a history of problems.

3 There are also mitigation fees that the
4 development has committed to payment for various
5 improvements that are identified in the GIS.

6 CHAIRMAN STUTO: I'm going to ask our Town
7 Designated Engineer to comment on this. The questions
8 that come to mind - I did call you to talk about this,
9 Joe - are density analysis. What is the density if they
10 didn't get the PDD, and what is the density that they
11 have which is under what the density would have been?
12 What would it be with the new proposal, as part of your
13 presentation?

14 MR. GRASSO: We didn't do a formal review yet
15 because it's only a Planning Board update. We have done
16 a review of the project. There is just no letter in
17 your packets yet.

18 Regarding the density, the project was
19 originally approved for 96 units. What they are
20 asking for is 12 additional, so the density will go
21 from 96 to 108. When we looked at the PDD
22 originally, we looked at what the underlying zoning
23 would allow - what would be the maximum allowable
24 density on the site be for the previous underlying
25 zoning? It was 104 units. Before it was slightly

1 under and now it's slightly over. You have to
2 understand that we don't consider that significant.
3 We also looked at whether or not the project as
4 redesigned and with the addition of density would
5 create the significant impact or figure any
6 thresholds that would require additional study or
7 additional improvements and there are none, right
8 down to the sewer system. Obviously, the Planning
9 Board can take the density into consideration. It's
10 also important to note that when we look at the
11 density of the underlying zoning, that's what would
12 be allowed by right with no public benefit. As
13 included in the project narrative, there is
14 extensive public benefits that were already proposed
15 and accepted by the Town and we feel that those
16 public benefits are commensurate with the very
17 slight additional density that they are proposing. I
18 did want to bring the density to the Planning
19 Board's attention.

20 MS. DALTON: Joe, can you review what the density
21 could have, should have would have been without any -

22 MR. GRASSO: Without the PDD?

23 MS. DALTON: Yes.

24 MR. GRASSO: It would have been 104 units and they
25 are proposing 108. They were approved for 96 with

1 extensive public benefits, or what I would consider
2 extensive public benefits.

3 Are there any other questions regarding the
4 density?

5 (There was no response.)

6 The only other comments that I would make is
7 really regarding the site plan. I'm just going to
8 jump up there because it may be easier to describe.

9 We still think that it's a good logical layout.
10 You probably remember that we have commented before.

11 I think that the flow of this generally this
12 way -- what they are proposing right now is to have
13 this lower level garage. You can see it in these
14 locations. Then, a loop around this building to
15 come in on the low side of the building. It slopes
16 in this direction (Indicating), so it may tend to
17 bring this under the building here and not do a lot
18 of grading work. It would be nice if we could, maybe
19 not eliminate both of those sets of garages or
20 garage doors on that side, but maybe this building -
21 this garage entrance could possibly be flipped to
22 the backside.

23 One of the comments that came out during the
24 original project review was to try to minimize the
25 look of the garages from Santononi Drive. That

1 would be the only thing that we would want you to
2 consider and the Planning Board to consider as we go
3 through the detail design of it.

4 MR. AUSTIN: Can they do both of the garages at
5 Santononi in the back?

6 MR. GRASSO: I don't think that they can do both
7 from a grade perspective because to try to flip this
8 1-15 to the back that the amount of grade change that
9 you're going to have to work with in the back is going
10 to impact all that parking back there. So, it doesn't
11 seem that feasible.

12 MS. DALTON: I have looked at some of the
13 developments and the garages back to back aren't very
14 popular. So, I think switching it up a little bit might
15 be good.

16 MR. COSTA: We can certainly take a look at that,
17 Joe, and maybe switch one of them but it does have to do
18 with the grading and that's one of the reasons why we
19 selected those locations. We can certainly look at
20 that. We would lose some parking.

21 MR. GRASSO: We thought that there was some
22 additional room back there that you could not lose the
23 parking and it's not often that we see parking
24 integrated within any structure, whether it's commercial
25 or residential. So, we commend the applicant for

1 willing to build that into the project because that's
2 what we consider smart growth.

3 MR. AUSTIN: Will the height of the buildings
4 increase? Are you going to go deep enough where it's
5 going to compensate for that?

