

**Syrette Dym & Frank Grant  
52 Wendt Avenue  
Larchmont, NY 10538**

November 18,2019

Mayor and Members of Village Board  
Village Hall  
Larchmont Avenue  
Larchmont, NY 10538

RE: Proposed Amendment to Chapter 381: Zoning Code of the Larchmont Village Code to Create a “Public Amenity Supplemented Mixed-Use Development” as a Permitted Principal Use in the RC-Retail Center Zoning District

**This is now the third continuation of the public hearing on the proposed amendment that could create the legislation that would permit construction of the Centro project and a village owned multistory parking garage on Lot 10 on Wendt Avenue.**

**Where are we?**

- At third continuation of the public hearing opened two months ago
- Still within the SEQR process of disclosing impacts of the proposed zoning and associated Centro project

**What have we learned?**

**Much new information including:**

- Elk Homes presented a modified Centro proposal at the Village Board Work session of November 4, 2019 for which I thank the Mayor for informing us in advance
- A report by FP Clark Associates dated November 14, a Village-hired traffic consultant to assess traffic, parking and garage issues related to the project

**What is the modified project?**

**First, What Modifications did Elk Homes make? Generally**

- The Chatsworth Avenue Building while still 5 stories in height, now has the fourth and fifth stories setback from the property line
- The Wendt Avenue 6 story building now has the fifth-floor setback in addition to formerly only the sixth floor being set back
- Two apartments have been eliminated - one market rate and one affordable to bring the apartment count to 24 units from the former 26 units

- Approximately 7 parking spaces at the underground level to be allocated to the developer have been eliminated due to a need to provide unexcavated area to reduce identified groundwater impacts
- It appears the penthouse floors may have been somewhat lowered
- Five feet in width has apparently been added to a portion of the pedestrian connection between the proposed garage and Chatsworth Avenue
- Earlier, the developer identified a reduction in height of the proposed garage stairwells to Wendt Avenue

**Second, What Modifications Did Elk Homes Not Make?**

- No changes have been made to the proposed zoning which still provides for a maximum height of 70' or six stories
- No changes at all have been proposed for the parking garage
- No changes have been made to the number of new and widened curb cuts along Wendt Avenue
- No ground floor building setbacks to the Wendt Avenue building have been made

**What is the result of these Project Modifications?**

While the developer has reduced the units by two, this reduction has permitted the elimination of one affordable unit which presents little or no cost to his bottom line. While one additional upper floor setback has been provided on the Wendt Avenue building, the narrow, sore thumb sticking out onto Wendt, disconnected to any wrap around building on Palmer Avenue (such as the building across Wendt) is still out of scale at six stories. While grade changes between Chatsworth and Wendt Avenues allow for this extra story, that is no justification or need for it to match whatever a final height of the Chatsworth Avenue building might be, particularly on this narrow interior side street. A perfect example of this is the building that spans from Wendt Avenue around Palmer Avenue which is four stories but steps down a story as it wraps around Larchmont Avenue from the corner of Palmer.

**What Issues from the Village’s Planning Consultant, Cleary Consulting, identified in the memorandum of September 6, 2019 have been addressed and what still remain to be addressed?**

**Visual Impacts** – Whereas the Village consulting planner’s memorandum identified that the proposed zoning only establishes a zoning envelope, it acknowledges that this envelope should be established to ensure an “appropriately scaled building”. I would suggest that the 70-foot height limit is established only to accommodate a six-story building on Wendt Avenue due to the grade change, precisely the interior narrow street where height should be lower.

**Stormwater management** – Four bullets identify the additional EAF Information needed to determine SEQR significance. To our knowledge, only bullets one and four - a SWPPP and soil borings - have been provided. Therefore, capacity of the existing storm sewer to accommodate additional flow generated has not been provided. Information would have to include not only stormwater discharge which might be delayed due to proposed mitigation but also needed amount

of groundwater dewatering to be pumped to the same system. This pumping would appear to cancel out any improvements due to proposed timing release mitigation. Clearly, this requires review and analysis by a village hired engineer. If it has been done it needs to be presented and if not, needs to be undertaken. Also, information regarding inflow and infiltration has not yet been provided or reviewed and made public.

