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Grand Island Planning Board Votes Against Zoning Change for Amazon's "Project Olive"

July 14, 2020 Grand Island, N.Y. — Last night, the Town of Grand Island's Planning Board voted against developer TC Buffalo's request for a Planned Development District (PDD) designation for a 3.8 million square foot Amazon warehouse. The PDD designation would have allowed the developers to work outside of the Town's zoning regulations. The PDD designation has been rarely used on Grand Island because it overrides the Town code and has historically led to controversial decisions on other projects.

The 3-2 vote, with one abstention, (see the July Planning Board Meeting video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dj7T2_Ez0Jg, vote at 1:11:30), with one abstention, followed a passionate statement by Board member Dave Duchscherer (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dj7T2_Ez0Jg at 47:30) who cited a variety of objections to the project. These included the strong and widespread public opposition to Project Olive, incompatibility with the Town's recently-passed Comprehensive Plan, TC Buffalo's failure to follow the typical process of application for a PDD, uncertainty about the PILOT tax abatement application by TC Buffalo, distrust of Amazon (especially given its unwillingness to disclose its role in the development), and questionable data presented by TC Buffalo in its application.

Grand Island's five-member Town Board still has the power to override this decision, but that would be unprecedented.

Without the PDD designation, aspects of the project would have to be scaled back drastically, or the developers would have to submit a number of requests-for-variance that would have to be individually approved by the Town's boards.

"We realize the fight to protect our community is far from over, but we appreciate the leadership and careful consideration shown by Dave Duchscherer and the other Planning Board members who voted to recommend the rejection of this zoning request by TC Buffalo" said CRED4GI co-founder Cathy Rayhill. CRED4GI is a recently formed coalition of Grand Island residents opposed to Project Olive.

CRED4GI believes last night's decision is a potentially fatal blow to the developer's plans to build what would be one of the world's largest warehouses on Grand Island.

"This vote makes it clear: Amazon's so-called Project Olive is not a "done deal," concluded Rayhill. "Our coalition is confident that citizen awareness and opposition to this proposal will only continue to grow now that the Planning Board has signaled that Amazon may be stopped."