

1 PLANNING BOARD COUNTY OF ALBANY

2 TOWN OF COLONIE

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4 HOTEL AND RESTAURANTS
5 144 WOLF ROAD
6 SKETCH PLAN REVIEW

7 *****

8 THE STENOGRAPHIC MINUTES of the above entitled
9 matter by NANCY L. STRANG, a Shorthand Reporter,
10 commencing on January 10, 2017 at 7:35 p.m. at The
11 Public Operations Center, 347 Old Niskayuna Road,
12 Latham, New York.

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11 BOARD MEMBERS:
12 LOU MION, ACTING CHAIRMAN
13 BRIAN AUSTIN
14 TIMOTHY LANE
15 KATHLEEN DALTON
16 CRAIG SHAMLIAN
17 SUSAN MILSTEIN

15

16 ALSO PRESENT:

17

18 Joseph LaCivita, Planning and Economic Development
19 Department
20 Michael Tengeler, Planning and Economic Development
21 Department

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21 Nick Costa, PE, Advanced Engineering
22 Thomas Burke

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1 ACTING CHAIRMAN MION: Next on the agenda is
2 Hotel and Restaurants 144 Wolf Road. This is a sketch
3 plan review.

4 MR. LACIVITA: Just to get this onto the record
5 for tonight before Nick gets settled - this is a
6 Sketch Plan Review. No action will be taken. The
7 address is 144 Wolf Road. It is for a three story 108
8 room hotel, three pad sites, for restaurants.
9 Actually, there were two looks on this.

10 MR. COSTA: Joe, there will be just one.

11 MR. LACIVITA: Your checklist shows will be
12 looking at three restaurants. This will total 12,600
13 square feet. Nicholas?

14 MR. COSTA: Thank you, Joe. Good evening. My
15 name is Nick Costa and I'm with Advanced Engineering.
16 We prepared a sketch plan that is before you tonight.
17 This redevelops the former Lazare car dealership which
18 is located at the corner of Wolf Road in the
19 intersection of Cerone Commercial drive and Automation
20 Lane. The parcel is 6.66 acres in size. It's located
21 in a COR, commercial office residential and Mr. Burke
22 purchase this parcel and has been working diligently
23 to attract restaurants and hotel use for the site.
24 What we have done is -- the restaurant used to be
25 located in the front along Wolf Road in the hotel

1 located at the rear. The existing site has I believe
2 three driveways off of Wolf Road. Two driveways are
3 off of Cerone Commercial Drive and I believe there are
4 also two on Automation Lane. I can see, the proposed
5 plan substantially reduces those access points to just
6 one for each one of those room. So, we feel that is a
7 major improvement for the corridor. The parking meets
8 the requirement of each proposed use. The green space
9 on the site is being improved. I believe it is a 5%
10 increase in green space. The site only has about 23%
11 green space currently and when we get done there is
12 almost 29%. So, it is about 6%. It is a redevelopment
13 of an existing site.

14 There are some waivers that are going to be
15 requested. The buildings are being placed further away
16 from the setbacks. That is mostly due to an existing
17 sanitary sewer that runs along the entire frontage of
18 Wolf Road.

19 There is some parking. As you can see, there is
20 some parking that is along the front portions. Those
21 are at least two of the waivers that we have
22 identified that we will be requesting. All of the
23 utilities are already there. The existing site was
24 fully developed with water, sanitary sewer and storm
25 water system. Those systems - that infrastructure is

1 going to be utilized to serve the proposed
2 redevelopment.

3 Stormwater will be done on-site. The site does
4 have a lot of -- it is a sandy site. It is Colonie
5 sand. We are expected to utilize on-site stormwater
6 management systems to take care of the storm water
7 runoff and comply with the storm water regulations.
8 We are providing 131 parking spaces. There is 123
9 parking spaces required. Those are broken out between
10 the hotels in the restaurants. There are 135 parking
11 spaces for the restaurant that is at this location
12 [Indicating] in the hundred and 45 spaces for this
13 restaurant at this location [Indicating]. The 108 room
14 hotel will have 131 parking spaces. Those are all in
15 compliance with the town requirements. There are
16 actually a couple more parking spaces that is
17 required.

18 Dumpster enclosures - we have located them
19 throughout the site to serve each one of the
20 developments. It is, again, a redevelopment of the
21 existing site.

22 There are quite a few trees along the frontage
23 of Wolf Road, Cerone Commercial Drive and Automation
24 Lane. Those are all pretty much going to remain. That
25 is mature vegetation. Again, the green space will be

1 improved.

