

# Amazon clears next hurdle

Town of Niagara prepares negative declaration in environmental review

BY TIMOTHY CHIPP

Niagara Town Board members appear ready to move past a major hurdle in bringing an Amazon warehouse to Lockport Road.

Council and representatives from the team looking to bring the warehouse to the town reviewed the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process this week, with town officials coming to a conclusion that a five-story facility at 8995 Lockport Road would not have a significant impact on the area.

Attorney Corey A. Auerbach, an attorney at Barclay Damon in downtown Buffalo representing the town's interests as lead agency of the project, said the word "significant" is key to the process.

Because, he said, there are several large impacts that would come with building this facility in question. But, if there are mitigation efforts from Amazon offsetting said issues, or limiting their effect, those impacts shouldn't be considered significant.

With a lack of significant impact – a "negative declaration" in the SEQR process – attention in the project heads now to the Zoning Board of Appeals, which meets at 7 p.m. Tuesday at Town Hall, 7105 Lockport Road.

There, the ZBA will hold a public hearing on the project. Auerbach said that board could choose to keep the public hearing open or close it at the conclusion of the agenda item. But once it's closed, a roughly 60-day timer begins, requiring the ZBA to decide whether the project can be forwarded to the town board for site plan approval or not.

Meanwhile, the town board is expected to formally issue its negative declaration at its meeting at 6:30 p.m. June 21, paving the way for a site plan approval process, depending on the ZBA's actions.

Approval of the project could be on the agenda in July for both the ZBA and the town board, should all steps in the process be completed in time.

### More Robust Mitigation

A month ago, the Town Board announced the Amazon project was being tabled.

"PSA: The applicant has requested the Town to table the application relating to 8995 Lockport Road with respect to the May Town Board meeting," the town posted to its social media channels on May 4. "In addition they have requested the May 17 Zoning Board public hearing be postponed. A reschedule for June will be TBD."

On Wednesday, those associated with the project revealed to the council why the process was delayed: further work addressing a number of traffic issues.

Most notably, they said, the plan now calls for a different truck route out of the facility to help reduce the number of vehicles that will use Packard Road.

While trucks arriving at the facility will still use Packard Road, those leaving the facility will now be instructed to travel on Lockport Road, if the project is approved. They will then turn left on Military Road and head toward the Interstate 190 on-ramp

at Porter-Packard Road.

An alternative route proposed by residents, which would see no truck traffic on either major roadway was deemed impossible, according to Michael Finan, associate principal for engineering firm Langan.

Achieving the new route, Finan said, added in an extra mitigation step at the intersection of Lockport and Military roads. The stop line on westbound Lockport Road would be set further back to allow the trucks ample turning space.

Four other mitigation steps were added to the traffic plan based on response to state, local and residential issues brought up during the process, Amazon representatives said.

First, they said a turn lane will be installed at the intersection of Walmore and Lockport roads, designed to help alleviate employee traffic flow exiting the facility at shift change.

Second, a turning lane will be established at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station main entrance on Lockport Road – though a traffic signal light won't be installed as the flow does not reach high enough volume, according to Amy C. Dake, senior managing traffic engineer for SRF Associates.

Third, the project now calls for the middle employee driveway to restrict traffic flow to right turns only, both entering and exiting the lot. Dake said a physical median will be installed to restrict the traffic.

It was a change prescribed by the state Department of Transportation in its review, Dake said.

The final proposed change to the original plan calls for a widening of Packard Road at the in-

tersection with Lockport Road, which would be the main entrance and exit from the facility.

Widening allows the creation of a right turn lane, Amazon representatives said, which would ease the burden truck traffic has on commuters and drivers using the road for other reasons. And fears of long lines of trucks lined up, Dake said, aren't realistic as, even during peak times, there shouldn't be more than two trucks every minute.

John Bancroft, representing developer JB2 Partners, said all of the mitigation efforts go beyond what he's seen from other sites across Amazon's facilities.

