

We need economic development not extremism masquerading as activism

To the Editor:

We now live in a society where those in the "cancel culture" want to bend the will of the majority to their beliefs and point of view. These groups are small, but often fanatical and they make their points by yelling and threatening.

Case in point is the proposed development of a Costco and apartments off of Western Avenue and Rapp Road. While we should politely and passionately debate the pros and cons of this proposed development, and all-important issue in our town, we must do so respectfully.

Everyone in town was given the opportunity to share their opinions, thoughts, and con-

cerns on this project through the transparent process laid out by town officials. In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic slowed down this process by several months. Hundreds of people took time to make sure their voices were heard.

The overwhelming majority support this project that will bring countless jobs and prosperity to the region. Those who oppose the project used a form letter and encouraged people from throughout New York State and across the country to speak out in an attempt to make their cause seem larger than it truly is.

After all of this time and input, the town planning board voted unanimously to approve

the environmental impact study, the first approval needed for this project. Those few, yet desperate opponents yelled and screamed and even threatened members of the board after the vote. So much so that Guilderland Police were called in to escort board members out of the building at the end of the meeting.

These shameful actions have no place in civil society and only diminish the voice and character of those who take part in them. We need economic development at this time and not an overabundance of extremism masquerading as activism.

**Adam DiPietro
Guilderland**

Why were planning board members escorted by armed police?

To the Editor:

Wednesday night, the Guilderland Planning Board in a unanimous decision that took about seven minutes, accepted the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Rapp Road Apartments/Redevelopment proposal in the Pine Bush as complete, leading the way to approve the project.

This was a surprise meeting with only one item on the agenda and no public comment accepted. All meetings of the planning board (except this one) have been on the website calendar since January. This meeting suddenly appeared last week, scheduled on a day that the planning board does not usually meet.

Clearly, the planning board was in a hurry to do the bidding of Pyramid/Crossgates and could not wait two weeks for the next regularly scheduled meeting to vote on this decision.

Save the Pine Bush and Guilderland Coalition for Responsible Growth members could not let this meeting go without making our opposition to the proposed development known. In this

time of pandemic, it is not safe to attend meetings, and we knew this was to be a virtual meeting.

We organized a socially distant, mask-wearing protest outside Guilderland Town Hall. About 15 people attended. We held signs expressing our opposition.

We greeted the Planning Board members with chants of "Only you can save the Pine Bush." We stayed socially distant from the members, and were very careful not to block the front door. No one went near the front door, because we were not going to enter the building.

We waited outside while the planning board held their meeting and voted. We wanted to greet them with our signs as they left. But, guess what? The planning board, instead of exiting from the front door, had the police escort them out of the side door! Armed police! Escorted by the police!

I cannot imagine that a dozen or so mask-wearing, socially-distanced, sign-carrying citizens could possibly be seen as any kind of threat that needed the

police. Especially since we were very careful to stay away from the members and not even come near them or in any way block their movements. Why were they afraid?

The only conclusion I can come to is that the planning board members needed the police to protect them from their shame. They are ashamed at what they are doing — allowing a huge corporation to destroy more Pine Bush for apartments and a Costco.

The Town of Guilderland Planning Board should do its part to protect the Pine Bush within its jurisdiction. The Pine Bush is considered by many to be the best example of an inland pine barrens in the world. The town of Guilderland should do its part to protect this rare and beautiful ecosystem.

The Pine Bush needs protection from the Guilderland Planning Board. The planning board members do not need armed police protection from the citizens.

**Lynne Jackson
Save the Pine Bush**