



The Preservation Collective, Inc.

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March 10, 2015

Tim Miller
Tim Miller Associates, Inc.
10 North Street
Cold Spring, NY 10516

Sent via email: tmiller@timmillerassociates.com

Re: Town of Monroe/Village of Kiryas Joel
507 Acre Annexation Petition / Draft DGEIS Public Scoping Meeting

Dear Mr. Miller:

We hope the information in this letter proves useful in your preparation of the scope document for the DGEIS on the annexation petition for 507 acres from the Town of Monroe to the Village of Kiryas Joel. As you know, our non-profit organization helps protect scenic, historic and cultural resources that are important to a community as well as raise awareness of environmental impacts of new development.

Attached is our letter previously submitted for the scoping meeting for the annexation petition of 164 acres. We recognize that some of the comments have been incorporated in the draft scope for the 507 acres petition, but there are still details suggested that we hope will be re-considered as relevant. In addition, when reviewing the transcript and other letters from the 164 acre public scoping meeting, there were many substantive comments about potential significant environmental impacts. In particular, you received detailed and thorough comments from Monroe Conservation Commission, Village of Woodbury, United Monroe and the MW School District to just name a few. However, some of the specific methodologies and/or site specific studies asked to be considered were not included in the final scope for the 164 acre petition nor are they in the draft scope presently under review.

It would be helpful if notice of future meeting dates and posting of minutes relating to the SEQR review discussion (e.g. the drafting of the final scope prior to adoption) and correspondence between consultants and Village of Kiryas Joel (that are of public record) were made available on the designated repository website. It would be beneficial if the public were given the opportunity to hear the explanations as to why certain comments and recommendations were decided not to be adopted and be given the opportunity to follow along the review process more closely.

This letter includes some recommendations made previously that we wish to highlight from our attached letter as well as new comments for the scope outline for the 507 acre annexation review.

In reviewing the maps of the project, it appears that parcels in the annexation and Village do not all adjoin each other so the scope should be specific that a discontinuous boundary is created with the 507 acre annexation. There are some parcels that are not part of the petition that would be left as inholdings, almost surrounded by the Village leaving the question how would they get municipal services? At the least, this would be very inefficient.

As for the overall scope outline, we believe there is a lack of preliminary lists of mitigation measures under all sections. An initial identification of mitigation measures in the scope is required by SEQR. We hope more time will be taken to consider and include more specific potential mitigation measures in this scope outline that will assist in the decision making and finding statements later in the process.

As for comments by sections, they are as follows:

- Page 6, A. Land Use and Zoning
 - 1.a., This section will describe existing conditions in Village of Kiryas Joel and the Town of Monroe and impacts on adjacent lands. However it has been requested that this should include the surrounding area as well. Specifically the Village of Woodbury previously requested description within 3 miles of project site.
 - 1.d. Other identified regional land use plan and reports will be summarized. What specific plans have been identified and referenced? For example, requests have been to include Moodna and Ramapo watershed management plans.
 - 2.c. this sentence should include Blooming Grove.

The potential rezoning of land presently zoned low density in the Town of Monroe to high density and/or commercial or mixed use, will have significant environmental impacts (e.g. lands on Seven Springs Road) in addition to development on certain lots presently zoned high density in the Town of Monroe (e.g Coronet Lake and tributary).

Therefore, we believe it is important that specifically the compatibility of the potential development/change in zoning/use designations with the character of surrounding uses and zoning is discussed by lots/areas. While some lots are presently zoned high density are adjacent to existing high density housing, other lots are presently zoned low density nearby ridgelines, farmland, parkland and bodies of water.

- Page 9, D. Traffic and Transportation

It appears that the annexation does not include certain roads, but does include land on both sides. Does that mean that the Village wants to let the Town continue to maintain these roads?

