

Prospect Gardens Written Comments Through 6/15/23

Comment #1

To the Members of the Village of South Blooming Grove Planning Board:

According to the NYS Department of State Division of Local Government Services, a Planning Board is “meant to serve as the foundation for all zoning regulations; a document or culmination of materials that provide an outline for orderly growth; and a land use plan.”

I am focused on “orderly growth.” Orderly growth would imply, by definition of the very words “orderly” and “growth,” that those areas that will grow or expand will do so in a fashion that aligns with a plan for a village that serves ALL its residents well.

Under Tips for completing Part 2 of the Full Environment Assessment Form there are twelve bulleted guidelines to assist the lead agency in providing complete and accurate information regarding critical components of the proposed plan. As I review your answers to these questions, I see no less than thirteen sections with questionable or vague responses and no additional information in the sections designated as “other.” Assuming there was adherence to such tips, I question why it was not deemed integral to the process that a more comprehensive, thoughtful response be provided.

In the interest of brevity, please direct your attention to Section 18 of the EAF Part2. I have inserted a link from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Workbook Section for illustrative purposes but prudent practice would assume this workbook was utilized and consulted for a full understanding of items for consideration before responses were provided. <https://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/91813.html> Section 18 asks for a response to the following statement:

The proposed project is inconsistent with the existing community character and the response was “YES.” In item “e,” we read The proposed action is inconsistent with the predominant architectural scale and character and the box checked is “No, or small impact may occur.” This is a gross and egregious misrepresentation.

In the NYS-DEC workbook referenced above, guidance to formulating an accurate response reads:

Predominant architectural scale and character need to be defined locally: they are determined through understanding the size, height, dimensions, and intensity of uses as they already exist in the neighborhood or community.

Actions inconsistent with the predominant architectural scale and character of the area could include those that results in a structure or landscape that is in sharp contrast to that which currently exists. A new structure(s) that is larger, taller, or of different architectural style, could be inconsistent with the existing character. Changes in color scheme, window and door configuration, roof style, setback from the street, or style of signs and accessory structures can all result in adverse impacts to community character. Streets that are widened, intersections that are changed, streets where trees have been removed, and placement of parking lots are other actions that can change community character. Introduction of noises, lighting and traffic are others.

This is precisely what has taken place or is proposed to take place on Prospect Road Let me highlight the obvious affronts

- 1) A new structure(s) that is larger, taller, or of different architectural style*
- 2) Setback from the street*
- 3) Style of signs and accessory structures*

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- 4) Streets that are widened
- 5) Streets where trees have been removed
- 6) Placement of parking lots
- 7) Introduction of noises, lighting and traffic

None of this is my area of professional expertise but if it is yours, how could a response of "No or small impact" have even been considered? The Orange County Department of Planning has issued a reply to you, stating:

"This development proposes a minimum of two dwelling units per acre on a road with very low density, which will put the new development at odds with the existing residential development along Prospect Road. The impacts on community character must be thoroughly assessed and mitigated to the fullest extent possible."

This reply does not even address the 3 story school with 20,000 sq ft on each floor, 35 parking spaces for cars and 17 parking spaces for buses or the temporary trailers you will use until the new building is ready.

You are responsible to the residents of Prospect Road, who have built their lives in a bucolic, peaceful setting to revise if not discard your plans. Decades of investment in a lifestyle they chose is being upended by a flagrant disregard for their needs.

I look forward to a thoughtful response that includes utilizing the guidelines in place which go far beyond what is exhibited in the preparation of your EAF Part 2.

Sincerely,
Valerie Robinson

Comment #2

To the Village of South Blooming Grove Planning Board,

I have several comments on the revised Plat for this project that I hope you will take into consideration during your review.

Road Widening

This plan proposes to widen Prospect Rd in between the two entrances/exits of the site. The widening would require paving over an existing drainage ditch and removing a line of mature trees. I encourage the Planning Board to look at alternatives to widening the road. The existing tree line significantly screens the property from the road, providing privacy for both the project site, and for neighboring homeowners. Removing this line of trees to widen the road will eliminate this privacy barrier that both the applicant and neighbors will benefit from. Additionally, paving over the existing drainage ditch may negatively influence drainage in the area and make maintenance of the drainage more difficult.

Sidewalk

This plan proposes a sidewalk in between the two entrances/exits of the site. Given the low volume of traffic on Prospect Rd and the set back of the school from the road, I do not see any need for a concrete sidewalk. Addition of a sidewalk will be a cost to the

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applicant, will add impermeable surfaces to the project site, and will reduce the area for screening vegetation and trees.

Impermeable Surfaces

Between the school and surrounding parking lot, this plan significantly increases impermeable surfaces on the proposed site over what is pre-existing. This property is near the top of a hill and water that flows off this property will flow down Prospect Rd, all the way to Satterly Creek. Impermeable surfaces increase the speed of runoff and will exacerbate already bad flood conditions below the project site. I strongly encourage the Planning Board to reduce impermeable surfaces in the parking areas, either by using unpaved surfaces or by using permeable pavement.

Lighting

Low light pollution and dark skies are defining features of Prospect Rd. In developing a lighting plan for this school, I encourage the Planning Board to strictly limit lighting after dark. This includes ensuring that there are no flood lights, that there are minimal parking lot lights, that any planned parking lot lights project light directly down to minimize light pollution, and that lights in the school (which is projected to have large windows), are put on a timer or motion sensors so that they will turn off at night or once students are no longer in the building. Overall, making these modifications to the lighting plan will be a win-win for both the applicant, who will save money on electric costs, and for the community, who will continue to benefit from low light pollution.

Sewage

This project currently proposes using a Eljen sewage system, which would be located in the front of the school. To the best of my knowledge this is not a common sewage system in the Village. In order to better provide public comment on this, I would ask if the engineer can provide more detail on what this will look like and how it operates. I would anticipate that both students of the school and neighbors of the property would want to ensure that the sewage system is not visible and that it does not give off unpleasant odors.

Regards,

*Ryne Kitzrow
120 Round Hill Rd, Washingtonville, NY 10992*

Comment #3

To the Village of South Blooming Grove Planning Board,

In reviewing the EAF Part 2 and the maps of the project, I found a couple of things that I have questions about.

Starting with the lot layout map, I see 5 large buildings labeled as proposed multifamily residence buildings. I was under the impression that there were to be 4. Is that other large building a community center? If so, why is it not labeled as such? Or will there indeed be 5 multifamily units?

Also, in comparing the lot layout map with the site analysis map, it appears that approximately 3 or 4 of the single-family houses are placed within a conservation area labeled "scenic viewshed, significant biological overlay." I believe these houses should be removed from the plan and that area left as it is.

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In reviewing the EAF Part 2, I see that in section 1e, the box for "moderate to large impact" has been checked. Regarding multiple phases, are all phases for the completed project included in this review or will there be more than the 51 two-family houses, 4 multifamily buildings and 2 community centers? If so, they must be included in this review.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

*Allison McBee
Blooming Grove*