

**Special Meeting
Town of Ghent and Village of Chatham
Monday, September 19, 2011 – Tracy Village Hall, Chatham**

Town of Ghent Planning Board: Jonathan Walters, Co-Chair; Dana Rosenstreich; Geoff French; Martin Silver; Larry Machiz; Aaron Groom, Co-Chair; Kathy Burke, Secretary

Town of Ghent Zoning Board of Appeals: Mark Huston, Chair; Lew Streeter; John Pohodzay; Judith Burke, Secretary;

Town of Ghent: Ted Guterman, Town Attorney; Carl Matuszek, Town Engineer; Larry Andrews, Supervisor; Lisa Hess, Board Member;

Village of Chatham Planning Board: Dan Herrick, Chair; Aaron Gaylord; Stephen Piazza; Leo Ponter; Pete Minihan; Carol Hargis, Secretary;

Village of Chatham: Pat Prendergrast, Town Engineer; Cheryl Roberts, Town Attorney; Tom Curran, Mayor; Lael Locke, Village Trustee; Dave Chapman, Village Trustee; George Grant, Village Trustee

Town of Ghent Planning Board Chairman Jonathan Walters welcomed all in attendance and went over ground rules for how this meeting would be run.

Mike Tucker, Infinigy Engineering

Description of project was given. Complete set of plans will be available at the Tracy Hall in Chatham and the Town Hall in Ghent for anyone who wishes to see them. Wetlands pointed out – front of property are overseen by Army Corps of Engineers; rear are overseen by NYSDEC. Proposed store is 45K square feet. It does not look like a typical development. Rail Trail will cross through the property and existing plaza property. Landscaping and buffering was shown on drawings. Truck circulation shown on drawings. Traffic study has been submitted. There will need to be a north bound left turn lane into site. Store renderings shown – front, rear, Route 66 side, view from historic house across the street. Storm water system discussed.

Steve Duffy, VP Store Planning & Design

45K square foot LEED standard store. Building elevations discussed. Similar design to new store in Lenox, MA. Showed drawings of all four sides of building. Drive-thru pharmacy shown. Treatment plant design shown. Building signs shown. Existing store is 23K square feet. New store is almost twice as big. All areas will be enhanced – bakery, meat, produce, grocery, frozen. Bigger variety of all goods will be offered.

Chuck Chism, Director of Real Estate for Price Chopper

Have been asked why Price Chopper would like to build a new store, not just enlarge the current store. Problems with renovating include: expense, disruptions and the odd shape of the existing building. LEED standards and sustainability are very important to Price Chopper. Because of the configuration of the current building, Price Chopper would have to close down the current store, tear down the existing building, and build a brand new building. Current lease of store is in effect until 2019. Will try very hard to get a new tenant in the old building. Price Chopper believes existing Chatham Plaza tenants will benefit from a new building. More traffic in the area and more business for all stores. Would like a connector driveway between the two properties.

Motion made by Silver, seconded by French to open the public hearing. All approved.

Chair Walters asked how much of the application material is available on line. Price Chopper answered that they will make plans to get all information on the Town of Ghent website.

George Grant – biggest concern is storm water on that property. Asked if the channel at the front of the property will be widened and cleaned out so storm water has a better place to go.

Dan Tuczinski, Hampshire Companies – read aloud a letter he submitted.

Rob Lagonia, Business owner – does not want new building. Doesn't want vacant plaza. Movie Gallery has been empty for four years. Another empty space will affect his business adversely. Lagonia's has volunteered to move his business to the end (old Movie Gallery space), then Price Chopper could expand into his current space. Inconvenience of upgrading the existing store will be tolerated. Showed picture of recent flooding. Showed picture of new Lenox store. Showed photo of vacant Lenox store. Please do full environmental review.

Danielle Palleschi, lives in Village – new building will be in a wetland area. Too many recent floods. Too much blacktop compared to store. Asked where displaced wildlife will go. Lighting issue concerns. Worries her property value will decrease. Eight years left on lease in current building. That space will probably be deserted for a long time. Asked about tax ramifications to Village of Chatham residents.

