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By Darryl Gangloff

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Alexander Durst spoke with a Pine Plains resident about the Carvel project following the March 14 presentation. *Photo by Kayla Smith*

PINE PLAINS — The Durst Organization presented its latest plan for the proposed Carvel Property Development to a standing room-only crowd of residents and town officials at the Heart of Pine Plains community center on Wednesday, March 14.

The Pine Plains town and planning boards hosted the meeting, which was held almost two years to the day since the project was last the topic of a joint session.

“This is a public information meeting. We will not be taking questions and answers,” town Supervisor Brian Coons told the audience. “Write things down, take it home with you and digest.”

During the course of the hour-long presentation, Alexander Durst, co-vice president of the Durst Organization, explained why the developers believe their latest plan for the proposed recreation-oriented second-home community meets the requirements of the New Neighborhood Development (NND) provision of the Pine Plains zoning law, which was adopted in October 2009 ([click here](#) ^[2] for story).

Key features

Durst began his presentation by outlining the key features of the development. Approximately 1,900 acres of the project are in Pine Plains, while around 440 acres are in the town of Milan. Of the 645 units, 591 are in Pine Plains and 54 are in Milan.

“There is a lot of open space that buffers and protects important habitats,” Durst said, noting more than 50 percent of the homes will be within a half-mile radius of the project’s core around Lake Carvel.

His list of highlights included a proposed public trail that traverses that entire project; a redesigned golf course and club area; architecture that is compatible with Hudson Valley homes; water and wastewater improvements; energy efficient, environmentally responsible construction; historic structure reuse; public road improvements; reduction in curb cuts on Route 199; and funding for affordable housing.

“There is going to be over \$100 million of investment in this area. We think that is going to bring a lot of jobs, including professional and skilled and unskilled labor,” he said. “It’s going to increase the tax base for the towns. It will attract visitors to the Pine Plains hamlet who will purchase goods and services.”

History of the project

Durst said the history of the Carvel Property Development began in the late 1980s when his father, Douglas Durst, purchased land in the town of North East “to pursue his dream of opening an organic farm.” Durst partnered with his neighbor, Ray McEnroe, and opened McEnroe Organic Farm on Route 22.

McEnroe showed Douglas Durst the land of ice cream magnate Thomas Carvel, which Durst acquired in 2001. The site plan and subdivision application for the project was submitted to the town of Pine Plains in 2003, with the Pine Plains Planning Board as lead agency.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Durst’s original 951-unit plan was accepted as complete in January 2008, which was followed by five public hearings.

“Many people commented. A lot of people didn’t like it,” Durst said.

The developers submitted a redesigned “conservation” plan to the Planning Board in summer 2008, which was soon followed by public hearings for Pine Plains’ proposed zoning law. The law was ultimately adopted, which led to the group submitting its third major plan as part of the NND pre-application process in January 2010.

Based on the comments the developers received during a joint meeting of the town and planning boards on March 16, 2010, the Durst Organization submitted its latest 645-unit plan as part of its NND application in December 2011.

Changes in two years

Durst provided a list of changes the Carvel Property Development proposal has undergone since the 2010 plan.

“The amount of open space is significant,” he said, noting there are 1,697 acres of open space in the NND application, which is 162 more acres than the previous plan.

The Ham Brook trail system will give project residents the ability to get around on foot. Approximately four miles of the trail will be accessible to the public.

The Spruce Farm Chautauqua will house artists in residence for shorts periods of time, giving them the opportunity to host workshops and show their wares. Chautauqua was a movement that brought entertainment and culture to communities. There will also be a community garden for Pine Plains residents.

Two areas near the Hedge and Spruce farms will be leased “virtually at no cost” to qualified farmers “to support the resurgence in interest of growing and eating locally.”

Architecture firm Looney Ricks Kiss wrote architectural guidelines for the project based on a survey of local homes. Different styles, such as Victorian and Dutch Colonial, will appear on various lots throughout the property.

The Durst Organization has purchased about 13 subdivision parcels and 96 acres along Mt. Ross Road, which are now part of the Carvel Property Development. “It only represents a 5 percent addition to the land that was proposed as part of the NND pre-application,” Durst said.

The existing dam on the property will be removed and replaced, resulting in a 5.5-acre expansion of Lake Carvel.

Next steps

Durst showed a lengthy flowchart of what his organization says is the list of steps necessary for the project to be approved, including the town of Milan’s input as an interested agency.

“There are many steps between where we are and when we can begin construction,” Durst said, suggesting the development is at least a couple years away from breaking ground.

He said the next step is for the Pine Plains Planning Board, as lead agency, to issue a resolution requiring a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) and set the scoping procedure. He asked the Planning Board to “move the process along” and approve such a resolution at its meeting on Wednesday, April 11, so his group can begin work on the Draft SEIS scope.

Both the town and planning boards opted not to ask questions after the presentation.

“It’s best that we digest this a little bit more before we engage in questions,” Coons said.

The slides from Durst’s presentation can be found at www.carvelpropertydevelopment.com [3], along with the Carvel Property Development’s NND application. A copy of the Pine Plains zoning law is available at www.pineplains-ny.gov [4].

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