6 MR. COSTA: The building will become a little bit
7 taller, but it's almost like a two and a half story
8 house. It's almost like it was a Cape Cod, which is a
9 one and a half story house instead of like a two story
10 house and a roof on top of it. We incorporated a lot of
11 the building on the third floor in this area.

12 What we've seen is that we have indoor parking
13 - we have 12 parking spots inside. We have
14 eliminated one of the outdoor garages. This will be
15 a building with an elevator inside of it. We have
16 dramatically increased the look of the facade
17 compared to what has been already approved. If you
18 look at some of the building materials on there, we
19 have stone on the foundation. We use brick and then
20 cedar shakes and siding. So, it's a dramatically
21 better looking building than what we have right now.

22 MR. AUSTIN: You're speaking of the new building
23 and the aesthetics and the elevations that you have
24 improved upon, what about the condominiums? Are you
25 going to transfer some of the new -

1 MR. COSTA: That's in the works. The
2 infrastructure is in up there. We are waiting for
3 blacktop and we already have our models. It's
4 brickstone and it's comparable. They have to math
5 those.

6 MR. ROSETTI: We're only asking for four more
7 units. The benefits that we did - the connections to
8 the bike path, the parking area for the bike path -- and
9 one of the things that Nick didn't mention was the roads
10 that are in that development are actually going to be
11 owned by the association which the Town doesn't have to
12 maintain, which is a big burden off the Town. We
13 donated the property which adjacent to the Town Park and
14 there are bike trails that are existing there that are
15 going to be donated to the Town.

16 The footprint changes very little. The size of
17 the building is almost -- you wouldn't be able to
18 know the difference if you went there afterwards.
19 The garage is basically underground. So, you're not
20 adding any height because of the garage. You're
21 adding the look of the garage on the side, but
22 you're also eliminating one of the garage buildings
23 that is a separate building. There is parking so
24 that somebody can come in and not have to park
25 across a parking lot and then travel through the

1 snow and go to the building. That's what we were
2 looking for here.

3 MS. MILSTEIN: I'm still not clear that if you're
4 going to increase the number of units and you're not
5 increasing the size, the only other thing that can
6 happen is the apartments are getting smaller.

7 MR. ROSETTI: The apartments are actually a little
8 bit larger.

9 MS. MILSTEIN: I just don't understand.

10 MR. ROSETTI: That's okay. So, right here there is
11 no living space in this roof (Indicating). Whereas in
12 this area there is living space in the roof. So, go
13 back to my comparison - if you had a Cape Cod style
14 house which is a one and a half story house where you
15 can have bedrooms up in the attic space, we're
16 incorporating some of that attic space into the third
17 floor. So, we're adding a third floor, but we are really
18 not considerably making the building higher. It's not
19 going to be a whole other story on top of the building.

20 MS. MILSTEIN: So, you're building three floors
21 instead of two.

22 MR. ROSETTI: It's going to be a two and a half
23 story building.

24 MS. MILSTEIN: How many floors will there be?

25 MR. ROSETTI: There is going to be three floors.

1 Then, there is going to be an elevator from the parking
2 garage up to each of the floors.

3 MS. DALTON: The quality control that you initiate
4 when you're providing oversight to the building -- I
5 have spent some time -- we just approved a lot of
6 buildings, sites, apartments and whatnot in the Town and
7 I've spent some time going to look at them now that they
8 are coming up and going on the market. There are some -
9 and I won't say which ones - where I was not really
10 impressed with the quality of the building. The floors
11 were bowed and so you throw a carpet over it and hope
12 that nobody notices it; that kind of thing. It's not
13 really what I was hoping for the Town. Can you talk
14 about the oversight?

15 MR. ROSETTI: I understand what you're saying and I
16 think that the difference with what I do is I want the
17 land -- I design the project, I design the buildings, I
18 build the buildings myself. I'm not hiring another
19 contractor to come in and do it. All the products that
20 we're using here are similar to what we use in our
21 homes; granite countertops, Anderson windows and the
22 same type of roof and siding and materials on the
23 building. My goal is to retain the property and not to
24 get it up and running and then put the cheapest
25 materials and build it for the least cost and then sell

1 it to somebody else down the road. I think that there
2 is an opportunity here to build really luxury
3 apartments. There are a lot of these built all over the
4 Town. I think that they become very generic and I'm
5 looking long-term and I say to myself, well, if you're
6 living in a building like this, you shouldn't have to
7 park across the parking lot in a garage, versus having a
8 building where you can pull in and it's heated and there
9 is an elevator. It's a little bit different style of
10 living and I think that maybe the rental market won't
11 always be as good. Maybe the housing market will swing
12 back and you have to have a reason for people wanting to
13 stay in your building and make it something that what
14 everybody else will be building in the future. That is
15 what I've tried to do with my own building company. We
16 try to build what other people will be building 10 years
17 from now.

