

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Dominique Mendez @ 631-886-1895.

WADING RIVER CORRIDOR STUDY IN TROUBLE Community Leaders Cite Development Approval & No Public Workshop

December 27, 2011: Community leaders are deeply concerned about the Wading River Corridor Study of Route 25A and Sound Avenue in the wake of Riverhead Town's approval of the proposed Knightland Regional Mall in advance of completion of the land use study. The concern is compounded by the town's cancellation of a Public Workshop that was to be a key part of the study.

"As if it wasn't bad enough that the town just approved what is probably the most objectionable of the retail projects planned for Wading River (the Knightland Mall), now they are axing the Public Workshop that would have given the public the opportunity to participate in the corridor study planning process," said Dominique Mendez, president of the Riverhead Neighborhood Preservation Coalition. She called again for a short "timeout" on new commercial development approvals until the corridor study is complete.

Richard Amper, a participant in the "Save Wading River" effort to rethink the construction of six proposed commercial projects amounting to nearly 200,000 square feet along a 1.5 mile stretch of the rural hamlet said, "The town promised a full Public Workshop like the ones the same consultant conducted for Route 25A in Brookhaven," he said, "Now, Riverhead is reneging on the most important part of the study and approving projects before the study is complete. What sort of professional planning is that," he added?

Riverhead Town officials have acknowledged that the plethora of proposed projects requires a new planning study and commissioned BFJ Planning Consultants to evaluate the impacts of such intense commercial development on traffic, home values, business and community character. A key component was full public input before the consultants reached any conclusions.

According to Wading River Civic President Sid Bail, the workshop was for BFJ to present its preliminary draft at an open public meeting in Wading River and for the public to react

and make suggestions. In Brookhaven, BFJ revised their recommendations based on this public input and Bail noted that he “would expect they would do the same here.” The Public Workshop appeared on the quote that was accepted by the Town, it appeared on BFJ’s project timeline as of October 17, and it was discussed several times publicly. Still, according to Ms. Mendez, “we have been given five different and contradictory reasons why the Town has apparently cut the promised public workshop from the schedule.”

In lieu of a Public Workshop, the Town has only expressed a willingness to have the planners speak to them at a regularly scheduled work session in January and to let the public comment at the legally required public hearing. The RNPC has maintained that neither of these routine meetings is a fair substitute. Ms. Mendez expanded: “The work session will be held during the day when most people are at work and, because it’s a work session, the public will not be able to participate in the discussion anyways. Then, by the time they have the public hearing required by law to adopt the study it will be a done deal and very little, if anything, will be subject to change. This is certainly not shaping up to be the open, public process we thought we were getting.”

The Corridor Study is budgeted at just under \$50,000.

-- END --