

Contact: CRED4GI cred4gi@gmail.com WEBSITE: CRED4GI.org

Residents Publicly Protest Against Amazon's Proposed Warehouse on Grand Island, NY

[GRAND ISLAND, NY] Nearly two hundred residents, including families with children, many for the first time in their lives, protested outside of Grand Island Town Hall last night before a planned Town Board workshop meeting on "Project Olive," the proposal by TC Buffalo to build a 3.8 million sqft Amazon warehouse on the north end of the island.

During the Town Board meeting, over 20 residents spoke in opposition to Project Olive with only one individual speaking in support. With 9 percent of residents having signed a petition opposing the project and hundreds of public comments submitted to the Town Board asking them not to approve rezoning, it is clear that a significant number of residents consider the project incompatible with the values and character of Grand Island.

Board Member Mike Madigan criticized the lack of transparency by TC Buffalo during the Board's closed workshop session, stating, **"There were meetings occurring all last year with the county executive with a non-transparent NDA. A bulk of the work was done in 2019 with no visibility to the residents, and no visibility to a majority of the town board. Why would you go about this without informing the public as well as the Town Board? That is a cause for some of the concerns. The lack of transparency, whether it's the tenant's name or disclosing what's happening with a project, has a huge impact on this island. It does affect credibility and trust when a lot of work was done in secrecy and lack of transparency. We represent the residents, and we're not even aware of it all through most of 2019?"** TC Buffalo's representatives replied by saying that this was standard practice and that in fact only about 20% of the sites where they perform due diligence ever come to fruition.

Representatives from the Coalition for Responsible Economic Development (CRED4GI) spoke during the meeting about details of the 2200 page proposal, stating they had each analyzed portions of it to determine whether the promises made by the developer and its request for rezoning from M1 to PDD were accurate and realistic. CRED4GI spokesperson Cathy Rayhill spoke early in the meeting about a "highly suspicious" June 9th, 2020, amendment to the Town Code allowing "zoning incentives" that prompted the developer's recent submission of a \$10 million offer in the 6th supplement of the proposal in which other key aspects of the Town Code were specifically avoided. She stated, "I would like to remind our town officials that the reason we have zoning codes is precisely to prevent the kind of pay-to-play scheme that is being proposed here. According to the code as written, the Town Board is NOT authorized to approve zoning variations in excess of 25% of our zoning codes and specifically limits such variations in height allowances and setbacks. Specifically, two of the requested variations are much more than 25% as relates to maximum building height and side yard setback. Article 407-20 says nothing about the authority of the Town Board to authorize variances associated with lighting requirements and the approval for altering the course of a natural watercourse, as is being requested by TC Buffalo. Even the request to approve a variance from 4 to 5 for the maximum building height in stories is suspect, given that each story is much higher than the height in an average building. In our view, the only two variances that should be allowed under Article 407-

20 would be the 2 requests related to minimum lot frontage and minimum lot width. I would like to remind our town officials that this is exactly why we have these regulations in place, so that even if deep pocketed organizations like TC Buffalo and Amazon offer the Town \$100 million dollars, we cannot be bought off to ignore our own laws and disregard the protections put in place for our community. CRED4GI's attorney, James Duggan, submitted a formal letter to the Board stating, **"On its face, this increase in size clearly violates the Town Code's 25% limitation and for that reason alone, the request should be rejected."**

Resident Betty Tranter, one of the property owners whose land would be adjacent to the facility, stated, "The property is surrounded on one side by I-190 and on three sides by approximately 110 residential properties with families, both young and old. We live here, have built here, knowing that the zoning codes for the development of this land between us and the I-190 was zoned as M1 development by the town's Long Range Planning Board. M1 allows for "light industrial" development only. The current zoning does not destroy the rural environment next to our homes, does not destroy the ecosystem of the land surrounding all our homes, does not destroy our quality of life, and does not destroy our health and safety. Changing 9 zoning codes to suit the greed of William Huntress, TC Buffalo and Amazon will destroy those things. A massive facility of this size does not belong on Grand Island shoe-horned into an M1 site with residential properties surrounding it."

Sean Christian Rustowicz spoke about environmental issues regarding the Town Board's earlier determination on a much smaller project during the Town Board Meeting, stating, "If we said no to Love's Truck Stop just a few years ago, citing air quality as a main concern, how could we say yes to something like this when it will have an even greater negative impact on our air quality?"

The Town Board has set the next public hearing date for August 13th.