18 MS. DALTON: What are the price points going to be?

19 MR. ROSETTI: The apartments are going to range
20 from about \$2,200.00 to \$2,400.00 a month.

21 CHAIRMAN STUTO: What is the square footage? They
22 look pretty big on the floor plan.

23 MR. ROSETTI: They're like 1,400 or 1,500 square
24 feet. We have some actual floor plan drawings that we
25 could provide to the Planning Board, if you like.

1 CHAIRMAN STUTO: They're already in here.

2 MR. AUSTIN: And the market supports the additional
3 units?

4 MR. ROSETTI: You're talking about a very small
5 number of units. Certainly, we have done projects where
6 we have done more luxury type units and there are a lot
7 of people that want to downsize and not own a house, but
8 still want a very nice place to live. We have a lot of
9 residents that are in that situation.

10 MR. AUSTIN: The only reason that I say that is
11 there is a large building down south where Eamons used
12 to be and that's luxury as well. They're having some
13 trouble, I think, filling it up. There are some other
14 spots in the Town as well that are luxury based. I just
15 want to make sure that -

16 CHAIRMAN STUTO: I'll say this: He builds them and
17 the price point is too high, he has to lower his price.
18 He's building to that quality.

19 MR. AUSTIN: Yes, I love the design.

20 MR. ROSETTI: We've had long-term tenants stay in
21 our properties because there is nothing else like that
22 in the market in Colonie. We have 36 of them that we're
23 looking to fill. We're not in a situation where we are
24 over-leveraging the property and we can't afford to rent
25 them for less with the quality of the product.

1 MR. AUSTIN: My concern is that we're building and
2 building and we have these high rents.

3 MR. ROSETTI: If they don't fill, then I can lower
4 the rent and rent them. I'm not in a situation where
5 it's over-leveraged.

6 MS. DALTON: When do you picture them being
7 available?

8 MR. ROSETTI: As soon as you approve them. If you
9 approve them tonight, they'll be available four months
10 from now.

11 MS. DALTON: So, you have neighbors that are
12 building to the north of the site that we're talking
13 about and renting -

14 MR. ROSETTI: I'm expecting those people to move
15 down here.

16 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Joe Grasso, do you have any more
17 comments?

18 MR. GRASSO: No.

19 Are you going to have views off the back?

20 MR. ROSETTI: I think that it's going to be
21 approved and I would invite anybody that wants to come
22 and see it -- there are going to be some great views.

23 MR. GRASSO: These buildings are a few stories tall
24 so the views to the north are really going to be
25 spectacular. It's something that you don't appreciate

1 when you look at the site plan, but I think that when
2 you're out there and if you ever go up in those upper
3 floor units, they're going to be spectacular. They'll
4 probably be the nicest in the Town.

5 CHAIRMAN STUTO: My only final comment is that it
6 looks like a quality product. I'm very sensitive on the
7 PDDs to the density, but this seems to be in the
8 reasonable realm of within the percentage given the
9 public benefits that we've gotten here. You're not
10 asking for too much. That's my personal opinion.

11 MR. ROSETTI: What it came down to actually is when
12 we build the building is that it doesn't make sense to
13 have -- you have four units per floor and then you have a
14 top floor where you would only put two units. It just
15 economically doesn't make sense. Then, you're back to
16 building the other buildings. You have to have each
17 number of units and have the buildings be the same.

18 CHAIRMAN STUTO: This is just an update.

19 MR. GRASSO: Right, so if I hear anything
20 otherwise, we will draft a SEQRA amendment and a
21 positive recommendation to the Town Board on a PDD.

22 CHAIRMAN STUTO: You're looking for a
23 recommendation tonight?

24 MR. GRASSO: No, I'm just saying that we need to
25 prepare that.

1 CHAIRMAN STUTO: Okay, thank you.

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4 (Whereas the above referenced proceeding was
5 concluded at 8:20 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