2 MR. LANE: What will be the percentage?

3 MR. GRASSO: It will be 23% to 28%.

4 ACTING CHAIRMAN MION: What would it be if you
5 did not have the additional parking spaces?

6 MR. COSTA: It would be another 2,000 square
7 feet of green space.

8 MR. LANE: Is there any way that you could do
9 some banking?

10 MR. COSTA: Sure, we could look at that.

11 MS. DALTON: I have a question. I understand
12 why you have the parking lot on each side of the
13 restaurants, but is there any way that you could move
14 that hotel closer but the hotel parking behind there
15 so it's not just one giant parking lot?

16 MR. COSTA: We can take a look at that.

17 MS. DALTON: I think it would be a lot more
18 attractive.

19 MR. LANE: Do you already have a company coming
20 in or is this projected?

21 MR. COSTA: It is being discussed. There is
22 anybody that has signed on

23 MR. LANE: So, there is a possibility you could
24 still work with that.

25 MR. BURKE: I'm Tom Burke and I am the property

1 owner. We have two leases that have been fully
2 negotiated and are out for signature; one for the
3 hotel and one for the restaurant pads. We have a
4 letter of intent on the other pad right now.

5 MR. LANE: Is there anything in the lease that
6 is a requirement for front parking?

7 MR. BURKE: This hotel, layout if you will, was
8 generated by the hotel operator. I am not going to be
9 the owner or operator of the hotel. While it is
10 subject to change, I don't think they have made a
11 final decision as of this date with respect to -

12 MR. LANE: Why is this is sketch plan? This
13 would be the point in which -- if you are that far
14 down the road, they might have an opportunity to come
15 in and discuss their plans and see how amenable they
16 are to any kind of adjustments.

17 MR. BURKE: Because they haven't decided on the
18 flag yet. Depending on which of the concepts they
19 elect to move forward with, that drives the geometry
20 if you will of the building.

21 MR. LANE: So, this is still very much in flux.

22 MR. BURKE: Potentially, yes. But I am attempt
23 to convey to you that it is not my decision as to what
24 they choose to build.

25 MR. LANE: That's why the suggestion is to

1 actually come in and discuss how open they are to
2 revision.

3 MR. LACIVITA: By the time concept is
4 submitted, you might be locked into a layout from the
5 flag.

6 MR. BURKE: Yes, they're trying to make that
7 decision.

8 MR. SHAMLIAN: I think to Kathy's point about
9 the building coming forward is correct. They may have
10 the requirements -

11 MR. BURKE: The other thing that I would urge
12 you to consider is that it is not just the hotel. A
13 lot of this parking that you see is for the restaurant
14 users and they have a minimum number of protected or
15 dedicated spaces which they require as a prerequisite
16 for them moving forward in close proximity to their
17 building. So, part of this layout has been driven by -
18 - as I said, you have a lease out for this right here,
19 right now. That is all part of that.

20 MS. DALTON: That's why I am saying that I
21 understand that essentially the closest to Wolf Road
22 you might need because of the restaurants -- but
23 still, that middle strip that currently is parking -
24 if you use some of that instead for the building then
25 put more of the hotel parking behind, I think it has

1 the potential to be more attractive.

2 MR. LANE: There is rear access.

3 MR. BURKE: Let me try to explain one point to
4 you. This parking that you're looking at is primarily
5 for this and not for that [Indicating]. There parking
6 - dedicated and exclusive parking for the hotel is
7 beyond here going that way [Indicating]. All of this
8 and most of that is as dedicated to this user. This
9 user has all of this and most of this [Indicating].
10 That's why you're seeing the entrance here on Cerone
11 Drive. That is kind of the breakpoint, if you will -

12 MS. DALTON: So, mostly what is on the side in
13 the back goes to the hotel. BURKE; Yes, ma'am; all
14 of this.

15 MR. AUSTIN: Those buildings look relatively
16 small for the cars and the patrons. The hotel is so
17 much bigger.

18 MR. BURKE: Let's talk about that. If you have
19 108 room hotel which I think that is what we are
20 showing here with 131 parking spaces, that is
21 certainly sufficient. If you have an 8,000 or a 7,500
22 square foot restaurant, you are going to need to have
23 that amount of parking. Look at Texas Roadhouse; same
24 thing there. So, the worst thing that we could do in
25 the last thing in the world I want to do is to have a

1 white elephant. You do not want to be under parked.
2 You end up with an empty building and nobody goes
3 there. We have seen instances where that has happened
4 and that is not a pretty picture for anybody.

5 MR. SHAMLIAN: The 6,300 square foot restaurant
6 - since you are already have promised a number of
7 seats in that restaurant -

8 MR. BURKE: Which is right where I think you
9 need to be. If you build less than that, you're not
10 going to have sufficient parking for peak demand and
11 for employees and all the things that you need.

