

Town of Niagara eyes protections while considering Military Road development request

BY TIMOTHY CHIPP
Contributing Writer

Town of Niagara officials are pushing back a request to rezone a portion of a land parcel in the 3400 block of Military Road, citing a need to include the entire piece of land.

The hang-up comes after Uniland Development Co. requested a portion of the land at the address be rezoned from multi-family residential (R-3) to light industrial (L-1) to accommodate two new warehouses they wish to build.

In the requests, according to Building Inspector Chuck Haseley, Uniland is seeking to keep a portion of the land zoned as R-3 to provide a buffer between the new facilities and residents in the area.

But Haseley said he doesn't think this approach would protect those residents, and suggested a more permanent approach to shield against misunderstandings or changed minds of the future.

"It would be easier to put a deed restriction on the property and collect industrial taxes on the whole parcel," Haseley told the board during Wednesday's work session. "We're not always going to be around. Things are suddenly different, the people are different, and things get lost

in translation and suddenly (it's developed)."

Board members largely agreed with Haseley, choosing to delay the company's request to schedule a public hearing on the rezoning request until at least May while they make the necessary adjustments to the wording.

Such a change would require a deed restriction on the property, which would forever prevent developing the land Uniland Development Co. plans to use as its buffer, rather than relying on a handshake agreement.

It's a decision, Supervisor Lee Wallace said, that could go a long way to earning the support, or just tempering dissatisfaction, from those who will be impacted in the community.

Originally, the board was considering scheduling the public hearing for April.

While they await the future of the Uniland Development Co. request, a different industrial project seems to have been shuttered.

Wallace said Wednesday that a planned expansion of a Covanta Environment Solutions LLC solid waste transfer facility, considered for Quarry Road, has been put on indefinite hold.

He said the company decided to focus on other projects.

"I wouldn't consider this 100%

dead, but it's dead for the foreseeable future," Wallace said.

The supervisor also gave a brief update on what he's heard regarding the proposed Amazon warehouse facility for Lockport Road, which was approved by the Town Board this past summer.

Wallace said the developer, JB2 Partners, believes the project is still going to move forward. But he's a bit skeptical, watching the company continue to contract as the American economy continues to battle high inflation stemming from concerns in Ukraine and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"My guess is as good as everyone else's," he said about the project's future.

According to numerous national media outlets in September, the company announced plans to close or cancel 44 and delay another 27 warehouse facilities, though the list did not include the Niagara location.

Facilities included locally were a planned delivery center in Hamburg, delayed from a planned third quarter 2022 opening, and a fulfillment center – similar in mission to the Niagara facility – in Gates, outside Rochester, pushed back from fourth quarter 2022.

Wheatfield officials criticize National Grid's recent response to light outages

BY LAWRENCE KAZNICA

When town highway crews are not plowing snow at all hours of the night, they are always on the lookout for light pole outages across the town, according to Wheatfield Highway Superintendent Paul Siegmann.

He cited an instance where a town resident requested a lamp to be fixed in January of 2022 and it reportedly was not fixed until last week.

"We are having a real issue this year. We pay for every street light (in this town) whether it is working or not," Siegmann said. "We've been having to (make multiple) phone calls (to National Grid.) Other years, when I called in a light, unless there was a major problem, it was fixed in a

day or two."

Councilman Curt Doctor asked if the department formulated a list, citing a handful of intersections and roads he noticed needing attention throughout town.

In a related matter during Monday's Town Board meeting, the councilmen held a public hearing for a lighting district for the Whistling Straits subdivision. There was no public feedback.

In other action, the board heard from Recreation Director Mike Ranalli, who reminded residents that the baseball registration deadline is March 24.

The board also:

- Authorized the Water/Sewer Department to send surplus equipment to Auctions International for sale. The list includes

a 2009 Ford F-250, trash pumps, lawn mowers and generators. The proceeds will go toward the purchase of future equipment for the Water/Sewer Department.

- Approved amendments for additional federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act. The general fund received a boost of \$19,700, which can be transferred to other funds. The water and sewer funds received an increase of \$9,850 each.

- Approved the purchase of a new 2022 Ford 250 XL for \$33,485 for the Water/Sewer Department upon the request of Mark Clark, deputy superintendent of the water sewer department. Also, the board approved a request for the purchase of 100, 64-gallon recycle bins at a cost of \$6,749.

Niagara County to host Agribusiness Outreach Forum

The Niagara County Center for Economic Development will host the 2023 Agribusiness Outreach Forum from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. Friday, March 24, at the Cornell Cooperative Extension Training Center, 4487 Lake Ave., Lockport. This is a free event, but attendees must register at <https://www.niagaracountybusiness.com/featured-events>.

"This is our fourth annual Agribusiness Outreach Forum, and it has proven to be one of our most popular events – even during the pandemic when we hosted it virtually," said Michael Casale, Niagara County commissioner for economic development. "This is a very full agenda, and we cover

a lot of ground in a short period of time."

Casale said event topics will include workforce management; selling direct to customers; the potential impacts of the New York State Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA); and an update of an ongoing Niagara County meat processing feasibility study.

There will be a number of tables set aside with information and resources available from several agencies, including the Niagara County Center for Economic Development, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County, NCCC Small Business Development Center, NY FarmNet, Ni-

agara County Farm Bureau, National Grid and the Niagara USA Chamber, among others.

"As a legislator who represents a rural district and married into a farming family, I know that is has never been harder to run a successful farming operation than it is right now, between state policy decisions, locked-in prices, inflation, and vocal anti-farming advocacy groups, among other things," Mike Hill said. "It's one of the reasons why Niagara County has established an agricultural rights advisory panel to help fight for our farmers, and why we place high value on hosting an annual agribusiness forum."

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