

**Clifford H. Schwartz**  
**PO Box 760**  
**Rock Hill, NY 12775**

September 16, 2008

Town of Thompson Town Board  
Mr. Anthony Cellini, Supervisor  
Town of Thompson Town Hall  
4052 Route 42  
Monticello, NY 12701

**Re: Rock Hill Town Center Project - Need for Better Oversight and More Openness**

Dear Supervisor Cellini:

I do not know who is responsible for getting materials addressed to the Town Planning Board into the hands of the individual Planning Board members. However, there appears to be a communications breakdown, which needs to be addressed. There also appears to be a tendency to keep all discussions of the project out of the public eye, which prevents us from developing a better understanding of the project and from providing valuable feedback to the developers and Town officials before it is too late in the process to be useful.

On September 10, 2008, I attended a meeting of the Thompson Planning Board, during which the developers of the Rock Hill Town Center project presented marked-up revisions to their Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS). The project engineers indicated that they had addressed all of the comments raised in the June 5, 2008 Draft Memorandum to the Thompson Planning Board from Robert Geneslaw, AICP, in regard to his Completeness Review of the previous draft of the DEIS/DGEIS. When asked by the developers' representatives whether they had any questions or comments, none of the Planning Board members said anything. Given the severity of Mr. Geneslaw's comments on the previous draft, I was shocked by the silence of the Planning Board members.

After the meeting, I spoke informally to two individual Planning Board members, who informed me that they had not read Mr. Geneslaw's draft memorandum and had never even been provided with copies of it. In addition, they had not received my August 19 letter to the Town Board with my comments about the issues raised by Mr. Geneslaw, despite the fact that you had directed Town staff to deliver a copy of my letter to the Planning Board.

It bothers me greatly that Mr. Geneslaw's comments on the previous draft were not delivered to the individual Board members before the developers were given the opportunity to present a second draft. The Planning Board was effectively forced to accept at face value the developers' assertion that Mr. Geneslaw's comments had been addressed when it would have been very easy to distribute the comments directly to the individual members. Mr. Geneslaw's June 5 Draft

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Memorandum was like an interim report card on the project. It was important for the members of the Planning Board to review that report card, just as it is important for parents to review the interim report cards of their children so that they are not surprised by the final grade when it is too late to do anything about it.

At the September 2 Town Board meeting, you made reference to in-depth discussions that had been held regarding the treatment of sewage that will be generated by the proposed project. Based on the absence of any reference to those discussions at the September 10 Planning Board meeting, I believe a decision has been made to address all issues pertaining to the project behind closed doors and to keep public discussion to a minimum. The unfortunate result is that the public is being kept in the dark and will not have an opportunity to understand the process and develop positions in advance of the public hearings for the project. Rather than serving in an advisory role to the Planning Board, the Town's engineers, attorneys, and others appear to be serving as the de facto Planning Board for this project, leaving the actual Planning Board with a rubber stamp role.

It is the responsibility of the Town Planning Board to ensure that the developers provide us with a comprehensive, professionally executed EIS. The Town Board can facilitate the work of the Planning Board by (1) requiring that all correspondence addressed to the Planning Board be delivered to the individual Planning Board members regardless of whether the correspondence is in draft or final form and (2) by placing all meetings of Town attorneys, engineers, and staff with the developers under the direct oversight of the Planning Board with mandatory reports to be delivered at the next open Planning Board meeting. I believe the Town Board should take all necessary steps to ensure that the Town's attorneys, engineers, and support staff fully understand that their role is to advise members of the various Town Boards – not to make the substantive decisions that should be made by the Boards and not to provide consulting services to developers at the Town's expense.

The scope of the Rock Hill Town Center Project is enormous and it is unacceptable for us to allow it to move forward until we have a clear understanding of its potential impacts on the environment and the costs to the Town of developing the infrastructure needed to support it.

Sincerely,

Clifford Schwartz

cc: Peter Briggs, Moniqua Diaz-Corley, Sharon Jankiewicz, William Rieber, James Lyttle