12 MR. AUSTIN: I am sure that you cannot release
13 the name of the restaurant, but is it a chain
14 restaurant?

15 MR. BURKE: It is a national chain. It is
16 high-quality.

17 MR. AUSTIN: I remember reading in the paper
18 that the hotel was -

19 MR. BURKE: We didn't want to discount flag. We
20 requested that it be class and character which is
21 commensurate with everything else that we tend to do
22 with the site.

23 MR. AUSTIN: I would almost like to tend to
24 disagree with my fellow Board Members. I like the
25 hotel back a little farther because it opens up the

1 property a little bit more. If you bring the hotel too
2 far forward, it would look very congested and it would
3 not look right from the street either. If that's the
4 three-story hotel, you'll need a setback.

5 MR. SHAMLIAN: As we move forward, I would like
6 to see a sketch with the restaurant - the 6,300 square
7 foot restaurant also moved more toward the center of
8 the property. Not back, but toward the entrance just
9 to see what that looks like. I understand you may have
10 an issue with the hotel but from our standpoint it's
11 also breaking up that huge parking field. I am not
12 saying that I want to. I'm just saying that I want to
13 see a sketch with it

14 MR. BURKE: We will certainly try to do that. I
15 know that was examined at one point. To your point,
16 the hotel doesn't want to have visual obstructions. In
17 fact, a part of the deal with the hotel is we won't
18 create multi-story buildings or do anything to create
19 a barrier or visually obstruct the people on Wolf Road
20 from seeing the hotel. So, we can't build multi-story
21 buildings and we can do all sorts of things out here.
22 They put handcuffs on us about that.

23 MR. LACIVITA: One of the reasons that the
24 third pad site dropped out because of the visual?

25 MR. BURKE: I wouldn't say that because that

1 was a very small building. That was only a 2,500 or
2 2,200 square foot building. The primary driver here
3 is that again, the hotel wanted to see more of a full
4 service restaurant there. That is the direction that
5 we are attempting to go in now. These guys aren't
6 going to be doing food, per se. A lot of these places
7 do a breakfast sort of thing that they will not have a
8 restaurant. It was critical to them that there be a
9 couple of nice restaurants out in front for their
10 patrons. So, that was kind of a deal that we had to
11 make.

12 MR. AUSTIN: I always have to ask this. I tend
13 to be the one that asks. You have already answered it,
14 pretty much. Does Wolf Road support a need for another
15 108 rooms and two more restaurants? Or, does the Town
16 of Colonie support the need for another 108 rooms?
17 You've already answered it by saying that you have a
18 lease -

19 MR. BURKE: I will tell you what: as a landlord
20 the last thing I want to see is a tenant that comes in
21 here that can't pay their rent. So, I guess if you do
22 with a jaundiced eye. I was very skeptical about hey,
23 can this absorb. The people that are the building and
24 operating the hotel are very experienced,
25 knowledgeable, seasoned high-quality operators. We

1 pressed them. They did their feasibility studies,
2 their due diligence. They are confident that the
3 concept they want to put here - that it will be
4 successful. A reporter said to me the other day - it
5 was not my line, but I thought it was appropriate. We
6 are not over-built, we are under demolished. There is
7 a lot of old stock that needs to go away, frankly. You
8 have to upgrade and innovate and reinvest or fall by
9 the wayside. So, I think that this is new
10 high-quality stuff and there is always in need for
11 that in the marketplace.

12 MR. AUSTIN: I think that it is great to see
13 the property redevelop.

14 MR. LACIVITA: It has been at least three
15 years. I wanted to read this just for the board. I
16 have been saving this since December 31. We always
17 talk about saturation of hotels. It talks in the
18 business section of that - that tourism has been on
19 the rise in this area for the past five years. This
20 is the fifth consecutive year. It talks about the
21 overall concern of hotels. In Albany County hotel
22 revenue, through November, grew to 158 million which
23 was up from hundred and 52 million, the year prior. It
24 talks about the need for more because of the educated
25 traveler. With what you're saying, some of these

1 projects that are coming back online are new. It is
2 not the older. We have two sites actually on Wolf Road
3 that are contemplating some renovations. It is a fixed
4 rate year and was done by STR Consultants. It talked
5 about the growth in Clifton Park. Also, to your
6 point, the Town's Industrial Development Agency has
7 engaged a firm in a study to do an analysis of the
8 retail industry within the Town from a hospitality
9 standpoint and from a restaurant standpoint. What is
10 the lifespan of a hotel? What is the lifespan where
11 you have to worry about concerns of saturation? We
12 hope to have that I would say within the next four
13 months and were going to be wrapping that behind the
14 comprehensive plan just to show a lifespan of our
15 makeup here in the Town. I think it is needed.

