

OPINION

Editorial



Civic leaders hope to halt the construction of a canopy at a gas station in Setauket to maintain the area's Main Street feel.

Planning to avoid battles

A recurring battle along the North Shore that we're noticing is the struggle communities go through to maintain historical characteristics while also satisfying modern business needs.

Where town or village codes may be lacking to maintain historical and/or architectural cohesion, community leaders are recognizing the importance of creating visioning plans. Our hope is that the want for sense of place is mixed with the needs of businesses in order to fill empty storefronts when crafting each plan in order to create a healthy mix.

Setting up guidelines to maintain its architectural heritage and cohesion is something Port Jefferson Village is paying attention to. At the end of last year, a draft resolution based on a meeting of the village's architectural review committee was introduced. If passed, it would require new buildings in the village's commercial districts to adhere to designs consistent with Port Jeff's "Victorian, maritime heritage" and to avoid a "hodgepodge" of buildings. The policy is far from complete but standards are being discussed, and that's a good start.

Constructing a visioning plan, with the assistance of residents and business owners, would be beneficial for revitalization in areas like Broadway in Rocky Point. Setauket and Stony Brook residents took a step in the right direction when community leaders, residents and business owners met in 2016 and 2017 to create the Route 25A Three Village Area Visioning Report. The report, approved by the Brookhaven Town Board and pending the adoption of a land-use study by the town's planning department, creates guidelines for issues that affect the Three Village area including maintaining cohesive architecture.

It gave the Three Village Civic Association some backup when it opposed the owners of a Shell gas station in Setauket on Route 25A applying for variances to the town's Board of Zoning Appeals. The company submitted proposed plans to construct a large canopy and a lighted electric sign at the gas station. The board closed an April 18 hearing without a decision and, according to town guidelines, has 62 days to make one. While the owners say most gas stations have canopies, residents at the hearing provided evidence to the contrary along Route 25A between St. James and Port Jefferson.

If the gas station doesn't get its way with its plans, we doubt it will vacate the premises. But what about other cases when a business owner feels an addition would attract more customers? This is when a visioning plan created with history in mind, but also present business needs can have the most impact. During discussions, compromise may be the key.

Northport Village has been able to strike such an agreement. Last summer, the village board was approached about building a hotel at 225 Main St. — something unheard of before then. While residents criticized the proposed plans, the village approved a code modification to make way for the inn. Then the village's architectural review board toured the 1950s building to determine firsthand if it had any historic value, before allowing the proposed plans to move forward. This two-step process allowed for a democratic proceeding, while protests may have otherwise left empty storefronts or rundown properties standing as eyesores, which is not the best option.

With some discussion, civic-minded folks with a respect for historical aspects can keep business districts from looking like an unattractive mixture of buildings. Taking in the concerns of business owners, can keep those buildings filled.

Letters . . . We welcome your letters. They should be no longer than 400 words and may be edited for length, libel, style and good taste. We do not publish anonymous letters. Please include a phone number and address for confirmation. Email letters to alex@tbrnewsmedia.com or mail them to The Port Times Record, P.O. Box 707, Setauket, NY 11733.

Letters to the editor

Leadership in LIPA dispute

Brookhaven Supervisor Ed Romaine and Port Jefferson Village Mayor Margot Garant are on the front lines of protecting the taxpayers. Their leadership has sought to create a tentative agreement with LIPA that creates a fair and equitable phase-down tax agreement that reduces energy costs for Brookhaven residents while providing a generous cushion to the affected taxpayers within the village. They both recognized that the other option, going to trial, would likely result in a draconian decision that could leave village and town residents on the hook for hundreds of millions of dollars in back tax payments.

Unfortunately, the Port Jefferson School District would have you believe otherwise as they have very little to lose if the court would rule against them. The fact is the school district would not be responsible for the hundreds of millions in back payments. Rather, it would fall on the village and town as the assessing jurisdiction which means the school district bears none of the responsibility in throwing dice with your tax money. Yes, the district stands to lose several million dollars in annual



Port Jefferson's power plant located in the village.

revenue but it's hard to imagine that would concern a school administration that thought it was OK to propose a \$30 million bond issue with an estimated 5 percent tax increase that would permit, among other things, the creation of a new office for the district superintendent.

Supervisor Romaine and

Mayor Garant worked hard to protect the property owners wallets by seeking a deal that recognizes the buck ultimately stops with the taxpayer.

Kyle Strober
Executive Director
Association for a Better LI

Vote Zamek, Biedenkapp and Kronberg

Simply put, Tracy Zamek, Ryan Biedenkapp, and Dr. Jason Kronberg are the right candidates for the Port Jefferson board of education. They are deeply committed to the students and residents of the Port Jefferson School District. Tracy, Ryan, and Jason are

parents with a long history of volunteer work in our community. Their continuous efforts for the future of Port Jefferson are only the beginning. I know they will work diligently to solve the many fiscal and educational issues we will face in the coming years. They are the right people

because they believe in all of us and will fight for our schools, our students, and our village. On May 15, please vote for Tracy Zamek, Ryan Biedenkapp, and Jason Kronberg.

Richard and Rosalie Lusak
Port Jefferson

Who we're voting for in BOE election

As a Port Jefferson Village resident, I am casting my vote for Tracy Zamek, Ryan Biedenkapp, and Dr. Jason Kronberg for Port Jefferson school board. Their collective energy as focused and devoted residents as well as involved parents is truly unequalled by any of the other candidates.

Their tireless efforts to help our students and Port Jefferson

community are greatly appreciated, as are the responsible goals they have articulated for our district's future. Their dedication to professionalism and being a unified honest voice for both Port Jefferson children and fellow residents won my support.

I know they will not only be fiscally responsible school board members, but they will also help to ensure that every child has

the chance to maximize his or her full academic potential.

On May 15, I urge my Port Jefferson and Belle Terre neighbors to join me in casting their vote for Tracy Zamek, Ryan Biedenkapp, and Jason Kronberg for Port Jefferson school board.

Jason and Pauline Spiller
Port Jefferson

The opinions of columnists and letter writers are their own. They do not speak for the newspaper.