

Denise Frangipane

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Dear Members of The Town of Bethel Planning Board

I am presenting my written and verbal testimony this evening regarding the White Lake Mansion House project on Route 17B in White Lake.

To start, I would like to go on record to say that as of 4pm today, February 6, the minutes from the January 9, 2023 planning board meeting had not yet been posted or available for review.

The fact that these minutes are not available further disenfranchises the community who were not able to participate in the last meeting in person. There is no point of reference for where we are, as a community, in this very important debate. Further, as someone who WAS at the meeting, I did not have the advantage of looking back on those minutes to clarify my own notes or recollection.

For example, I recall Ms. Babcock stating clearly, as I stood at this very mic, that this is a “new application.” Yet here we are, continuing a process that was based on a building department application marked received January 5, 2023 and noted for “Reapproval of Site Plan of 2013 which was extended to April of 2016.” **Per exhibit A attached to my testimony.**

If we are not discussing a reapproval; but in fact, a new application, I maintain my request of this board to treat this project as a new application; and to exercise your authority to use the State Environmental Quality Review Act to take the required and necessary hard look at this project.

- A. On the Full Environmental Assessment Form Part I
Project and Applicant/Sponsor Information
Brief Description: The Applicant desires to have the site plan approval of 2013 (which was extended until April 2016) reapproved.
My interpretation of this narrative is that April 2016 was the deadline. That date has come and gone. The pre-existing approval is void. These plans need to be resubmitted and re-evaluated based on current conditions.

Understanding also that we are where we are; and putting the legitimacy of this hearing aside. The remainder of my comments are directly related to the EAF Part 1 (which was submitted in December 2022 and again in 2023.) as well as the EAF Part 2.

Question C3 – Zoning

- a. Is the site of the proposed action located in a municipality with an adopted zoning law or ordinance? If yes, what is the zoning classification ...
The applicant responded yes and went on to say “this is a partial redevelopment of the site to a similar historic use.”
This is a stretch to say the least.

Question D - Project Details

D 1 Proposed and Potential Development

Question F: Does the project include new residential uses?

The Applicant responded "Yes" and noted 72 multifamily (four or more)

Nowhere in this discussion, or in the Developers representation or presentation, has there been any mention of residential units, especially not 72 multifamily units of four or more. I believe at some point in time these may have been described as time shares, and prior counsel to this board recommended that the Town Attorney examine this to see whether it was necessary for Attorney General approval if there were some kind of HOA.

COMMENTS ADDED AT MEETING:

During the Zoning Board meeting of May 17, 2010, the project Architect, Michael. Cosentino, referred to the , "...residential portions of the buildings."

During the April; 17, 2012 Planning Board meetings, Jess Sudol, representing the developer said, "This is not a hotel. They are suite style rooms. They do have kitchenettes, they do have a little living room. They do have a separate bedroom... Basically you purchase and get to sue one of the units for a amount of time. So each unit could have 12 owners. It is similar to a timeshare."

Question G: Does the project include new non-residential construction (excluding expansions)?

The Applicant responded "Yes" and noted 2 structures at 67 feet in height.

These are the structures that continue to come into question with regard to how they relate to the character of the areas. In fact, when the original owner began this project and sought the height variances – which by the way are almost double what the zoning allows; it was to save on disturbance of land and still get maximum capacity.

D2 Project Operations

Question A: Does the proposed action include any excavation. Mining, dredging during construction, operations or both?

The Applicant responded "No". I would ask the board for clarification on this in terms of how they intend to dig for a pool and whether the building that was noted before the Zoning Board as being partially in the side of the hill or even parking will require excavation.

Question C: Will the proposed project use or create a demand for water?

The Applicant responded "Yes" and noted 12,140 gallons per day. How is that number derived?

Based on the average person uses 101.5 gallons / day. That would be 119.6 people.

*Philadelphia government

Question D: Will the proposed action generate liquid waste?

The Applicant responded "Yes" and noted the same 12,140 gallons per day.

Question D iii. Will the proposed action use any existing public waste water treatment facility?

The Applicant responded "Yes" and identified the Town of Bethel, Kauneonga Sewer District

The EAF further asks if the existing wastewater treatment plant has capacity to serve the project.

The Applicant responded “Yes”

Gentlemen, here is where we have a problem. A very big problem.