Barry Herbold, Empire State Appraisal Consultants, on behalf of Hampshire Companies – asked about impacts on existing plaza if a new store is built. Price Chopper has eight years remaining on lease, plus 24 years on options. If Price Chopper controls the store through the length of the lease, it certainly won't

sublet that space to another grocery store. Difficult to rent 23K square feet of space in Chatham and in tough economic times. Spoke of other large vacant spaces in the area – Grand Union in Rhinebeck, Borders on Wolf Road in Albany, Grand Union in Hyde Park. Large spaces tend to become blighted. Currently has 10% vacancy at Chatham Plaza. If Price Chopper leaves, the plaza becomes 60% vacant. Other tenants will suffer greatly. Other tenants may try to negotiate lower lease rates if Price Chopper moves. Reduced property values reduce tax assessment. Higher taxes to all Village residents to make up for lost money.

Lisa Rugen, Village resident – asked if Price Chopper expects to make more money with a bigger store. Asked if Chatham is getting bigger.

John McGowan – lived in Ghent for 26 years and grew up in Chatham. Wants a new Price Chopper. Not enough facings in the current store. Real issues are water, flooding and taxes. Urge all boards to approve new stand alone Price Chopper store. Doesn't understand how moving store will hurt businesses in current plaza.

Doug Clark, Clark Engineering – Has reviewed all applicants' information to date. Site plan review – very specific criteria. Only a couple of minor issues not yet answered. Proposed project meets all requirements so far. SEQRA – supposed to balance need of applicant and environmental impact on property. Part 1 is complete. Urge all to follow along with Parts 2 & 3. Town of Ghent is lead agency. Burden of proof is on applicant. Must provide all studies and requirements. Read from letter submitted. Would ask that a full environmental impact review be completed. Please look at other options – expanding current store is one other option. Price Chopper says new building will be LEED certified. First principal of LEED – don't pave 4.1 acres of new green space.

Judy Grunberg – hasn't made up her mind on this issue yet. Spoke of food co-op renovated an old building. Probably would have been cheaper to tear down and start new. It is possible to take something that already exists and bring it up-to-date and attractive. Has been through SEQRA process herself.

Lenore Packet – lives on Payne Avenue. Half of Payne Avenue is completely flooded whenever it storms. Asked what will happen with all the paving for the new store. Real complete study must be done.

Chair Walters stated that water is an issue that will be studied and addressed.

Kim Canuteson, owns Route 66 Spirits in Plaza – back of new store will face Plaza. Current tenants willing to move to help Price Chopper expand. Thinks some

spaces in current store could be better utilized. Never seen full parking lot at current plaza, not sure more parking spots are needed.

Norm Feinstein, Vice Chair, Hampshire Company – owns Chatham Plaza. Discussion of expanding store has been going on for years. Wanted to expand to left side, which creates turning radius problems. Price Chopper smeared Hampshire Companies in newspaper articles. Neil Golub said they are bad landlords and will not negotiate. Even today Hampshire Companies are willing to negotiate. He does not think they are bad landlords. Price Chopper suggests Hampshire doesn't maintain the building – the lease says tenant is responsible for maintenance on their own site. People will deal with inconvenience if current store is modified. Price Chopper threatened to leave if they can't get a new building.

Lisa Johnson, Village resident – remembers outcry when plaza was originally built. People kept saying it would result in more, more, more, new buildings. Wants to preserve rural characteristics. New banks always appear empty. Asked if we need a supermarket that is twice as big as what we already have. Likes Price Chopper and is a loyal customer. Doesn't think bigger departments are necessary. Asked what could fill the old space. She thinks nothing could.

Jan Gamello, Ghent resident – owned business in Chatham. Liked when original store came in. Price Chopper promised they would never abandon that mall.

Edgar Acevedo, Payne Avenue resident – flooding pictures shown. Banks shown. Fears blame being cast from Village to Town. if Price Chopper made promise to stay, then please keep your promise. Suggests nine month wait is possible good option. Stay put. Don't need more blacktop. We can all work together.