**Grading, Erosion & Sediment Control-** There are four bullets for which additional information is identified as needed for a SEQR determination. These include a geotechnical assessment, sedimentation and erosion control information, rock removal plan, and a haul plan for exported material. While the developer has stated no rock removal is anticipated, it is not clear what information has been presented to the Village, whether this information has been assessed by the Village consulting engineer and whether his assessment has been included into a report made to the Village and then made available to the public.

**Infrastructure** – Additional information to be provided included three bullets related to capacity and pressure to accommodate water demand, capacity in sanitary sewer network and potential video surveying of sewer and water lines beyond the immediate area. Has this information been provided to the Village consulting engineer? Has a report been prepared assessing this information and made available to the Village Board and the public?

**Traffic and Parking** – Three bullets of needed information are suggested by the consulting planner that include justification for the 50% local-capture TOD credit, a pedestrian/cyclist survey and sight-distance information for driveway locations along Wendt Avenue. Most importantly, since the September 6, 2019 memorandum by the Village consulting planner, the Village has importantly retained the services of FP Clark Associates who prepared a November 14, 2019 analysis of traffic, parking and garage configuration and operations. Of all the issues they emphasized, their greatest area of concern was the proposed parking garage, much in line with what residents of Wendt Avenue who know this corridor best have been saying from day one of this proposal. The consultant, like the residents, strongly suggest that:

- The Lot 10 site is too constrained for a feasible garage,
- Curb cuts are too extensive to ensure pedestrian safety,
- Garage reconfiguration, if possible, is highly recommended, and
- On street parking loss along Wendt will not only be greater than what the developer identifies, but would need to be entirely eliminated on the north side of the street to aid adequacy of sight lines and ensure vehicular and pedestrian safety.

So, the effective addition of net new parking spaces continues to decline to possibly less than 20 spaces. Analysis of additional intersections are also recommended to assess traffic impacts. So importantly the lynchpin of the proposed zoning and the project as proposed – i.e. the public parking garage - is brought into extreme question by the Village's own hired traffic expert.

**The question is – Will the Village Board finally hear what the public has already been saying and will they take the recommendations of their own consultant into account?**

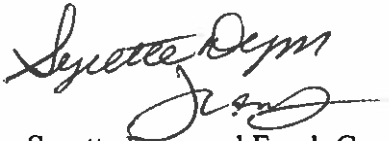
**So - where does this leave all of us?**

Although I may be a professional planner, as a long-time resident of this part of the village, I could visualize a better plan that, at a minimum, would account for not only the facing frontages along Chatsworth Avenue southeast of Palmer Avenue, but would incorporate the eastern frontage of Palmer Avenue wrapping around to Wendt including the parking lot. This entire block is the most problematic in the downtown in terms of building obsolescence and inappropriate grandfathered uses such as those inhabiting the two off-street back alley garages accessed by driveways from Chatsworth Avenue – buildings and uses from a bygone era that don't belong in a modern downtown retail district. Assessment of alternative future concept design scenarios for these areas should be undertaken as well as for the Village-owned railroad lot. Rather than reacting to a proposal such as the one for the railroad lot, a scaled back version of the Scarsdale Freightway site study could help the Village identify the best uses for these highly opportunistic gateway assets,

At the work session of November 4, 2019, the developer strongly urged the Village to move on, approve the zoning and special permit and let him move on to site plan review by the Planning Board. He said he had never faced as much scrutiny or produced as many reports as he has for this project. Well I don't know if all other Elk Homes projects were proposed in areas where they already complied with existing zoning or whether the sites were especially free from environmental issues or constraints, but that is not the case here. Existing zoning does not allow this project. There are still outstanding items not addressed from the consulting planner. More, importantly, the Village Board has to decide if the concerns of its own traffic consultant are so significant that Lot 10 is not an appropriate location for a multistory garage and, if so, what type and scale of mixed use residential/retail development should be built on the Chatsworth Avenue site.

The Village Board has its work cut out for it. The Board should not move hastily until it has fully gathered all necessary information as recommended by its consultants and until alternative concept plans have been developed by its own consultants. Such plans would act as a guide, helping the board to understand its options and how its decisions now impact future redevelopment of this critical downtown block as well as the railroad parcel.

Very truly yours,



Syrette Dym and Frank Grant

Attach.











WATER FROM PALMER EXCAVATION FLOWING ON TO WENDT AVE 11.18.19

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