Does the current sewer, in its current condition, and with the issues we know are facing it challenges with the existing sewer treatment, and projects that are proposed or pending to be included in the Town sewer district. As a new application, the Town must also evaluate the former decision to extend the sewer to this project. That evaluation must take into consideration current useage and conditions.

Question E iii: Where will the stormwater runoff be directed?

Stormwater management facility to existing roadside swales.

This, I find very interesting...

Those roadside swales are actually pedestrian corridors.

The run off has potential to travel along Route 17B – not sure in which direction

The run off has potential to travel across Route 17B and into White Lake.

Will stormwater runoff flow to adjacent properties?

The Applicant answered “No”

Question J: Will the proposed action result in a substantial increase in traffic above present levels or generate substantial new demand for transportation facilities or services?

The Applicant responded “Yes” and then specified weekends. Again, the need for a traffic study cannot be emphasized enough.

If we cross reference these numbers to water use mentioned above and garbage generation of 5,000 tons / month referenced later in the EAF, the weekend only traffic increase makes no sense.

viii. Will the proposed action include pedestrian or bicycle accommodations for connection to existing ...

The Applicant responded “No.” But it should.

Question I: asks the hours of operation

Hours of operation indicate otherwise – 24 hours / day all days and holidays

Question N: Ask abouts Lighting

Applicant notes Downfacing lighting and pathway lighting.

E. Site and Setting of Proposed Action

Question E 1a Check all boxes that occur on, adjoining and near the project site.

Developer notes Commercial, Forest, Residential (Suburban)

Missing is agriculture. Also, the last I checked we do not have any suburbs in the Town of Bethel. The option: Residential Rural (non farm) would more accurately describe the site.

Question E1c asks: Is the project **site** presently used by members of the community for public recreation?

The Applicant answered: Yes – dining and shopping

But that is incorrect. The project site is currently an abandoned White Lake Mansion House. The project site is not presently being used by members of the community.

In the EAF Part 2 – which is completed by our Town Engineer, Glen Smith

Question #9 The land use of the proposed action are obviously different from or in sharp contrast to, current land use patterns between the proposed project site and a scenic or aesthetic resource.

The Engineer responded No.

There is nothing like this project anywhere in the vicinity of the project; certainly not to this scale, literally or the intensity of use.

9. Impact on Aesthetic Resources – Answered No.

The very nature of this project impacts the aesthetics of our community. For those who live nearby, those who enjoy our lake, those who travel this corridor every day.

13. The proposed action may result in a change to existing transportation systems.

Town Engineer responded No.

Impact on Transportation – Answered No.

How could we ever confidently know this without a traffic study?

18. The proposed action is inconsistent with the existing community character.

Town Engineer responded No.

That cannot be further from the accurate. There is nothing in or around the town of Bethel that is consistent with this project.

For scale, the Regency in Monticello is about 80 feet high.

It asks – the proposed action may create a demand for additional community services such as schools, police and fire. Of course it will.

It asks – The proposed action is inconsistent with the predominant architectural style and character. Yes. It most certainly is.

It asks – The proposed action is inconsistent with the character of the surrounding landscape. Yes. It most certainly is.

While the EAF does not explicitly ask about impact to surrounding community resources / infrastructure – the potential impact on White Lake needs to be taken into consideration.

Gentlemen. I could not review it in the minutes, but because I was here, I heard it in your own words; in your own tone. There are too many questions; too much is unknown. How we even got to this public hearing is a question in and of itself. It appears that perhaps there was a misconception that this was straight forward based on past deliberation and decisions by prior boards. Yet nothing, from all that I have been able to review, has advanced or changed with this project to alter the impacts that we are outlining for you this evening.

This is not about electric charging stations and planting native shrubs. This is not about adding amenities and contributing to community character. Those are consolation prizes and pats on the back.

I know that you know it is not your job to pave the way for this project. Your job, what you signed up for, is to protect the resources and community character of OUR TOWN.

Just because a representative of an unknown developer stands before you with pretty pictures and old documents, compelling you to sign off with the assurances that they will work with you to make this project great. No. It doesn't ... or it shouldn't work like that.

Once you give approval; if you give approval; you have lost your leverage and your ability to assure our community is protected. You have lost. Conditions do not mean anything. Especially when we do not have the resources invested in our building department to ensure that the project is monitored, and the conditions met. Small changes become large concessions; soon the integrity of the project is gone. And we, as a community, are left with whatever is left.

What you need to ask yourself tonight is what will Bethel look like in the next 5, 10, 25 years?

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Denise Frangipane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Denise Frangipane