


Long Island Business NEWS

Where Business Gets Down to Business

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Permit Chase

By David Winzelberg

Friday, August 22, 2008

Frustrated developers know how long it can take to get approvals for commercial projects on Long Island. Each year construction

delays result in millions of dollars in lost revenue, costing us all. In this occasional series LIBN will track the prickly path to building permits for a few as-of-right developments to shed some light on a tedious process.

Town blames architects for delays to intermodal plan

When we last checked, the application to build a 60,000-square-foot truck/rail distribution center in Medford had been revised and resubmitted on July 2 to the Town of Brookhaven's planning department.

The \$15 million intermodal plan is the project of West Babylon-based Riegel Trucking, which hired Bob Gruber from Robert Gruber Architects in Medford to design the facility and help move it through the approvals process.

Originally submitted to the town on May 22, along with \$19,250 in filing fees, Gruber still awaits comments from a handful of town and county agencies, some of which have had the plans for nearly two months.

Brookhaven planner Amy Moody acknowledged that the Riegel application got to Town Hall on July 2. Moody said she sent out copies of the application to various town and county departments on July 28.

So far, only the Suffolk department of public works and Brookhaven's highway department have responded. Moody is still waiting for word from the county planning board, health department and the town's departments of environmental protection, fire prevention and traffic safety.

Chip Wiebelt, Brookhaven's senior site plan reviewer, said there are five staff members who review an average of 120 commercial site plan applications a year, or about two applications per month for each reviewer.

However, site plan review is just one part of each planner's responsibilities, Wiebelt said, which also include reviewing dozens of change-of-zone and change-of-use requests. Planners also assist on long-range projects, land-use studies and moratorium proposals.

Wiebelt said most of the delays in getting projects approved lie with the architect or engineer and not with the town.

"Most of the time we're waiting for the private sector to get back to us," Wiebelt said.

Moody pointed out that the Riegel application has yet to address the town's lighting and signage codes, something she said architects frequently wait to add closer to the end of the approvals process.

Gruber must now deal with the comments from county public works and the town's highway department, which raise concerns about the traffic study statistics offered in the Riegel application. The comments call for road improvements to handle the dozens of trucks expected to drive past the intersection of Horseblock Road and Station Road on their way in and out of the

intermodal depot each day.

"That's a lot of trucks going through there," Wiebelt said.

Meanwhile, Riegel's real estate broker, John O'Hara of Corporate Realty Services in Hauppauge, has been collecting the endorsements of local elected officials to secure a state Department of Transportation grant to help pay for the necessary railroad switch from the MTA.

If approved, Riegel would receive 60 percent of the \$650,000 cost of the switch in a grant and 40 percent in a low-interest loan, the repayment of which goes through the Brookhaven Industrial Development Agency.

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