

Developers pitch PY Marine ideas

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PENN YAN — The Yates County Legislature heard two multi-million-dollar proposals this week for the former Penn Yan Marine Manufacturing site on Waddell Avenue.

Each includes a boat museum, but the similarity ends there. One is designed for retail opportunities; the other focuses on residential and office space.

Developers pitched their plans Monday at the Legislature's regular meeting, which was also attended by Chamber of Commerce President Mike Linehan, Industrial Development Agency Executive Director Steve Isaacs and Finger Lakes Boating Museum members.

Until the meeting, the boating museum's interest in having a permanent museum on part of the roughly 15-acre site was the only specific, publicized proposal for the property.

Rochester-based developer David Wegman described a \$10 to \$13 million project that would include a dry goods store and grocery side-by-side — each roughly 50,000 square feet — with parking, a drive-up automatic teller machine, and two 3,000-square-foot buildings for retail, office or restaurant opportunities off Lake Street.

Wegman considers a new 20,000-square-foot boat museum integral to the project.

"It adds to the total viability of the project," he said.

The old boat factory would be razed under his plans.

Boating museum President Ed Wightman said members have spoken with Wegman about his preliminary ideas, and while there are some issues that need to be resolved, the proposal is basically in keeping with the museum's mission. He wouldn't elaborate on what the issues are.

Legislator Doug Marchionda Jr., who is also Penn Yan mayor, said the proposal fits with the village's master plan, and the boardwalk that would outline the waterfront of the property is the "missing link" in terms of the outlet trail.

Along the waterfront, plans also include several residential units and a "Street of Shoppes" with a 7,000-square-foot building for retail/restaurant opportunities. The type of residential units is undetermined, Wegman said, adding that he expects to have market research conducted to see what is needed.

No tenants have been lined up for the new stores, so far, though Wegman said there is interest. Conversations have gone "as far as they can at this point" given the uncertainties, he noted.

The plan could lead to a couple hundred new jobs being created.

A fall 2004 or spring 2005 groundbreaking could be possible, Wegman said.

Wegman, who also spearheaded the \$3 million renovation and addition project at Esperanza Mansion, said the project will encompass about 20 acres, including the 14.8 owned by the county. He added that he has the option to buy the additional land, which is owned by the Ribble family.

The second proposal, a \$30 to \$35 million project, came from developer Jim Hoagland, of East Lake Road, a partner in what is being called the Boatworks Development Project. It would take four to five years to complete.

It includes a village square with 20 new townhouse units, and 56,000 square feet of loft-style townhouse units; a 24,000-square-foot boat museum; 67,000 square feet of office condos; and a wine museum.

The former boat factory would be renovated to accommodate the new uses.

Closer to the waterfront, there would be a new 10,000-square-foot restaurant at one end of a lake walk, which extends to Mace Street. Several single-family homes would be built near the waterfront, and there would be a new marina.

Developers said any purchase offer would be contingent on cleanup of the site. Yates County has been preparing for an investigation of the site to develop a plan for the cleanup and removal of debris.

Hoagland said his plan was two years in the making.

"This complements the need that exists," he said.

He emphasized the need for the village, the town of Milo and the county to work together to make the project happen.

There is some resistance to Hoagland's proposal, particularly since it include firemen's field, which is owned by the village but largely controlled by the Penn Yan Fire Department. Some of Hoagland's new townhouses are proposed for the field.

Marchionda said incorporating firemen's field in the plans is a "stretch" and a "huge hurdle." He asked what would happen if the field is unavailable, which he thinks it might be because it's "very near and dear" to the fire department.

Hoagland told the Legislature they want the area to be vibrant and green space to be a living space that is part of village activities. If the field is unavailable, they could look at rearranging other parts of the plans.

"They haven't done their homework," Linehan said after the meeting. "They would've known that firemen's field was not an option."

At last night's village meeting, Marchionda brought up the topic again, saying that no one approached the village about buying the land. He said he told the firefighters that the village would not sell the property from underneath them.

“It was an assumption on the developers’ part,” Marchionda said. “I don’t feel it’s our place to commit that to anyone without talking to the firefighters first.”

Marchionda also said firemen’s field is currently green space on the waterfront, and if the village ever sold it, they probably would never get it back. He added that it’s been an unwritten rule that any green space in the village would be kept that way.

Both proposals will be discussed by legislators and considered, though no timeline was given.

After the meeting, boating museum Vice President Bill Oben praised both developers for including a boat museum in their vision and acknowledging the cultural and economic value of having one. “But I think they need to gain a deeper understanding of the requirements of a boating museum,” Oben said.

Oben said officials think the boat museum should be on the water, though it is not in either proposal. Museum officials hope to have educational programs, workshops, boating safety courses, boat shows and exhibits at the museum, which is why accessibility to water is important to their search for a site.

Oben is also concerned about the space restrictions in each proposal but noted they are conceptual at this point, and museum officials would likely have conversations with the developers.

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