

OYCC REDEVELOPMENT PLAN TESTIMONY

My name is Noreen Cardinali. I live at 28 Windingbrook Road in Bordentown Township, New Jersey, which is within the Clifton Mill development and less than a quarter of a mile from the closed Old York Country Club (OYCC) in Chesterfield. I am a Board member of the Clifton Mill HOA. I was an employee of the NJ Department of Transportation for 37 years. I would like to offer my observations on the Redevelopment Plan proposed for this property by CME Associates of Camden, NJ dated September, 2022.

I understand the demand for warehouses is a key component of the e-commerce surge of the past ten years. I do not agree that the segment of CR 660 (Old York Road) between CR 545 (Georgetown Road) and NJ 206 is an ideal corridor for those warehouses. This property is on a country two-lane roadway that serves as a back-up evacuation route for residents of Chesterfield, Bordentown, Wrightstown, and New Hanover, as well as the Joint Base McGuire Dix Lakehurst personnel, when segments of CR 545 and CR 528 are closed for repairs.

If the development of the Rehabilitation Area with a warehouse facility is “not inconsistent with the goals and objectives of the Master Plan”, why were some properties along this section of roadway designated years ago in the State’s Farmland Preservation Program and TDR (e.g., the 93 acres known as the Collier Estate and the 70 acres known as Old York Stables)? This short segment of CR 660 already has two major preserved farms on it, regardless of whether they are actively farmed or not. Surely you can see that a warehouse immediately adjacent to preserved farmland will increase vehicular traffic and increase noise, not to mention causing the market value of homes and farms along CR 660 to decrease. The Rehabilitation Area is within close proximity to more than 1,100 residents and hundreds of school-age children of Bordentown and Chesterfield.

The plan states that this location is appropriate for warehouse development because it is accessible to the NJ Turnpike and Interstate 295 via NJ Route 206. This property is on a county road (CR 660) and it does not have immediate access to either of these two state highways. CR 660 is a collector/distributor road that allows access to residential properties, has low to moderate lane capacity, and has a generally lower speed limit than arterials. These characteristics make this road less desirable for heavy truck traffic.

To conclude that a warehouse on OYCC property is not inconsistent with the township’s goals, our regional goals, the county’s goals, and the State’s goals is ridiculous. If none of the properties on this segment of roadway were designated as preserved farmland, I would agree with the township planner’s conclusions that there are no inconsistencies with the Master Plan, but that is clearly untrue. The plan states that the redevelopment activities will “not adversely affect the transportation objectives of the 2017 Burlington County Highway Master Plan, encroach upon designated Farmland Preservation Areas of the 2009-2018 Burlington County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan, or interfere with planned parks and trails projects envisioned in the 2014 Burlington County Open Space Master Plan.” How can a redevelopment project located across the street and next door to two other designated preserved farmland properties, not encroach upon the County’s Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan? How can the sensitive environmental features of the property be protected when, by your actions today, the agriculturally zoned property will not keep its agricultural designation and is not currently protected by the State? The plan tries to justify the re-zoning on the basis that a golf course is not a farm and is not actively farmed right now, but isn’t the purpose of the agricultural designation to protect open space, as well as farmland? Furthermore, by changing the zoning, your community loses the potential for the property to be either farmland or a golf course ever again. Is it the intention of the developer and this Committee that all of the properties in this segment of CR 660 be designated as REO, instead of agricultural? This property was clearly zoned agricultural for good reason. That was, this section of CR 660 was never intended to be an industrial park.

The plan claims that the Rehabilitation Area is “similarly compatible with the existing industrial uses located along Rising Sun Road in the Township of Bordentown and at the intersection of Bordentown-Georgetown Road (CR 545) and Old York Road (CR 660). How can this statement be relevant when Rising Sun Road is more than a mile away from the OYCC?

“Bordentown’s REO zone is located directly across Old York Road from the Rehabilitation Center.” How can this statement be true when directly across from OYCC is a state-preserved horse farm in Bordentown Township, not the REO-zoned Matrix warehouse that is stated in the RP ?

Your Township Planner did not cite the errors in the Redevelopment Plan in his statement to the Chesterfield Township Planning Board or insist on revisions being made, prior to its consideration by the Planning Board, and instead supported the RP by saying that it was not inconsistent with your Master Plan.

In the course of developing this document, was the County Chief Engineer and the County Planner thoroughly consulted on this Redevelopment Plan and advised of the truck restrictions which are intended to be imposed by the developer and the township, if approved? To our knowledge, the proposed access restrictions have not been approved by Burlington County, so truck access restrictions might violate federal interstate commerce law and result in a lawsuit against the county and the township by the NJ Motor Truck Association. The Traffic Impact Study relies on 2020/2021 traffic counts. Can we all agree that these counts might be misleadingly low when taken during the Covid-19 lockdown ? Where is the township planner’s criticism of that statement ?

The intersection of CR 660 and NJ 206 operates at an F level of service now. The proposed acceleration lane mentioned in the RP for the right turn movement from CR 660 onto NJ 206 north is not likely to be a feasible remedy, because there is another warehouse going in right on NJ 206 where the acceleration lane in the RP is proposed.