In all, the plan now calls for about one mile of turn lanes installed, Bancroft said, in what he called "one of the most dynamic mitigation plans" he's seen.

"We've been to a lot of meetings," he said. "At this point, we think we understand what the concerns are. We've worked to address them the best we can."

Council's Other Concerns  
What wasn't addressed in the updated plan is traffic to and from the interstate, which some council members felt could be an issue with trucks added into the flow.

They wondered, among other concerns, whether there could be stacked vehicles on the off-ramp waiting at red lights. It's a complicated section of road, they feel, and could pose a problem maneuvering multiple lanes on their path to the facility.

But, Amazon's representatives said, there were no mitigation requirements from the state regarding the traffic in the area.

"We're not seeing backups off Interstate 190," Dake said. "In

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# OBITUARIES

## James P. 'Bubba' Maloni Jr.



James P. "Bubba" Maloni Jr. went home to Jesus, his parents, relatives, church friends, and a slew of cats on Saturday, June 4, 2022. He was 75.

A man of many interests – including cars; animals of all sorts; the New York Yankees and Buffalo Bills; TV shows "The Deadliest Catch," "Wicked Tuna" and "Battle-Bots"; trips to the movie theater; and cooking famously delicious Italian dinners – Maloni most enjoyed spending time with his family. His church congregation, pastors and worship team at Resurrection Life Church came in a close second.

Maloni was a fierce defender and friend to those he loved, while always working to provide compassion and aid to the less-fortunate. He was the first one to pray for someone in need, surprise a family member with a treat – often something sweet, of which he, too, would partake – and lend a hand when the job was big and the resources small.

Above all, Maloni was a man of faith, whose firm foundation was Jesus. Despite years of physical health challenges, Maloni always had a smile on his face, a joke to tell, a story to share, and a prayer of thanksgiving at the ready.

Maloni was born on New Year's Eve, 1946, in Niagara Falls, to James Maloni Sr. (Mary Archie). He was a 1965 graduate of Niagara Falls High School, where he wrestled and played football and baseball. In 1971, Maloni earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from Buffalo State College. He served as a member of the New York National Guard for six years. Later in life, Maloni would volunteer at Buffalo Stand Down events, supporting local veterans.

He read meters for Niagara Mohawk before continuing his career as a technician in the results department at the Huntley power plant (NRG). He retired after 30 years. After a short break, Maloni joined the team at Community Missions, where he worked for 16 years – first as a driver and then as a transportation supervisor.

Maloni served as a worship team member at Res Life for more than a quarter-century. He also was a volunteer and safety team coordinator at Vacation Bible School, and helped start the "Helping Hands" ministry.

Bubba is survived by Lynn (Conley), his loving wife of 48 years. The two wed Aug. 17, 1973. And, yes, his suit was yellow. It was the 1970s, after all.

Of his wife and constant companion, Maloni wrote, "She is my strength, my fortress, a lover of Jesus; she took over when I couldn't. My love for her cannot be said in words. ... I am truly blessed."

Additional survivors include beloved children Joshua, Matthew (Marisa Nold) and Elyse; his dear sister, Jere, and her husband, Tom Insana; nieces and nephews: Jennifer (John) Castellani, Erika (Peter) Daddabbo, T.J. (Korina) Insana, Joe (Ann Marie) Johnson and Jillian (Johnson) Shaner (Michael); as well as several great-nieces and great-nephews; cousins; innumerable friends; and even more cats.

Visitation was held Wednesday, June 8, at the M.J. Colucci & Son Niagara Funeral Chapel in Niagara Falls. Funeral services took place Thursday, June 9 at Resurrection Life Church in Buffalo.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be sent to Community Missions or to the Resurrection Life Church food pantry.

Visit [mjcoluccifuneralchapel.com](http://mjcoluccifuneralchapel.com) for online condolences. James P. 'Bubba' Maloni Jr.

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