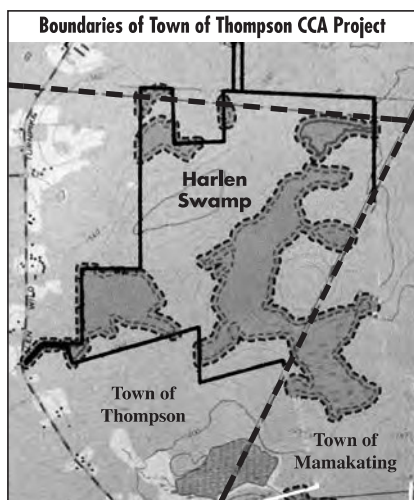


China City Action Alert: August 29, 2013 by Paula Medley

WRITE LETTERS, SUBMITTED BY SEPTEMBER 30, 2013, URGING DEC TO BECOME LEAD AGENCY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF CHINA CITY OF AMERICA'S (CCA) PROPOSAL IN THE TOWN OF THOMPSON.

It is critical to ask the DEC to intervene and oversee environmental review of CCA's latest endeavor, this time sited entirely in Thompson and presented before Thompson's Planning Board on August 28. See map at right for location of 570-acre parcel.

See also Map 1 in *Summer Guardian* or on our website: www.thebashakill.org



This newest proposal is described this way: "The China City of America project will involve the construction of a college and associated student housing and cultural/recreational facilities on a large parcel off Wild Turnpike in the Town of Thompson. There will be an inn, a separate conference center, 35 single-family attached and detached dwellings for faculty and married students, 1040 units of other student housing, four classroom buildings, a student union, three studios, 10 recreational facilities, two parks, five playground and child care units, nine community center units, a library/museum, and a sports center. There will be 700 off street parking spaces. Total anticipated water usage per day is 140,000 gallons. The project will be phased. Phase 1 will be focused on basic college facilities and accompanying student housing and cultural and recreational facilities."

Though currently there are no CCA plans for Mamakating, we cannot trust this situation to remain static. Additionally, the BKAA continues opposing this development as it negatively impacts the Bashakill Wetland System, which is a recommended priority project for the 2013 New York State Open Space Plan, along with Harlen Swamp, which already is incorporated within the Neversink Highlands priority project in the 2009 Plan. Also, all construction traffic will emanate from Wild Turnpike, adversely influencing Masten and Wanasink Lakes.

At the August 28 meeting, a Notice of Intent by the Thompson Planning Board to be Lead Agency was produced and will be sent to all "involved" agencies having permitting authority over this undertaking, (such as DEC). Involved agencies have 30 days to determine whether they want to challenge for the lead agency role. If no one does, Thompson's Planning Board will be named.

When there is controversy surrounding lead agency status, the DEC Commissioner renders a decision based on three criteria:

1. whether the anticipated impacts of the action being considered are primarily of statewide, regional or local significance.
2. which agency has the broadest governmental powers for investigating the impacts of the proposed action
3. which agency has the greatest capacity for providing the most thorough environmental assessment of the proposed action

Several years ago, when deciding that DEC would "take the lead" for another project on this same parcel plus Mamakating's property, Commissioner Grannis stated, "Considering the first criterion, as Delaware River Basin Commission approval of water supply is required, there is inherently a regional component to the impacts. Also, the wetlands on the property are identified in the NYS Open Space Plan as the Neversink Highlands Open Space Project, which is included in the Open Space Plan for its high habitat value. The potential impacts to those wetlands, as well as major changes in nature and intensity of use of their associated upland, would be regionally significant impacts."

"There are also potentially very significant impacts stemming from the proposal to locate a project of this scale in such a relatively remote rural area. Current land uses near the proposed project include clusters of small lots associated with several lakes or existing hamlets, but otherwise sparse development scattered along roadways. Remote, 'ex-urban' subdivisions such as the one proposed here contribute disproportionately to accelerated generation of greenhouse gases based on their inherently long daily driving distance to jobs or services for residents, equally long drives by potential customers of the commercial area, and basically car-dependent layout. Further, such isolated, sprawling subdivisions can also consume disproportionate open land, water and energy resources while exacerbating fragmentation of large habitat areas like forests and grasslands as well as wetlands, and thus represent a development pattern which is unsustainable in the long term. These additional potential impacts are of far more than local importance, and indeed may rise beyond even regional significance."

(continued on page 14)

China City Action Alert *(continued)*

"Therefore, given the broad nature of the potential impacts, including the Open Space Plan implications, and the regional consequences of a very large, sprawling development in a rural area, I conclude that NYSDEC is most appropriately designated lead agency under the first criterion.

"The second criterion, breadth of authority to conduct the environmental review, also favors NYSDEC. NYCDEC has broad mandates encompassing protection of air and water resources and quality in general; regulation of land uses in and adjoining wetlands; regulation of new water supplies and maintenance or preservation of valuable or unique habitat complexes. NYSDEC staff includes members with technical specialties which will enable it to most effectively address the whole range of potential impacts of the proposed project, specifically including the regional and wider impacts of accelerated greenhouse gas generation and habitat fragmentation as well as the infrastructure and resource demands inherent in such a massive development. Compared to a local lead agency (Like Mamakating's Planning Board), whose authority and expertise is limited to land use within its boundaries, NYSDEC clearly has the more appropriate authority to conduct the scale of environmental review which this proposal demands.

". . . For the foregoing reasons. . . I conclude that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation should serve as a lead agency for the environmental review of this project."

