

Residents Attack Seacroft Plan

CUTCHOGUE — Some sat on chairs designed for five-year-olds, others sat on the stage, while many stood to vent their anger and concern over the Seacroft Condominium Project that they claim threatens the sleepily, bucolic lifestyle of the Hamlet of Cutchogue. Approximately 140 people packed themselves into the auditorium of the West Cutchogue School on Depot Lane to find out how to stop the project.

Some residents of the area are concerned that the 160-unit condominium project on 47 acres would tax the area's water supply, and also create a greater amount of traffic coming into the hamlet changing the quality of life. Although the town board approved a zone change from residential to multiple housing clearing the way for the project to go ahead last July 19, Nancy Sawastynowicz, chairwoman of the group calling itself Southholders Opposed to Seacroft, said the request of an addition of a possible shopping center and a decrease in the minimum age for the retirement community from 55 to 45 to 50 years of age have "alarmed" residents. She had attempted a year ago to submit petitions with 900 residents opposed to the project, and speak to the town board, but was told no further evidence could be considered because the public hearing was closed.

Attorney for the group, Robert Pike, told the audience that while the original zone change decision could not be overturned, due to the amount of time that passed, he did say the group was going to ask the planning board to require an environmental impact statement to be filed.

Pick said that the value of an EIS is, that it requires the developer to come up with alternate ways of developing the site. He said that if the planning board did not require an EIS the group would petition the town board to re-zone the property back to what it was or "something better."

Pike also said that the group was putting the town board and planning board on notice that the project goes against the recommendations of the current master plan. He also said that the

petition with 900 names that was submitted a year ago and sent back to Sawastynowicz would be resubmitted to the town board.

One of the many Cutchogue residents that spoke out against the project was John Wickham, who was formerly the town's planning board chairman for 24 years. He said, "160 units in the little village of Cutchogue would do irreparable damage to the village of Cutchogue." He pointed out that the Suffolk County Planning Board contends that one acre is needed to supply enough ground water for one family; and the town board has recently had

the foresight to see that 2 acres is needed to supply water for one family. He added that since this decision goes against the town's two acre zoning, and the fact that no EIS is required leaves the action by the town board, "subject to challenge."

Pat Dorman, of Cutchogue, one of approximately three who spoke in favor of the project, pointed out that since it was a retirement community, where no children under the age of 19 would be allowed to reside, it would be a boon to the school district of Cutchogue. He also
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John Wickham (right) speaks out against the Seacroft Condominium project. Nearly 140 residents showed up at a meeting of Southholders Opposed to Seacroft chaired by Nancy Sawastynowicz (center) and SOS Lawyer Robert Pike (left).

said it would be beneficial to the growing elderly population who are finding out they cannot maintain their large old homes and want a place that requires low-maintenance. Dorman then said that if the project was not allowed to go through the possible alternative was low income housing.

Daniel Lyons, of New Suffolk, likened the condominium project to an "invasion." Lyons said that he has been to every state of the

union and found that developers, "have wrecked every single place in America and they'll do it to you."

Councilman Paul Stoutenburgh, who attended the meeting along with Councilman Joseph Townsend and Town Justice Raymond Edwards, told those assembled that they came to listen, but did not promise anything because he said, "these things are very complicated." He said that the town board are just laymen and have to rely on the town attorney's judgment as to what they can and cannot do because people are always, "looking to put you on the stand

in court."

Pike said that since the project as proposed is not planning to have a sanitation system to take care of the septic wastes it will have a hard time passing the Suffolk County Department of Health. But he suggested to the people gathered, that if they are opposed to the project to write or visit, the Southold Town Board and the Southold Planning Board. He also suggested writing the new town planner.

At the end of the meeting the organizers were accepting donations of \$25 and \$50 to fund the battle against the Seacroft condominium project. —Bill James