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PUTNAM COUNTY'S LOCAL NEWSPAPER

This paper publishes official notices for Putnam County, Kent, Southeast, Brewster, Patterson

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2021

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P.O. BOX 608, MAHOPAC, NEW YORK 10541

VOL. 163 NO. 3

# Rt. 22 Master Plan Headed to Town Board for Approval

By Holly Crocco

The Southeast Planning Board held a public hearing on a draft master plan for the Route 22 corridor during its Jan. 11 meeting.

"We are very open to comments from members of the public, as well as property owners along the corridor," said Planning Consultant Ashely Ley. "This is very much a work in progress."

Over the past couple of months, the planning board has been discussing updates and proposed changes to zoning along Route 22 that would allow for smart development, bring new life to dormant properties, improve aesthetics and protect residential property owners along the corridor.

Among the proposals included in the draft plan is adding new uses in the Special Route 22 Zone that would allow general business, theater/performing arts, research labs, doggie daycare and veterinary uses. In addition, there are proposals to create new "live/work" designations, increase the

maximum building size, and remove some restrictions on drive-throughs.

In the Highway/Commercial Zone, the board proposes adding a new conditional use for self-storage.

"Currently, self-storage is not allowed anywhere in the Town of Southeast," said Ley. "The only self-storage that exists is the Life Storage building, which is pre-existing, non-conforming, and that would make that building a conforming use."

The board also looked into potential non-vehicular infrastructure improvements and connections along Route 22, including added protected north and south bike lanes.

"We did a survey at the very beginning of this process and there were quite a few comments related to improving pedestrian and bike infrastructure," she said. "At this point, further study would be needed to further develop these and come up with engineered notions to this."

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The draft master plan also includes recommendations for uniform landscape and design, as well as a "hardscape" design guide for outdoor seating, standardized guiderails, consistent street furniture in various plazas, and more. However, Ley said it's important to consider how these things will be put into effect.

"What we don't want to see happen is having a lot of sidewalks to nowhere, which is sort of the slow way to do it," she said. "As each property comes up for approval you have them install sidewalks, but then you wind up with a bunch of unconnected sidewalks."

In addition, the plan recognizes the lack and sewer and water infrastructure along the corridor.

"One of the biggest issues we have in this area is access to water and sanitary sewer infrastructure, so we're looking to facilitate agreements between private sewer/water providers or expand services where feasible to enable the development of underutilized properties," said Ley.

Sam Mermelstein of Enclave Equities owns 10 acres of undeveloped property just north of Clocktower Commons, and said the site has been difficult to promote due to lack of sewer/water hookup and poor visibility.

"I really appreciate what you're doing here," he told the board during the public hearing. "It's about time, and I think we can unlock this property and it has amazing potential."

Mermelstein said he would like to develop about 100 units of affordable senior housing on the parcel, along with a self-storage

facility in the rear of the property, which would include its own sewer treatment system.

"We can get these two uses off the ground immediately once we get the zoning, (and) we can be under construction once we get approved," he said.

Milltown Road resident Jay Ryan, who is chairman of the Milltown Road Association, thanked the board for its work to improve Route 22. "My initial impression is that it's very exciting," he said of the draft master plan. "I think it's all very positive."

He also asked for future traffic studies to look into ways to prevent speeding on Milltown Road and Old Milltown Road, which have become shortcuts to New Fairfield, Conn. "It's been a chronic problem for us in the Milltown area," said Ryan. "The speeding is horrendous."

"I think this was an outstanding job — really a great plan," added Carla Lucchino of Allview Avenue in Brewster. "With all these changes I think there needs to be an attempt to attract other businesses who want to partner with us and do things to improve this corridor."

Mike Liguori of Hogan & Rossi Law Firm in Brewster also expressed positive thoughts about the plan, but asked the board to reconsider, or further study, the addition of bike lanes on Route 22, as it may slow traffic and cause safety concerns.

"I think it raises a whole host of concerns and I think that pedestrian segment, that particular area, should really be moved out of this document into a second document where you could look at all the safety concerns that go along with it," he said.

Timothy Wallach, who owns property on Route 22 along Kishawana Farm Road, and Jack Bolnick of Bolnick & Snow, located at 39 Old Doansburg Road, agreed.

"I was one of the people that wanted to see a bike lane along

Route 22," said Bolnick. "But (Route) 22 is really getting to be a problem" and it's probably not a good idea, he said.

According to Ley, the planning board will go over all the comments and recommendations from stakeholders and residents, make any necessary adjustments to the draft master plan, and submit it to the Southeast Town Board, which will have its own public hearing before consideration for adoption.