

A Public Hearing of the Town of Sweden Planning Board was held on Monday, January 13, 2003, at the Brockport High School Auditorium, 40 Allen Street, Brockport, N.Y., commencing at about 7:10 p.m.

Members present: Ellen Bahr, William Hertweck, Edward Williams, Arnold Monno, Terrin Hover and Craig McAllister.

Absent: David Hale.

Also present: Jim Oberst – MRB, Neal Madden – Harter Secrest & Emery, John Bennett & Tom Lucey – APD Engineering, Amy Dake – SRF Associates, and please see attendance list.

The meeting was called to order at about 7:10 p.m. by Chairman McAllister.

The Chairman read the notice of Public Hearing and affidavit of publication for:

**Wal-Mart Super Center.** Brockport Spencerport Road. 084.01-1-14.112, 084.01-1-14.2, 084.01-1-14.12.

Attorney Neal Madden presented Wal-Mart's request for subdivision, site plan and Special Permit E approval.

Engineer Tom Lucey gave an overview of the proposed site plan. The 203,622 sq. ft. Super Center would include groceries, general merchandise, seasonal garden center and an 8 bay tire and lube center. Mr. Lucey pointed out the main access drive, the detention basin, and possible wetland area.

Traffic Engineer Amy Dake discussed the traffic survey that was conducted September – November 2002. The data includes the re-occupation of the existing Wal-Mart store. Ms. Dake said the traffic counts warrant a signal light at the main access drive, improvements at the Owens Road intersection, and signal timing modifications at the Routes 31 and 19 intersection.

Mr. Madden submitted a letter addressing some of the concerns raised by the Planning Board at the November 25, 2002 meeting. Mr. Madden also presented an informational packet about the Wal-Mart organization.

The meeting was opened to public comment.

Caurie Putnam, 13 Talamora Trail, read a statement saying that the proposal does not fit the site and is incompatible with the Town of Sweden Comprehensive Plan. She is concerned that Wal-Mart executives did not attend the meeting. Her home would be 60 feet from the proposed truck turn-around. She said she is concerned about increased car accidents, decreased property values, pollution, noise and whether the land itself can support the weight of the building. Mrs. Putnam said the typical Wal-Mart generates four police calls per day. There is a Wal-Mart Super Center just 15 miles away. She cited a *Time* magazine article that states Wal-Mart plans to begin selling cars at its Super Centers. Mrs. Putnam is organizing a group called SWAT – Stop Wal-Mart At Talamora Trail.

Bob Getz, 27 Brook Terrace, said that although he is not within hearing or visual distance of the proposed Wal-Mart, he opposes the project. The traffic statement did not give details. He believes that the character of the village and town is an environmental impact. The Super Center won't serve customers exclusively from Sweden/Brockport/Clarkson, but it is these taxpayers who will be inconvenienced.

Lisa VanDeMark, 84 Talamora Trail, agrees with Mrs. Putnam. She moved here for the charm of Main Street and the Talamora neighborhood. There is nothing charming about a Super Center. She's concerned about commercial vacancies.

Tim Bates, 69 Royal Garden Way, stated that three types of jobs will be created by the project. The full-time employees at Wal-Mart will not be paid living wages. The majority of jobs will be part-time and there isn't a need for the creation of more part-time employment here. The construction of the Super Center will consist of non-union workers that receive low pay and no benefits and are brought in from out-of-state companies. No local contractors will be employed. Mr. Bates said the community is trying to bring in tourism and maintain the appeal of the downtown shopping and the Super Center doesn't help those efforts. What's best for the Village of Brockport can't be separated from what's best for the Town of Sweden. Mr. Bates asked if the fees and taxes generated from Wal-Mart would be used to help off-set the expenses of the community center, park and cemetery. There will be two empty plazas. He will boycott the Super Center.

Barb Fisher, 97 Talamora Trail, questions whether Wal-Mart will really actively recruit businesses to fill the vacancy it leaves. The community already has enough grocery stores. She has three children, one a new driver, it is virtually impossible to make a left hand turn out of Talamora Trail. She worries about her children being involved in an accident.

Anthony Peonie, 83 Smith Street, is a downtown merchant. He doesn't want the competition. He believes a traffic study by an independent engineer should be done.

John Shields, 14 Talamora Trail, said it's not very easy to turn right out of Talamora Trail either. He said the Planning Board should hold a number of other hearings during the scoping and SEQR process. He looked at the SEQR information filed for this project, hunters do hunt on the property now. Three acres of forestry will be lost, trees prevent soil erosion. He believes the project is a Type I action. The traffic study only provides a snapshot in time, it won't tell what happens further down the road. The Planning Board is the community's last defense against this kind of thing. It should use the power it has. Courts defer their judgment to the wisdom of local agencies unless there is a grievous error. Keep in mind the needs of the community.

Walter Uhrman, 52 Centennial Avenue, agrees with Mr. Getz. Wal-Mart has more assets than many small countries. It is a huge force coming into the community. When other communities do a cost analysis after a Super Center comes in, they come up short about \$40,000 per year. Add to that the local businesses that suffer, and the cost is higher. There are also social and political dimensions to the proposal.

Laura Lieberman, 2 Carolin Drive, said there are already many automobile fix-it shops here. There are 14 storefronts from Wal-Mart to Pizza Hut that are empty. The Super Center will make it worse. The college won't be able to recruit good faculty and students if the village declines.

Jan Benham, 45 State Street, remembers what Rochester was like before the advent of the mall. She referred to an article in *Time* magazine. Wal-Mart is retail imperialism.