Although this earlier venture differs from the prevailing one, many of Commissioner Grannis' remarks remain viable and can be effectively utilized in your correspondence.

In the latest round of letter writing please identify yourselves as members of the BKAA, regardless of where you live.

Inform DEC Commissioner Martens that Part II of the Long Environmental Assessment Form (EAF), to be filled out by the Lead Agency, has already been completed, along with determining project significance, either by Town of Thompson or the applicant, though both actions must not be taken prior to the formal naming of a lead agency.

Notably, also on the EAF, the applicant answered NO to the question: Is there or is there likely to be public controversy related to potential adverse environmental impacts?

It is easy to see why the DEC should assume the Lead Agency role as significant errors in the environmental review process have already occurred.

Letters should be addressed to:

DEC Commissioner Joe Martens
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233

With copies to:
Acting Regional Director, Tom Rudolph
NYS DEC , Region 3
21 South Putt Corners Road
New Paltz, NY 12561

Town of Thompson Planning Board
Chair Patrice Chester and Board Members
Town of Thompson Town Hall
4052 Route 42
Monticello, NY 12701

County Legislators

Alan Sorensen
Sullivan County Government Building
100 North Street
Monticello, NY 12701
annmarie.martin@co.sullivan.ny.us

Kathy LaBuda and Jonathan Rouis
Same as above

State & Federal

Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther
18 Anawana Lake Road
Monticello, NY 12701
gunthea@assembly.state.ny.us

State Senator John Bonacic
201 Dolson Avenue, Suite F
Middletown, NY 10940
bonacic@nysenate.gov
Congressman Chris Gibson
P.O. Box 578
Ferndale, NY 12734
ny20gibsonchris@mail.house.gov

Questions? Email info@thebashakill.org or call Paula Medley directly at (845)754-0743.

Update on China City by Paula Medley

China City promoters have not undertaken any formal actions in the Towns of Mamakating and Thompson since presenting before these boards in May 2013. (See Action Alert on page 13 for new information.) Nevertheless, the BKAA remains on the offensive. For instance, we quickly aligned with the Yankee Lake Preservation Association (YLPA), whose supportive members have joined the BKAA in droves. We likewise approached Masten Lake residents and received crucial endorsement from several.

We galvanized prevailing energy and motivation into a major letter writing campaign. This endeavor conveys our forceful objections to decision makers, project principals, and the public, enhances resistance momentum, and rapidly invests enterprise opponents in the advocacy process, ensuring greater likelihood of their long-term involvement.

Forty letters were dispatched. Most correspondence emanated from Yankee Lake, definitely in China City's

crosshairs. Thanks to the following correspondents. We regret any omissions. Anita Altman, Linda Lou Bartle, Toby Boritz, Madeline Boyd, Jackie Broder, Adeline Bruni, Silvia Colella, Charles Crawford, Catherine MacGowan Dawkins, Stephen & Susan Erny, Susan Gize, Joy Grancio, Lorry Green, Muriel Patterson Huttenbach, William "Pat" Huttenbach, Eileen Lake, Marlene Lange, Bill & Carol Lucas, John T. Masterson, Nancy Masterson, Paula Medley, Maura Muller & Family, Denege Patterson, Eileen Phelan, Michael Phillips & Michelle Eckerson, Jon & Ann Reed, Christine Seward, Scott & Erica Scheinblum, Robert J. Schneider & Laura Coruzzi, Mort Starobin, Diane Stindt, Virginia T. Wakeman, Marcia Briggs Wallace, Diane Wanser, Nancy Wertsch.

In the future, the BKAA will continue informing citizens about China City's status and recruiting more proponents to our cause. Rumors that China City is dead, at least in Mamakating, have not been corroborated. The only way it will be defeated is through our HARD WORK!!!

Letters in Opposition to China City

Dear Editor,

July 19, 2013

I am writing this letter out of deep concern for my community, Yankee Lake, Town of Mamakating.

In May of this year, we became aware of the proposed development known as China City of America.

I, as well as many concerned Yankee Lakers, attended the Mamakating Town Meeting for the presentation of the proposed project by Ms. Sherry Li. It is safe to say, that we were astounded by the expanse of the proposed project. While I understand that it is merely in its conceptual stages, the Yankee Lake community stands strong and united against such a development.

This is the wrong project in the wrong area for such an enormous development. It would forever change the landscape and the quality of life in our community for the worse. We stand to lose the beauty of our rolling hills and the densely wooded areas and wetlands richly populated with an endless amount of priceless wildlife, including our national bird, the majestic bald eagle. Our peaceful, quiet oasis will cease to exist.

The infrastructure could never sufficiently support such a drastic increase in traffic and population. We all understand that change and progress is a sometimes difficult but inevitable part of life. Having said that, I am adamant about stating without doubt, the negative effects of this proposal to our environment will far outweigh any possible benefits.

I am urging our elected officials, through a letter writing campaign, to support our opposition to this development. Those of us fortunate enough to have grown-up and enjoyed the beauty and tranquility of Yankee Lake are hoping that our children as well as future generations will learn to appreciate and have the opportunity to enjoy life on the lake; the long hot summer days spent swimming or sailing on a windy day; fishing at dawn; the wonder at nature's explosion of color at sunset; and gazing up at the most amazing star-filled night sky and counting shooting stars.

Simple. Quiet. Natural. This describes our quality of life now. Will these be the words we use to describe our life at the lake if China City of America becomes a reality? The answer is obvious.

Sincerely, Adeline Bruni, President, Yankee Lake Preservation Association