

Dear Supervisor Gerrard and Members of the Town Board:

We have been following both the Town Board's discussions as well as the discussions and published opinions from within the community regarding Summit Greenfield's proposal for development of the Reader's Digest campus and are becoming concerned with the increasing focus of those discussions on the impact that the proposed development would have on the Chappaqua Central School District (CCSD). While we expect that the evaluation of any residential development proposal would include a review of the impact on the local schools, we doubt that a development in the West End which had the potential to increase the number of children in the Ossining UFSD (which is already dealing with the effects of increased enrollment, spending over \$500,000 reorganizing its elementary schools over the Summer to avoid overcrowding issues in September) or development elsewhere in the Town that would increase the number of students attending any of the other school districts that serve the Town, would receive this kind of intense scrutiny. We respectfully submit that the primary focus of the review of Summit Greenfield's DEIS and any negotiations regarding zoning changes should be the impact on the Town of New Castle, not the potential number of additional students who may enter the CCSD.

We are also concerned about the Town's consultant's proposal for recreational uses of a portion of the campus. It seems that the primary motivation for building additional playing fields, directly across the street from Horace Greeley High School, is to improve the facilities available to the CCSD's sports teams. The reports we have read of the consultant's traffic studies refer to the use of the fields for "after-school sports" leading us to believe that any fields built on the Reader's Digest campus would be used most frequently by the CCSD, not by programs of the Town's recreation department. Even more worrisome than the discussions regarding playing fields is the suggestion that a pool be built on the property. There are more than half a dozen private summer clubs in and around the Town, as well as several year round gyms and clubs, all with swimming facilities. We do not believe there is any need for a Town owned and operated indoor swimming pool. We are certain that the only constituency for a pool is the CCSD and their varsity swimming teams. If the CCSD felt that it was important for their swimming program to have a local pool, they could have easily built one on the Seven Bridges School campus. The Town should not be providing the CCSD with a facility that the District specifically excluded from its building plans just a few years ago.

Regardless of what decision is made regarding potential Town use of a portion of the Reader's Digest campus, one thing is quite clear to us. There should not be any development on the campus that is paid for by the Town. Any land that is acquired for Town use and any development of recreational facilities on that land should be paid for by the developer. It is quite common for developers to offer (or be required) to provide public amenities in concert with the requisite rezoning and approval of a development project. Locally, we can see evidence of this at the intersection of Route 9A and Chappaqua Road, where McCrum field was built for the Briarcliff Little League by the developer of a new subdivision at that location. We would further suggest that public amenities provided by Summit Greenfield do not necessarily have to be located on the

Reader's Digest campus itself. Building additional playing fields, regardless of their location in the Town, is of little benefit to residents of the West End. Our children do not participate in the youth sports leagues that are either sponsored by the Town's recreation department or that play in Town parks. They play in the leagues in Ossining, with their classmates. Even though there are new soccer fields on the Amsterdam property in the West End, our children will never use them as the facility is not available for use by the Ossining AYSO. An example of a public amenity located in the West End that would benefit the entire Town would be the acquisition of the property at the corner of Station and Millwood Roads. A public park and parking lot at that location would be used by residents from throughout the Town who make use of the North County Trailway. The old Millwood train station building could be renovated to provide restroom facilities for those who use the Trailway and also to accommodate a seasonal food service establishment. We hope that you will keep these suggestions in mind as you negotiate with Summit Greenfield regarding their application for a rezoning of the Reader's Digest campus.

WENT believes that it is critically important for the Town to not only keep the Reader's Digest campus on the tax roles, but to also work with the developer to maintain, if not increase, the amount of tax revenue received by the Town in property taxes. Continuing the restrictions on the number of tenants allowed, while engaging in protracted reviews of the Chappaqua Crossing proposal and/or the eventual rejection of any residential development on the campus only serve to decrease the value of the property and will surely result in a reduced assessment and reduction in the amount of taxes paid by Summit Greenfield. While those who live in the immediate vicinity of the campus and others in the CCSD may view this as a victory, it would be a huge failure for the Town.

WENT agrees with many of the points raised in former Supervisor Tulis' July 10th letter to the Board (published on NewCastleNOW.org). Most importantly, we believe that no residential development be allowed with a condominium or cooperative form of ownership. As residents of the West End are well aware, the current system of assessing and taxing condos and coops mandates property taxes that are much less than those on comparable single family homes. We urge you to require that any residential development on the Reader's Digest campus be owned fee-simple. If this is not possible, we believe that the Town should delay approval of any development proposals until after the completion of the proposed Town wide reassessment, coupled with a homestead election that would treat all residential property in the Town equally, assessing at full market value and with a single tax rate regardless of the form of ownership.

Chappaqua Crossing is clearly the largest development proposal that the Town has seen in recent history and based on how little undeveloped land remains in Town, it is unlikely to be surpassed. We believe that some type of residential development on the Reader's Digest campus is inevitable. It is our hope that the desire to minimize the impact on one segment of the Town does not stand in the way of maximizing the potential benefits to the entire Town.

Sincerely,

Robert Herbin, for West End Neighborhood Taxpayers

July 17, 2009