

Good and Bad Development Proposed for Schodack

At the corner of Routes 9/20 and 150, near the Senior Center, new projects are being proposed by Roderick Valente. One project on 10-acres will be a new vocational education center for Questar III BOCES and will house programs such as automotive repair, culinary arts, cosmetology, and construction. The other project will be a warehouse, which is based on the design that McLane Foods had proposed, but later withdrew. Although developers want the BOCES project approved quickly, very little on the design of the school has been submitted. We at the Schodack Planning and Development Association think this is a perfect opportunity to have design standards be considered for our town as opposed to the usual box-like structures that have been built in Schodack. For example, compare our rectangular Rite Aid to the attractive Rite Aid in Sand Lake. Many are wondering why we can't have that kind of construction here. Schodack does have a Commercial Design Guidelines Manuel, but it is not codified into our zoning laws, therefore few adhere to it.

Another concern we have is that Mr. Valente is asking for a construction exemption to gravel-mine the area for the future warehouse prior to construction with the justification that the warehouse will be lower and less visible to the neighbors. Neighbors from the Richwood Drive area have been fighting mining proposals from Mr. Valente for years and do not want gravel mining. The concern is that this area is over the Schodack Aquifer and near the Moordenerkill, an area is not zoned for gravel-mining. Mr. Valente has previous DEC violations while gravel-mining at other sites. There will soon be a public hearing on the combined projects, possibly in April. Updates are at www.schodackplanning.com.

Barbara Spink, Schodack Planning and Development Association, March 2017, *The Advertiser*

A GOOD FACE TO EXPEDITE BAD DEVELOPMENT?

The Schodack Planning Board is reviewing the planned development of the Valente property near the intersection of 150 and 9&20. Part of the review package includes the new BOCES Rensselaer Academy, and **a new**

Distribution Center, whose tenant is currently unknown, as well as a variance to mine 60,000 cubic yards of gravel, which in and of itself presents environmental concerns for the town aquifer and nearby residents. Considering the site's history of the Dollar General and the Project Red development plans, it seems that a distribution center is not smart and sustainable development for that area, and I would expect strong pushback from town residents. Do we want Schodack to become known as the warehouse district of Rensselaer County?

As an architect, I support the Rensselaer Academy's construction and its vocational education opportunities, but, my immediate concern is the lack of transparency as to what it will even look like. A brick box or a bent frame metal building is a lost opportunity for good design. How does it fit with the development strategies of the Town's Comprehensive Plan and the recently adopted Town Center Plan? No elevations, renderings, plans, etc. have been made available by BOCES or Schodack for public viewing. Town residents do care about the finished product. I encourage them to attend the **May 15th public hearing** to hopefully see more.

The BOCES project should not be an opportunity for the Board to put a good face on bad development so they can push through a distribution center project. Rather, I encourage them to view the Academy's design as a catalyst influencing new Route 9&20 development, and be one piece for the start of, let's say, a Schodack Renaissance.

Stephen Van Hoose, RA - East Schodack, NY, April 2017, *The Advertiser*