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August 7, 2020

Southold Town Board
53095 Main Road
PO Box 1179
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Dear Board:

I have learned today that the Planning Board will review Walsh Park's application for a zoning change this Monday, and that the public will have no opportunity to participate. The Planning Board will then forward its recommendation to the Town Board for a decision on Tuesday. I write with scant notice of these proceedings.

Much has happened since this issue was addressed early last winter. Covid has changed the world, both at large and locally. The economic carnage is already trickling down. Suffolk County has projected an 18 month 1.5 billion dollar deficit that is unmanageable without higher taxes and outside help. While the picture is less quantifiable at the town and local levels, it promises to be painful.

On the local level we are seeing a significant number of city refugees who are planning to move to the island on a more permanent basis. This demographic change alters the urgency of Walsh Park's mission. It is likely that the local population will experience an unanticipated boost without the need for additional housing.

But the island is confronting some serious economic impacts. Overnight the FI Ferry District experienced an 80% decline in operating revenue, and is projecting an annual shortfall in the neighborhood of 1 million dollars. This is occurring after dramatic measures including layoffs, reduced service, and increased rates. The two clubs, which are a major part of the local economic engine, are seeing similar weaknesses. These are just the immediate visible knock-ons – more are sure to follow.

Walsh Park's plans must be viewed in the light of these developments. The local cost of living is certain to increase. The neighborhood impacted by the zone change hosts a significant portion of the local population. They are financially responsible for maintaining the local sewer district, which is already stressed by capacity issues, and will more than likely need significant capital to handle the proposed additional load. Such additional expense will only add to, if not overwhelm, the existing locals. Such an event would be counter to Walsh Park's mission.

The future has become much less clear. It is not the time to embark on large, ambitious projects that could threaten the status quo. I would urge the Town Board to give deep and circumspect consideration to these issues. I would strongly suggest that this project is inappropriate for the times.

Thank you for your consideration,

Bob Evans