

Dover works on final stages of proposed development's environmental impact

by Greg Lucid

DOVER—Benjamin Companies, a Long Island-based real estate and management development company, is planning to build the Knolls of Dover. It is a project that will bring 1,376 homes into the hamlet of Wingdale, about 238,500 square feet of commercial development and 99,450 square feet of community or recreation space on the former Hudson Valley Psychiatric Center campus.

The developer purchased the initial 848-acre site from the state for \$3.95 million in October 2003. In 2007, the company bought an 83-acre portion of Dykeman Farm, which raised the total cost of the project to \$9 million.

The Town Board is currently reviewing what remains of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) stage of the project, which calls for residential and commercial transit-based development situated on a 931-acre area of land near the Metro-North Train Station, at Wheeler Road and Route 22.

The FEIS included a workshop held on Wednesday, Dec. 9, and a second workshop meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 23, at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall.

Town officials said the purpose of the environmental review is to address any remaining site concerns. Once all

statements from respective groups involved with the project are collected, the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will decide whether or not the review is acceptable. Following the review, the Town Board can modify zoning regulations and begin a site-plan review.

Town Supervisor Ryan Courtien said he's been told large projects such as this usually take 18 to 24 months to go through the State Environment Quality Review Act (SEQRA) process. He hopes to have it done by March.

"Once the SEQRA process is complete, we'll [town board] do our site plan findings," Courtien added.

According to the project proposal, residential development will include, in part, townhomes, single-family homes, two-story apartments and loft conversions.

The number of residential properties allocated for ages 55 and up is projected to be 276 units. Dwellings with age limitations without a deed restriction would total 684 units.

Commercial development will include new stores, offices and other infrastructure.

Stancy DuHamel, co-founder of a group known as the Coalition for Responsible Growth of Dover, said the project "could be the gateway to recreational possibilities we have in the area."

DuHamel emphasized the need for

commercial growth, specifically a town center.

"There isn't a town center in Dover or Wingdale anymore," she said.

Examining issues

Jill Way, a former Dover town supervisor and councilwoman, said she supports the "re-development of the campus [on the former psych center property], but not all of the components of the project."

She said the Knolls of Dover is "the largest project, and the first-ever of its kind in the history of Dutchess County."

Like many residents, Way wants to keep taxes down.

"The taxes are going to be driven either by the success or failure of this project," she said. "If it's not done properly, not well-balanced, then it will cost the town, county and state more money."

Way said one of her concerns within the FEIS is the Knolls of Dover's proximity to the Great Swamp area and the environmental impacts. She said the town had "substantial floods" in October 2005 and April 2007, when she was supervisor. She added she's also concerned about the economic impacts, but is optimistic about what's to come.

"I think that a well-considered project is vital to the future of this community," Way added. "We [the residents]

want a little downtown hamlet where we can all sit at a sidewalk café and enjoy the comfort of this community."

Town Councilman Christopher Galayda noted he's pleased about how the environmental review process is moving along.

"I think we're [the town] making great progress," Galayda said. "We're following SEQRA. We were given a plan a couple of years ago, and it's evolved." He added he thinks the Town Board has worked well together as a team during the entire process.

Last June, the DEC sent a letter to Courtien. In it they expressed concern that the site "lies within a significant Biodiversity area, which includes threatened and endangered species such as timber rattlesnakes, Indiana bats, bog turtles and a variety of reptiles and amphibians." The letter added, "Loss of wetlands, biodiversity, and fragmentation within the Great Swamp area and adjacent areas are of particular concern to the DEC."

According to growsmartdover.org, on April 29 the Dover Town Board accepted as complete, the initial Dover Knolls Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Following the board's acceptance, members of the public had through June 30 to submit written comments that pertained to the DEIS.

Attempted kidnapping foiled

POUGHKEEPSIE—A convicted Level 2 sex offender was apprehended by Town of Poughkeepsie Police last week after a foiled attempted kidnapping near the Marist College campus.

On Dec. 9, at approximately 9:45 p.m., Town of Poughkeepsie Police were notified by Marist College Security on a report of a female student who was threatened near the college campus. Responding officers were told by the 21-year-old victim that she was on the Route 9 sidewalk in front of the campus when she was approached by a male subject who forcibly grabbed her around the shoulders.

The suspect said he had a knife and gun and threatened to harm her if she did not go with him. The victim began yelling and she was overheard by a 23-year-old male student in the immediate area who ran to assist the victim. The suspect ran away.

Police received descriptions from the victim and the witness and located the suspect near Route 9, north of the col-

lege campus around 9:55 p.m. An investigation resulted in the arrest of Joseph Paul Kline, 47, who is homeless in the Poughkeepsie area. He was charged with attempted kidnapping in the second degree, a Class C felony. After his arraignment, he was sent to the Dutchess County Jail on \$100,000 bail, expected to return to Town of Poughkeepsie Court this week.

The victim was not physically injured and was assisted by Marist College Security and the Marist College Office of Student Affairs.

Police Chief Thomas Mauro reported that Kline is a convicted registered Level 2 sexual offender. No weapons were displayed or recovered by police. Mauro said the quick action of the male Marist College student was directly responsible for the positive outcome in the incident and that Marist College security officers acted in a timely manner and their assistance was instrumental throughout the investigation.

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