

May 1, 2020

Renate Ferro
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Dear Supervisor Whitmer and Town Board Members,

I am so proud to be a resident of Caroline. I have lived in a home, originally built in 1880, set on 14.5 acres of land on Route 79 between Landon Road and Caroline School. My husband and I moved into our home (abandoned at the time) in 1982 and over the last 38 years we lovingly renovated it with care. Additionally, we have nurtured the surrounding pond, woods, and wetlands with sustainable planting and gardening.

A few years after we began our renovations in the late 1980's, a large senior living development was proposed at the corner of 79 and Landon Road. The proposed development prompted so many of us to become involved in town politics and subsequently Caroline Town Governance. Why? First and foremost, it was imperative that we preserve the natural character and life in our Town of Caroline. Not to exclude others out but to nurture everyone who wanted to live here. We asked ourselves, what ways could/can we ensure that our air, water, cultural landscape, safety, health and welfare of our all of our residents be sustained over not only the immediate moment but the future ahead. We were concerned that the potential character of our rural community would be altered in ways that would not ensure our children of a safe environment to live. We were successful in stopping the large development project and I can recall that this project inspired years of smart planning on behalf of the community and the beginnings of the Comprehensive Plan.

Don Barber as Supervisor and many supportive Town Board members including Ed Cope, Dominic Frongillo, Penny Boynton, Tim Seeley, Molly Adams, Cornelia Farnham, and so many others on the Planning Board shepherded the original site plan in 2003 and its update in 2006.

And now we find ourselves considering the revision of a 2020 Town Comprehensive plan. I hope that our town archives will show how you as Supervisor and Town Board members will help to protect what imminently looms in our backyards, potential commercial developments unlike anything we have seen previously.

I implore the Town Board to pass a moratorium to halt the building of any commercial development so that our Planning Review Board has the time to consider the Comprehensive Plan revision but also consider long-overdue zoning ordinances for the future development of our Town. We are the only Town in the entire Tompkins County that does not have RESPONSIBLE zoning. Let's protect our water, land and environment for generations to come.

Let us not fall into the traps that so many of our neighboring towns did previously. Many of us spent a good deal of time through the summer and fall elections in 2017 and 2019 electing you as representatives. In campaigning you reflected your interests in green sustainable living as a major issue. This past election you won by nearly a 60% mandate. This is celebratory. Let's join together to make a lasting effect for generations of Carolinians to come. As you said in November: let's Build on Success.

“We believe that government plays an important role in protecting things we hold in common, in safeguarding the welfare of our residents and in building a strong and sustainable future. We're proud of our accomplishments in serving Caroline's residents.”

What follows is a list of my personal concerns about broader implications of a commercial development in 2020, ironically again at the intersection of Route 79 and Landon Road. I use this particular case as another case study in reflecting our need to be responsible in incorporating thoughtful provisions to think through how we want our town to develop commercially and sustainably. Again, I use this case simply as a model to reflect broadly on the issues which is the passage of the building moratorium and why that is important. As I said in a recent Site Review Meeting during the privilege of the floor, this particular case is one that will affect the way we move forward and what the town will look like in future years.

1. Water- Caroline is on the cusp of delicate aquifers and natural springs. Adjacent wetlands, streams and Six Mile Creek meanders in the nearby neighborhoods. We must ensure that any proposed site does not affect the delicate, clean water resources that our community and neighbors depend on. For example, historically, water studies done at the time the senior living development was proposed at 79 and Landon in the 80's, proved how sacred and delicate the site and its surroundings are. Water flow and soil composition must be thoroughly studied.
2. Safety: Using again the 79/Landon example, within .6 of the proposed square-mile of the site there are over 100 homes and 2 apartment dwellings. Traffic at that intersection of as well as the curves and rolling landscape of the road would cause that intersection to be more dangerous than it is already probably inviting the likelihood of a stoplight at minimum.
3. Cultural Landscape: The significant vegetation and "view shed" is most spectacular in our Town but specifically looking south west from 79/Landon we sit on land that is rich in natural resources and wildlife. The residential character of our entire Town must be protected now. Any careful plan should absolutely ensure that the character of our community be nurtured in a way conducive with the values we designate in any Comprehensive Plan and Zoning architecture.
4. Sustainability: The example I use, the current proposed commercial development at 79/and on, though not designated in name, may be characterized as similar to local dollar chain developments. Within a ten-mile radius of Caroline there are eight-dollar related stores in addition to others like Big Lots, Not only are there franchised Dollar Stores, but Family Dollar, General Dollar, and Dollar Tree. I have enclosed photos that I took last weekend. In the Town

of Dryden near the intersection of Route 38 and 13 there are two abandoned dollar-like retail spaces. Those retail spaces are empty shells of buildings abandoned by their owner with trash surrounding one of them. It is unbelievable to note that in the adjacent block .4 miles around the corner, a new *Dollar Store* opened on Route 13. Also, within that store there is a CVS, a Kinney's Drugs, a Mobile gas station that sells low cost food all that complete with Mike Clark's Clark IGA. I grew up in the area and I remember that the entire strip of Route 13 was filled with green expanse. All of the commercial establishments at the time were situated within the town's corners. What we need to consider in moving forward is that approval of any commercial building site, especially one with a large blueprint comparatively, will signal to other developers in the future what the planning threshold of the Town of Caroline is.

5. Food Justice (a store to serve): Recent research reveals that only about one quarter of the products at the stores I mention earlier sell for one dollar. Often times those items are prepackaged in low quantities. Low quality, empty calorie food items, cigarettes, imported goods, most unrecyclable, made with workers in crowded factories making unjust wages is one potential choice for our town. See the photo attached.

Or the other option I urge you to consider is this one. Can we work together to nurture green building, sustainable planning, healthy living, low-impact development, local businesses? Can we nurture the surrounding delicate environment and the needs of those who live here? I think we can. There may be a few road bumps in the path to move forward in your eyes. With creative brainstorming and the overwhelming support of the residents of the town, I am confident we can keep the Town of Caroline the special place it is for all and promote a forward-thinking place that everyone so amazingly has spoken about in the meetings that I have witnessed.

Thank you for the time you are spending in getting local resident feedback in this process. Wishing you all good health in these Covid times. Please feel free to call upon me at renateferro@gmail.com should you need futhur input.

Sincerely,
Renate Ferro
Renate Ferro