

OBSERVER

Sheridan in running for cold storage facility project

May 2, 2017

Dunkirk's loss appears to be the town of Sheridan's gain.

A month ago, a majority of the Dunkirk Zoning Board of Appeals approved a use variance for a cold storage facility to be built on a residentially zoned property between Central Avenue, Fairview Avenue and Main Street Extension. Neighbors on Fairview Avenue voiced their displeasure with the idea of a commercial neighbor despite measures to remediate noise, traffic, lighting and safety measures.

Not satisfied with the ZBA's ruling, 35 residents on Fairview Avenue and Green Street filed an Article 78 lawsuit to see the decision weighed in court.

That lawsuit set off a chain reaction with the developer, which ended with him pulling the project from the city location.

"I didn't know about (the lawsuit until) we were served with papers Friday. I had heard rumors that it was coming, but I hadn't heard officially. They appealed it and the developer, (Patrick Gorbett), said that he just didn't know what the outcome would be or how long they would be tied up in litigation and he has a timeline that he was trying to keep, so he thought it would be better if he took it to another location outside the city," Dunkirk Mayor Willie Rosas told the OBSERVER.

However, the \$15 million development won't be going far, according to Chautauqua County Industrial Development Agency Director Kevin Sanvidge.

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He called the OBSERVER Monday to say the Great Lakes Cold Storage facility will likely be located in the Chadwick Bay Industrial Park. Sanvidge added the matter will be discussed at today's IDA board meeting at 10 a.m. in the SUNY Fredonia

Incubator with details expected to be finalized by the end of the week.

Rosas, however, remains disappointed by the news it will be outside of the city.

“I am extremely disappointed in this outcome. Bringing businesses and jobs into the city is job one for me, and my development team has worked tirelessly and given everything they had to this project; I am extremely proud of them.” Rosas said. *“... This appeal process has unfortunately stopped needed economic growth for our area and has held up opportunities for up to 50 new jobs in the city as well as impacting the probability of future expansion of one of our major industries.”*

Rosas went on to say, *“Mr. Gorbett met every demand I put before him to include ensuring aesthetically manicured landscaping and a berm bordering the yards of the Fairview residents. There would be no outside generators, an ammonia system would be in place to prevent exposure to the area residents. There would be a playground for the areas children, and jobs for their parents.”*

In a letter to the editor appearing on A4 today, Gorbett also commended Rosas and his staff, saying they were a determining factor in choosing a location.

However, residents’ attitudes were the reason for the project’s move.

“As an outsider to your community, you can dismiss my advice, if you wish, but I hope, for your city’s sake that you will think about it. New jobs and new tax revenue will require use of vacant land, new construction and change to the ‘same old thing.’ Doing the same thing can only lead to further decline in everything, except the taxes,” he said.

Like they say in real estate, the most important thing is location, location, location.

Many residents pointed to the Edgewood warehouse property on South Roberts Road as an ideal location, but the developer’s need for a swift timeline required a shovel-ready site.

“This is a perfect example of what could have happened and what did happen. If that site was shovel ready, we would have had this development there and there wouldn’t have been a lawsuit. But, because it’s not shovel ready, we lost out on a good opportunity

to bring in jobs and a good \$15 million project here,” Rosas said.

“I’ve been in talks with the county executive as well as the IDA and we’re going to be meeting in the very near future to discuss these issues and how we can move forward to get it cleaned up and shovel ready. I think it’s important that we make that a priority because we’re expecting some development here in the near future with Athenex coming and we want to have as many sites in the city shovel ready and as ready to go as possible.”

The city continues to make brownfields like the Lucas Avenue ALTech Steel plant shovel ready, but the Edgewood warehouse is under the county’s jurisdiction.

Rosas added he does not blame residents for this turn of events and he and his team will work toward bringing a development to that property that the neighbors can agree with.

“There’s no hard feelings on my part; I don’t blame the residents. I understand their concerns and I’m just disappointed because as mayor of the city we lost out on this opportunity to have this development in our city. My focus as mayor is to bring more jobs. We were just told next month we’re going to lose 24 jobs from JCPenney and this would have made up for some of those jobs. It is a disappointment on my behalf, but I don’t hold any grudges or animosities toward the neighbors there. I respect their opinion and we’ll move forward and try to get some development in that site that they will be in agreement with.

“The city is in a state of affairs where we actually need the jobs here, that we need the development to give a boost to our economy. Our planning and development department has been working very hard to try to bring these types of developments here and this project is one of them they worked very hard on and to come up empty handed is very disappointing.

“We’re missing out on the tax (revenue), but I also think that would have spawned even more expansion because I anticipate that this developer is going to be expanding. I don’t think it will stop there, I think he’s going to expand further,” he said.

In addition to his team working with Gorbett, Rosas thanked Gov. Andrew Cuomo, U.S. Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, Congressman Tom Reed, State Senator Cathy Young, Assemblyman Andy Goodell and County Executive Vince Horrigan for their support.

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