- Page 9, D. Traffic and Transportation (continued)
 - 1.c. Specifically the physical condition as well as size and capacity of key locations should be discussed. With Seven Springs Road being access to lands in annexation petition, its condition to handle buses and pedestrian traffic should be evaluated as well as site distances at the intersections with Seven Springs Mountain road and 208 given servicing that side of the Village should those lands be annexed. Also, CR64 and Larkin Drive should be included in locations to be studied to account for increased traffic to Village school/park outside municipal boundary. Also, roadways connecting to highway access should be evaluated to include commuter traffic. Schunnemunk Road and Route 208 were previously requested by other commenters should also be included particularly with location to highway access to that side of the Village.
 - 1.d. Traffic is assessed at the peak hours, which are the morning and evening rush hours that may not overlap with the school hours that should also be included. Also, days chosen for studies need to take into consideration the Village's traffic patterns that may not or may not coincide with areas typical peak hours.
 - Is there a central location or gathering place that generates a lot of pedestrian traffic on roads within the Village that might need upgrades to insure safety to Village residents?
 - 3. Mitigation Measures could be specific to discuss a potential new road network as well as any needed traffic control devices, signage, in and around the annexation area.
- Page 10, E. Community Water and Sewer

The GEIS should evaluate the impact of the annexation plan on streams and watersheds from which the Village draws water, including areas in the headwaters of the Ramapo River in or near KJ, any other existing or proposed sources, and specifically including their proposed water withdrawal application located in Cornwall in the Woodbury Creek aquifer.

- Page 11, F. Natural Resources

It is written in the document that the intention of this GEIS is to give general identification of natural resources. The existing conditions could trigger the need for supplemental determination of significance or site-specific EIS, which would be outlined in section III. Since natural resources don't end at the property line, the potential impacts include habitat fragmentation effects. The scope will need to discuss the surrounding area. In addition, the impacts section will estimate potential implications on natural resources but what about mentioning the estimated constraints on development based on existing conditions? This section needs adequate detail in the areas listed in order to estimate future development impact scenarios based on the respective municipalities' regulations.

Stormwater management should be under a separate section.

- Page 11, G. Cultural Resources

The GEIS should assess the public enjoyment and appreciation of scenic, historical and cultural resources; however with only a general description planned for existing conditions, what studies will be conducted specifically to assess the potential impacts? For example, the need to take photos of the planned annexation area from State/County parkland, area hiking trails, and roadways. What type of development will be planned at entrance to parkland? As for mitigation, creating greenway/improving trail system in area.

If it is already planned that the properties in the annexation will all be subject to high density development, then the Natural and Cultural Resource sections need some level of site specific studies to take a look at the impacts of the different development scenarios to determine first what needs to be avoided and then what needs to be mitigated and which scenario would have the least impact.

- Page 13, V. Alternatives

Where the document states “No Action (no annexation)” – Should this be split into two categories for clarity? For instance;

No Action - absent of development and

No Annexation – density based on existing zoning & regulations.

We believe that the comparison to the potential development in the Town of Monroe should consider the Town’s environmentally conscious regulations regarding development in sensitive areas e.g. buffers to water bodies and use of clustered development as a tool to preserve steep slopes, viewshed and open space (e.g. corridor along the Long Path to Gonzaga parkland).

In the Scoping outline for the 164 acre petition, there was also the alternative “annexation of smaller land area”. There should be a smaller alternative in this scope as well. It is reasonable to consider that certain parcels of either petition could be excluded or have density limitations as an alternative?

The GEIS should discuss the most likely course of development as well as the most intensive use and the possibility of further annexation petitions beyond the 507 acre boundary.

- Page 13, VII Growth Inducing Impacts

Increasing the development potential for nearby areas by installing or upgrading sewers, water mains, or other utilities should be assessed.

Please consider the above comments in the SEQR process of the proposed annexation review.

We also hope that the Monroe Conservation Commission’s request for site visit to the proposed annexation lands has been accepted. This could assist the Town of Monroe in their responsibility as an Involved Agency in the SEQR process.

Lastly, we urge all Lead Agencies to make every effort to encourage public participation in the review process especially those living in the close proximity of the study area due to their personal knowledge of issues to address and their direct impact by a proposed action. It is has also been stated that the Village of Kiryas Joel “*recognizes the responsibility to the public and will solicit input to ensure multiple perspectives and points of view are heard.*” Therefore, we would like to recommend that the Village’s future public hearing notices on the EIS are mailed out to adjacent landowners and those within at least 300 feet of the lots in question. This is typical notice in many municipalities for public hearings on new development proposals. In addition, we respectfully request that when a public hearing is held on the Draft EIS, that the Village gives the public more than a 30 day window (including public notice submitted in Times Herald Record), to review since it will be an expectedly large document.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,



Tracy Schuh
President
TPC, Inc.

Cc: Town of Monroe Town Board
Orange County Planning Department
NYS DEC Commissioner and Regional Director Region 3

Attachment: The Preservation Collective Letter re: 164 acres petition dated 9.30.14