Evan messenger, from Spencertown – asked if Price Chopper would be willing to invest in something the community might need. It would be nice to have a creative arts center, newer library, etc.

Eddie Allen, moved to Chatham from Los Angeles four years ago – likes quaintness of this community. Doesn't want to see new store next to an empty mall.

Riley Hoops, Chatham student – more traffic in Chatham sounds bad.

Sarah Palleshi, Dan Levinworth, Jacob Hoops and Max Lagonia, Chatham students – handed out fliers in front of Lagonias. They were threatened with arrest on numerous occasions. Not a friendly reception.

Paul Calcagno – price Chopper wants to move because of “preferred development.” Schuyler Companies is their preferred developer. Business in plaza is greatly affected by whether or not Price Chopper is there. Price Chopper is very profitable. Weekend population in Chatham greatly increase. May wetlands on new site – probably bought land cheap because of that. Thinks money is main factor in all this.

Kathy Stump, business owner in Chatham – not a big box store town. We don’t want that. Feels being pressured by price Chopper. Anti-bully commercials by Neil and Jane Golub on TV all the time. Don’t bully our town.

Peter Lynch, Esq., Schuyler Companies – under SQERA, this boards obligations are to address certain issues. Didn’t need public hearing but did it so Board can get input and reach a decision. This applicant doesn’t know how these boards will vote. When deciding whether or not to issue negative or positive declarations in SEQRA – discussed objective criteria that this proposed store is clearly below the threshold. Only minor issues with signage and loading dock are zoning issues. Applicant would like to connect to Village water and sewer – that will create money for the Village. The Board has not made determination. Thank them for opening public hearing and listening to you all.

Wendy Carroll – asked what in the Village will be improved by a new store. Everyday food is thrown out – recycling or food pantry are good options instead of putting food in the trash. Not sure people of Chatham want a new store.

George Grant – no sewage agreement in place.

Linda Macaione – asked if the board is determining whether or not to do SEQRA. Asked what is the difference between a positive declaration and a negative declaration.

Chair Walters explained positive declaration and negative declaration.

Bill Parker, *Columbia County Scoop* – asked if everything will be available online.

Chair Walters answered all info will be available on the Town of Ghent website.

Doris Whithoff – very bad water this year. Loves Price Chopper, gets to visit with people when she visits the store. Wish property would be renovated instead of moving to a new building.

Mini Greenspan – received a letter from Neil Golub that said 80% of people are in favor of a new store. Asked who was surveyed.

Steve Katten – asked if Price Chopper could be asked if any of the comments from this meeting has an impact on their decision.

Chair Walters answered that would not be appropriate.

Marcy Gardner, Village resident for 23 years – remembers when broke ground for current plaza. Used to be a farm on that property. Has never set foot in that store. Lots of money taken in every week at Price Chopper. Most jobs there are probably minimum wage. Community is getting smaller. Consider social, economic and agricultural impacts.

Carla Kavanugh – would like to see current store renovated. Sustainability is good – renovation is part of that. Big not always better. Doesn't need 97,000 options of one item. Be creative with existing space.

Audrey Dean – stay in plaza. We dealt with renovation on Main Street. Environmental impact can't sustain a new store.

Howard Resnicouff, Austerlitz resident – if Price Chopper grows in size, we won't eat more. Asked if this will put local businesses out of business.

Judy Grunberg – put Lagonia's on movie end. Make mini market at Lagonia's. Then go renovate and extend existing building.

Cheryl Roberts, Village of Chatham attorney – asked how the Town of Ghent wanted Village declaration.

Chair Walters answered in writing. Main big issue is water. There will be more public hearings held to discuss this issue. Write in with concerns, issues, etc. People can submit written comments to the Town of Ghent Planning Board until September 30.

Motion made by Herrick, seconded by French to close this public hearing, but accept written comments until September 30, 2011. All approved.

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