16 MR. AUSTIN: I think it is important because I
17 am always asked that question a lot. Why do we need
18 another one? Thank you.

19 ACTING CHAIRMAN MION: Susan?

20 MS. MILLSTEIN: No.

21 ACTING CHAIRMAN MION: Joe?

22 MR. GRASSO: So, this is only sketch plan. It
23 is the first time that the Board is seeing it all.
24 There is no formal comment letter issued by CHA, but I
25 do want to touch on a couple of things in the Planning

1 Board packet that you received. The highlights of the
2 project and the key features are obviously like Nick
3 and Joe had mentioned - it is a redevelopment project.
4 They're increasing the amount of green space on an
5 appreciable amount. The consolidation of the curb cuts
6 along the corridor is really important to the town in
7 maintaining traffic flows throughout this heavily
8 traveled corridor. The plan provides strong pedestrian
9 connections from each of the pad sites out to the Wolf
10 Road corridor. That's really important and something
11 that should be continued as the plans evolve. I think
12 the concept of the shared parking on the site is
13 really important. I think the planning board has done
14 a good job really understanding that. I think both
15 Tom and Nick did a good job explaining. That's so
16 important that should really drive some of the layout
17 of the site. Obviously, trying to maximize the amount
18 of shared parking can further make sure that the green
19 space increase is as much as it can be. The less
20 parking we have, the smaller the parking areas can be
21 so that there is less impact of the large parking
22 areas on the site. There are some things that by
23 trying to consolidate the parking areas together to
24 improve the shared parking arrangement can result in
25 what you can see -- that these parking lots are too

1 big. There is ways to address that through the
2 landscaped islands. The Town has regulations regarding
3 interior landscaped islands. I think, first and
4 foremost, trying to maximize the efficiency of the
5 parking that serves all three pads sites is really
6 important. It was mentioned possibly looking at a land
7 bank parking. I think that's a great comment and I
8 think that's something that the applicant should
9 consider as they work with the perspective tenants and
10 try to identify possible areas on the plan that could
11 be land banked so that accomplishes some of the goals
12 that the Planning Board expressed tonight. The
13 Planning Department has issued some comments that I
14 just want to mention. The project site is in the
15 airport area GIS study area. So, mitigation fees would
16 be applicable. Although, some credits would be given
17 to the demolition of the previous uses on the project
18 site. Incentive zoning will not be applicable because
19 they are increasing the amount of green space on the
20 project site. There are some waivers that are going to
21 be required of the project as it is laid out including
22 the maximum front yard setback of Wolf Road, parking
23 within the front yard setback, parking lot pavement
24 within the setback of Cerone Commercial Drive and then
25 the interior landscaped island requirement. Based on

1 our review of similar projects along Wolf Road, we
2 think that those are all consistent with recent
3 development with the corridor. I would say the
4 requirement for the interior landscaped island is
5 something that really should try to be accommodated in
6 the plan as much as possible. DOT did issue comments
7 on the projects during the DCC review. I think it's
8 really important because it could impact the location
9 of the primary access ways. Their comment is: The
10 center to way left turn lane on Wolf Road is used by
11 left turning entering moves as well as a refuge area
12 for two-stage left turn exiting moves from the site
13 driveway. The existing access driveways on the east
14 side of Wolf Road -- so, this is on the other side --
15 should be shown on the plan. When locating the access
16 drive to Wolf road along the site frontage,
17 consideration must be given to locating this driveway
18 opposite driveways on the east side of Wolf Road to
19 minimize the potential conflicts that could occur
20 between overlapping left turn moves within a two way
21 left turn Lane. So, that is something we would want
22 to see during the concept plan and make sure that DOT
23 is concurrent with that plan because that could
24 definitely affect primarily the restaurant pad sites
25 and how they are set up. The other thing that I want

1 to mention is from a sewer service standpoint, this
2 site is tributary to the Wolf Road pump station in the
3 Town is currently planning improvements there. You may
4 have heard us mention and other project reviews the
5 capacity issues. Nick has been a design engineer
6 having most of not all of those projects so he is
7 intimately familiar with it. Those improvements in
8 the timeframe for those coming online need to dovetail
9 in this project's development schedule if this project
10 is going to require the capacity that is going to be
11 provided by those improvements. That is just something
12 for the applicant to be aware of. That is all we have
13 at this time.

14 ACTING CHAIRMAN MION: Thank you. It looks
15 like it's going to be a good project and it's good to
16 be great to see it redeveloped. It's just a vacant
17 lot. Have a good evening.

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19 (Whereas the above entitled proceeding was
20 concluded at 7:50 PM.)
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CERTIFICATION

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I, NANCY L. STRANG, 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 L. STRANG

Dated _____

