

Show Me The Details

To the Editor:

I felt compelled to respond to Pat Papa's Sept. 15 letter, "Revised Windy Acres Plan Has Benefits," regarding the Windy Acres settlement agreement. It's difficult to understand that the opinions of people who live in this town are "useful" one day and inconsequential and "destructive" the next.

I thought Ms. Papa, who is vice chair of the Planning Board, was supposed to remain objective and impartial so that her actions uphold the law, not reflect personal opinion. Yet she is advocating a project that the Planning Board would decide on. That's the crux of this problem. How can our public officials advocate for something that had not received any public input and that is not substantiated by any facts?

Ms. Papa says unless we sign the agreement to protect our certification from the Council on Affordable Housing, Clinton Township will fall to the wrecking ball. Yet her argument is full of inconsistencies. In 2001 the Planning Board denied the application. The denial was upheld by the court, and our COAH certification still remains intact. What's changed to suggest that our certification is now at risk?

Ms. Papa promotes all the empty promises we've heard all year long. "We must build this project to avoid more building!" Isn't that like suggesting that to stop the bleeding we must first cut off our arm? "We must sign to stop the lawsuits!" Do the lawsuits stop if we sign the agreement or does it

just extend the time and cost of defending ourselves? "If they can't get the approvals they need, then the project can't be built!" Doesn't settling on a project that can't be built put our certification at risk and open us up to even more lawsuits and development? "Don't worry. We get more tax revenue, no school children, no negatives of any kind if we obligate ourselves to build a project that's larger than the Borough of Lebanon!" Tell me that one again. When did the Planning Board start accepting these unsubstantiated claims and promoting applications?

Pat Papa has attacked residents and their right to comment on a project she would vote on. If that doesn't destroy her impartiality, I don't know what does.

When Ms. Papa and other officials promote their message by disparaging objectors, peddling fear instead of stating facts, everyone should start paying attention. I trust Nick Corcodilos' cautious and deliberate approach over Ms. Papa's dismissive arrogance and shallow promises.

Our officials are making promises while avoiding providing the public with any details. Don't tell me not to worry. Don't tell me I don't understand. Show me the details so I can draw my own conclusions.

Clinton Township should not rush this agreement. We should take as much time as necessary to work through the details in public. We need to recognize that all opinions matter.

CAROLYN GEIGER
Clinton Township

Travesty In Clinton Twp.

To the Editor:

A minority of Clinton Township's residents vote and even fewer attend the various board and council meetings. The majority trust the political process to keep us out of trouble. Those of us who attended the two recent joint Township Council and Planning Board meetings at North Hunterdon were treated to a hysterical display of how this process works. The two meetings were held to collect and evaluate public comments on a proposed Windy Acres settlement between Clinton Township and Pulte Homes.

At the first joint meeting, chaired by the mayor, three council members carried a motion to extend the public comment period until Oct. 26, believing that the one week between the two meetings did not provide adequate time to review the public comments, because this meeting provided the first wide dissemination of the settlement document. Sounds like the process is working, right? Not so fast! They could have sold tickets to the second meeting.

The tip-off of what was to come was the public notice in the newspapers stating that a vote on the settlement might be conducted at the end of the meeting. The meeting was chaired by the Planning Board Chairman Jim Imbriaco.

The chairman, completely unrestrained by the mayor, took no prisoners. He described what led to an offer of assistance by Freeholder Nancy Palladino as probably a Sunshine Law violation by her and other freeholders. He said a letter regarding Windy Acres from the Department of Environmental Protection commissioner was based on misin-

formation. He allowed Vice Chair Pat Papa to actually give a count-down (30 seconds ... 15 seconds ... your time is up) to one person, Nick Corcodilos, likely the township's next mayor. And he called for a police officer when a woman approached the microphone after his deadline of 10:30 p.m. for public comments. After an executive session that lasted more than two hours, the final travesty occurred.

In spite of the mandated Oct. 26 date for public comment, the robotic Planning Board members read prepared statements and proceeded to vote to ~~approve the settlement~~. One of those members was the outgoing mayor, who also sits on the Planning Board. The public then witnessed the mayor, who had already voted to approve the settlement, attempt to persuade a council member to support a motion to extend the public comment period by only one week to Oct. 12 instead of the already agreed-to date. He failed.

Once again, the agenda for the Oct. 12 Township Council meeting calls for a vote to authorize the mayor to sign the settlement without further public comment. More rubber-hose treatment for council members Helen Mataka, Rose Marie Malaker and Kevin Cimei in executive session. The Planning Board has approved the settlement and is out of here. Our lame-duck mayor will eventually have an approved settlement. He will have a lot of good laughs telling how he got it.

RONALD E. WILLIAMS
Clinton Township