An unidentified woman from Talamora Trail said she is concerned about noise and traffic. She visited the Super Center in Gates, thought it was a monstrosity – messy inside and out.

Pat Kutz, 495 White Road, said that when the school district wants to build a new building, it has to jump through hoops. What evidence has Wal-Mart provided that people have the disposal income to support a Super Center? If there is no evidence that means Wal-Mart will be drawing from existing dollars spent locally. Businesses will be closed and the tax base will be eroded.

Paul North, 3 Talamora Trail, said he is disappointed that the plan disregards the Talamora Trail development by only just meeting the bare minimum for required setbacks. He would like there to be a formal study of the negative impacts of the proposal. This couldn't happen in Spencerport because they don't allow these large commercial developments. He'd like to live in a Brockport that's more of a Spencerport than a Greece.

Charilla Connor, Sweden Walker Road, said if she'd known 20 years ago how bad the traffic would be, she wouldn't have bought her house. She resents that Wal-Mart executives didn't come to the hearing to listen to the comments. She is a former Wal-Mart employee. She supports the Talamora Trail residents.

Mary Beth Nesbitt, 47 Fairview Drive, said turning left out of Sherry Lane is taking your life into your hands. There are too many accidents there. Her husband is in the automobile business here, he won't appreciate the competition.

Monica Anderson, 8 Hickory Way, said she moved here 30 years ago to escape development in Greece. She believes most people live here to enjoy a small town atmosphere. She doesn't want a mega-store of any type.

Renata Haynes, 7567 Fourth Section Road, said that when her family lived in the Village of Brockport adjacent to a parking lot, her children had trouble falling asleep at night. Her family also suffered respiratory problems that went away when they no longer breathed automobile fumes constantly.

Doug Hickerson, 231 Hollybrook, said the discussion involved the total community about the total quality of life. The downtown is historically preserved, the community has to have the foresight and gumption to continue to preserve it.

Jolene Bak, 18 Keystone Court, said the existing Wal-mart is never too busy so she questions the need for a Super Center. She visited the Gates Super Center and said there is not much more selection of merchandise. There are 6 empty store fronts in Wal-Mart Plaza now. What will fill the plaza? The Bell's Plaza was a vacant eyesore for many years. The existing Wal-Mart is the right size for this community.

Ken Schlecht, 5859 Brockport Spencerport Road, is concerned about Route 31 traffic that already backs up to Northhampton Park and sometimes to Route 531. Five to six times a year there is a serious car accident in front of the proposed Wal-Mart site that closes the road. Mr. Schlecht said that tax abatements are unfair to small businesses that don't qualify for them.

Scott Valet, 22 High View Circle, said that Route 31 needs a traffic light at Sherry Lane. There also needs to be a lower speed limit on Route 31 – it is the main road through town.

Donna Smith, Brockport Spencerport Road, said the intersection of Routes 19 and 31 is already very congested. Emergency vehicles have a difficult time. This plan will make it worse.

Brandy Sieber, 99 Talamora Trail, said her school bus has to turn right to leave Talamora Trail. It scares her.

Ann Devine, 159 Gary Drive, wants the board to remember the problem with lights at the Hess Express. Residents don't need more lights.

Ivan Thompson, 47 Talamora Trail, said this application is not about the community's needs but about Wal-Mart's needs to expand. Five hundred local Kodak jobs were lost due to Wal-Mart importing single use cameras. Wal-Mart is a bad neighbor economically.

Mary Akins, 33 Fairview Drive, said these big stores bring lots of social problems with them. Smaller is better, quainter is better.

Jim Drake, who owns Unique Gift Boutique on Main Street, said he moved his business here from Greece 8 years ago. He loves the family atmosphere and would hate to see it ruined. He doesn't dislike Wal-Mart, it isn't a direct competitor of his, but he worries for the other small businesses.

Victor Senia, 42 Talamora Trail, moved here two years ago to raise his family. If he wanted to live in a Henrietta, that's where he would have built a home.

Jim Moore, 4 Talamora Trail, asked what the impact on property values will be and questions a tax abatement for Wal-Mart.

Norman Wright, 433 Gallup Road, said Wal-Mart's plan does not fit the Comprehensive Plan. He's not against a Super Center, there might be other spots in this community where it would fit. The community should determine how it grows, not outside businesses.

Nat O. Lester III, Sweden Supervisor, said he believes that the Planning Board members are experienced and talented. The Planning Board is not a roll-over board, but it also does not pre-judge applications. Everyone is entitled to have their application heard. Mr. Lester said he had met with Wal-Mart engineers for the first time last week and expressed disappointment that they hadn't contacted the Town Board earlier. Mr. Lester said the review process is just beginning and there will be many more opportunities for public input. The Planning Board members are honorable people who know how to do the job and will do it well. The Town has requested a reduced speed limit on Route 31, but the state has repeatedly denied the request.

Steven Warren, 95 Talamora Trail, said that Brockport is like an ecosystem, it's well-balanced. A Wal-Mart Super Center will disrupt the ecosystem.

Chris Haag, 3400 Brockport Spencerport Road, said his biggest concern is the impact on downtown businesses. If businesses close, the buildings will decay. There are already enough grocery stores here.

Bob Shangle, Spencerport, questioned what shape Kodak would be in if Wal-Mart only sold Kodak products. Four of the richest people on the planet are Wal-Mart people. No one can raise a family on a \$7 an hour job. Small businesses rely on other small businesses for services. Wal-Mart is self-sufficient, it doesn't purchase any services from local businesses.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

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Planning Board Secretary