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Monroe Mayor Calls for Zoning Board to Reject Proposed SPII-LLC Housing Development on Route 33

Mayor Tamburro Says Environmentally-Sensitive Area Can't Be Home to 206 Apartments and Retail

MONROE TOWNSHIP – March 19, 2019 – The Monroe Township Zoning Board is expected to hear an amended application on Tuesday, March 26 that would bring 206 new housing units and retail to an environmentally-sensitive area of Monroe, at the Millstone River.

Mayor Gerald Tamburro said the area is home to a bald eagle's nest perched near the Millstone River. Under state and federal law, it can be illegal to construct buildings within 660 feet of the nest.

The proposed developer of the 48-acre parcel, which sits on Route 33 between Applegarth Road and the East Windsor border, informed the Township in 2018 that the bald eagle nests on the property. Under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, it is unlawful to harm eagles, their nests, or eggs.

Since the discovery of the nest, the developer, SPII-LLC. reconfigured the development plan, increasing the project density to the frontage of the highway to maintain the same number of housing units in the updated proposal.

"I've not been pleased with this proposal since its inception; it is yet another way in which developers use state affordable housing mandates to force more development into towns," said Tamburro, noting the proposal would include 42 court-mandated affordable units. "And now, the developer is still trying to squeeze as much development as possible onto this site, even with a bald eagle nesting ground. To me, this is absolutely unacceptable."

To comply with the 660-foot buffer, the developer now has less land on which to build. In response, the original plans, which called for mostly townhouses, has been replaced with four-story apartment buildings -- with the amount of commercial space being slashed to make room for the concentrated housing.

“The developer could have easily reduced the amount of housing units to lower the density and create an appropriate buffer to protect the bald eagle,” the mayor said. “But, instead, the plan calls for building rental apartments, some of which will be on top of reduced retail space right on Route 33. It will be unsightly, unnecessary and not in the best interest for Monroe.”

The proposed site, at 1099 Route 33 west, is now mostly a farm.

Monroe residents are encouraged to attend the Zoning Board meeting at 7 p.m. next Tuesday (March 26) at the municipal building.

“As the zoning board votes, eaglets are beginning to hatch on the Millstone River,” Tamburro said. “Our community needs to stand up in full force against the SPII-LLC housing project. I am proud to lead the charge.”

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