Was the State Planning Commission consulted on the OYCC Redevelopment Plan ? Your township planner never mentioned the inconsistencies between the RP and the SPC’s Warehouse Siting Guidance last month. As an FYI, page 15 of the SPC warehouse siting guidance mentions that warehouses, especially large ones, should not be permitted outside of the State Approved Sewer Service Areas. How can farmland be protected when the redevelopment plan calls for a sewage plant to be installed?

The net impact of adding impervious surfaces to the property will be disruptive to local wildlife, disruptive to the ecosystem, and create or exacerbate the property’s stormwater drainage challenges. In June of 2019, the owner (Three Putt) of Old York Country Club (OYCC) had to close the front nine holes of golf due to “severe flooding”. The owners’ letter to its members in 2019 stated that the course had 16.5 inches of rain within 7 weeks (that’s 2.3 inches of rain per week). With four straight days of no wind and no sunshine, Black’s Creek overflowed its banks for nearly 48 hours and flooded parts of Holes #3 thru #9. The aftermath of this event was silt/mud covered fairways from the lower 3 fairway to the lower 9 fairway. Does this property sound like an ideal location for adding impervious surface and for moving a historical structure to a lower elevation ?

What government agency will be overseeing the “reasonable efforts” to relocate the historic masonry building known as the ‘1740 Black House’ within the Rehabilitation Area ? The State Historical Preservation Office ? Have they been consulted on the ‘Black House’ relocation plans ? Why is it proposed to be relocated between the two egress driveways to Old York Road? Isn’t that an area which is prone to flooding and shouldn’t we all be concerned that the truck noise, vibrations, and fuel pollution might negatively impact the building’s structural integrity ? Does Black’s Creek need to be dredged and cleaned to accommodate the new location of this historic building ?

And no one should take lightly the nightmare that construction of these facilities cause. The equipment, supplies, and building materials will be brought in from all directions. And, even if the disruption is temporary, it will likely be worse than what the nearby residents expect. For example, in addition to loud noise, the residents of Clifton Mill are constantly complaining to the Bordentown Township administration about the lack of landscape maintenance at the Matrix warehouse at CR 660 and CR 545. Further, the Matrix warehouse has posed no known economic advantage to the residents of Bordentown Township and it was completed more than three years ago. The residents of Bordentown Township could not stop the approval of the Matrix warehouse because it was an allowable use under its outdated zoning code. Don’t make the same mistake here.

If you approve this plan, you will be creating an industrial zone in this section of CR 660 and putting the development rights owned by the State of New Jersey and the preserved farmland owned by Chesterfield and Bordentown

residents, in serious jeopardy. Warehousing belongs on state highways and at interstate interchanges where truck traffic is commonplace and expected.

What steps have you taken to measure the Chesterfield residents' wishes about this segment of the CR 660 corridor ?

In August, 2022, the Branchburg Township Committee voted unanimously to place a non-binding referendum on its general election ballot about whether Branchburg should spend \$25 million to stop warehouse development on the NJ Route 22-28 corridor in its North Branch section. Under the proposal, the township would purchase property in the corridor at an estimated cost of \$25 million to block development of warehouse facilities or other construction "that would negatively affect the community" according to the ballot question resolution. The township would keep the property until it is sold and "repurposed". The \$25 million appropriation would raise property taxes on the average home assessed at \$500,000 by \$221 a year until the property is sold. The township did extensive polling about 18 months ago and found that residents opposed the proposed warehouses in their community by a 9 to 1 margin. In 2020, the Branchburg Township Committee adopted zoning that prohibited warehousing as a permitted use in its industrial zones. If Chesterfield is buffered right now with its current agricultural zone designation, there is time for this Committee to measure what this community envisions for this property and its surrounding area.

Furthermore, there is a current trend whereby, Amazon and other e-commerce retailers are downsizing their warehousing operations. **What will happen to the Chesterfield and Bordentown real estate market when these warehouses become ghost towns like the shopping malls of the past 20 or more years ? Who will want to live near them then or now ?**

The State legislature in 2021 introduced legislation (S 3688), sponsored by Senator Troy Singleton, which if passed, would require towns facing warehouse applications to tell adjoining municipalities about the plans and seek their approval. Disputes between towns would be decided by County Planning Boards and appeals decided by the State Planning Commission. Senator Ronald Rice (D) Newark stood in the way of this bill advancing in 2021. But, Senator Singleton persists.

In September 2022, Assemblyman Alex Sauickie (R) of District 12 (Burlington, Middlesex, Monmouth, and Ocean Counties) introduced A 4527 which is a proposed bond legislation to allow the State (NJDEP) to borrow a total principal amount of \$150 million for distribution to qualified municipalities as matching grants to purchase the development rights at a proposed warehouse site. The landowner of the site would be paid a one-time fee in exchange for adding an easement to the title of the property. The easement would permanently restrict the development of the property, preventing the construction of the warehouse. The landowner would retain all other rights and responsibilities associated with the property, including the ability to sell the property. The grant program would be voluntary and open to every municipality in New Jersey. The purpose of the legislation is to help municipalities that are faced with a "Hobson's choice" between the development of warehouses, which may negatively impact the character of the community, as well as affecting farming areas, open space, recreational areas, and areas of historic and cultural significance within the municipality, and the choice of adding more housing, which results in a higher demand for schools and other government services, without an equivalent increase in property taxes. **We need this kind of state legislation to support municipal decisions and stop warehouse sprawl.**

This concludes my observations and contribution to your dialogue. Thank you for your time.