

DATE: December 23, 2015
TO: Rick Ramsdell, Chairman, Planning Board, Village of Chester, NY
FROM: Gordon Shehab, Resident and ZBA Member, Village of Chester, NY
SUBJECT: Elmwood Park Apartments

I am submitting these comments regarding the proposed Elmwood Park Apartments. Having attended the Public Hearings on the proposed development, it is clear that the immediate residents of the area do not want the development as proposed. In fact, other than the developer, it does not appear that any residents of the Village of Chester want this development.

The proposed Elmwood Park Apartments have raised concerns over increasing traffic congestion as well as living conditions for the surrounding residents, snow removal, etc. One of the long-time residents living near the project told me at the Public Hearing that she is selling her house because of this project. Developers should not be driving residents out of the Village of Chester.

Article 98-24 of Chapter 98 of the Village Zoning Code states,

“The Planning Board shall take into consideration the public health, safety, and general welfare, the comfort and convenience...of the residents of the immediate neighborhood in particular.”

Section E(1) of Article 98-24 states,

“The location and size of such use, the nature and intensity of operations involved,...its site layout and its relation to access streets shall be such that both pedestrian and vehicular traffic to and from the use ...will not be hazardous or inconvenient to or incongruous with the said residential district or conflict with the normal traffic of the neighborhood.”

Section E(2) of Article 98-24 states,

“...the use will not hinder or discourage the appropriate development and use of adjacent land and buildings or impair the value thereof.”

Having a 30 foot wide road slicing through residential homes to a 20-apartment development will create vehicular hazards, will be incongruous with the homes in the immediate area, and will impair the value of surrounding homes. This is clearly contrary to the language and intent of Article 98-24.

The developer for Elmwood Park Apartments is Mr. Sorrentino who was also the original developer of the Meadow Hill development. Once Mr. Sorrentino obtained the approval to build Meadow Hill, he “flipped” it to another developer who has already committed violations while it’s being built. In addition, my home is right next to the Meadow Hill development, and even though my house is several hundred feet from the buildings, my house was subject to vibrations and shaking from the construction equipment for hours a day for weeks. The residents adjacent to the proposed Elmwood Park development are much closer to where the construction will be, and I can only imagine the potential damage their homes may incur when the construction begins.

At the Public Hearing, a Planning Board member expressed concerns over snow removal. Since the majority of the property will be impervious surface, there will be little, if any, area for snow to be piled. The engineer for the project said it will have to be removed by truck. If we get another winter like last winter in which we had snowstorms almost every other day, a logistical problem will be raised regarding timely snow removal.

While I sympathize with the fact that the developer purchased this land, he did so knowing the potential risks and problems he would encounter. It is not up to the Village of Chester to ensure that a developer makes a profit on their land especially at the expense of the existing residents. Residences in the Village of Chester are predominately single family homes, but this balance is rapidly changing with the potential BT Holdings development, potential Mountco development, as well as the Meadow Hill development, and Whispering Hills. The residents of the Village of Chester are trying to maintain their way of life without the encroachment of high-density developers whose only goal is to maximize profits at the expense of the living conditions of the residents. While Elmwood Park Apartments represent one development, its impact must be considered in conjunction with other existing and proposed high-density developments. The Village of Chester has to say enough is enough and stop over-development otherwise the Village of Chester will become a congested area with the attendant increases in public services, crime, traffic, etc.

I therefore urge the Planning Board to reject the site plan for 20 apartments, and instead consider only allowing single-family homes with a normal-sized driveway access to the street. This will keep the development in conformity with the surrounding neighborhood, will require less impervious surface, and not be a detriment to surrounding home values.