

Subject: Application to rezone 469 and 471 Smith Ridge Road

Dear Mr. Parsons, Mr. DeLucia, and members of the Town of Lewisboro Town Board and Zoning Board;

Just this morning my husband and I became aware of a public hearing scheduled for tomorrow relating to property which abuts the full rear of our property, located at 9 East Street in Vista. Unfortunately we are leaving on a pre-planned vacation in about an hour, and we cannot attend the hearing. We would like to be heard, however, and therefore we are sending this email.

As many of you are aware, we are fully in favor of creating a positive climate in our community for business as well as residences. We supported the efforts of Copia Home and Garden Center to create a safer and more visually pleasing frontage of their property on East Street, but we conditioned our support on the understanding that any business use of the property at 5 East Street would be sufficiently far from our residential property at 9 East Street that noise and activity would not interfere with our use of our own property. To that end the owners of Copia have already spent substantial amounts of time and money putting a sound and sight barrier consisting of pleasing bushes and trees between the properties. The efforts of Copia have the best interests of the community at heart, as evidenced by the fact that the owners live in this very community.

By contrast, the principal owner of 469 and 471 Smith Ridge Road, consisting of 3 lots discussed in their application, is an absentee landlord, and while Copia has improved its entire frontage on Route 123 since they have been in business, the owners of the Vista Market and the old church have done nothing in the 20 years since I have lived here to improve the visual appearance of that property. This leads me to be concerned that whatever plans they may have for this property will not include improving the area, but will be focused on lining the pockets of the owner, to the detriment of our community.

One area of major concern is in the petition itself, which misinforms the Town of the location -- not only does the property in question abut 5 East Street and the Copia property, as stated in the application, but it also abuts the entire rear of our property -- currently entirely forested -- and it abuts three properties on Robins Wood Lane, also providing a woodland atmosphere to the back of those properties. The Petition conveniently omits this very important fact of other homeowners directly impacted by this application. (By contrast the property involved with the Copia change only abutted our property, for which they have already developed a barrier, we were notified by Copia at every step of the way, and we were given multiple opportunities to make our feelings known). I feel confident that those owners, who have not been formally notified of this Petition, will have the same concerns that we do. Without any explanation of the plans being considered the owners have asked for a rezoning of the entire property to General Business. This could mean that the property would be razed of vegetation, and turned into a parking lot full of trucks, causing noise and fumes, potentially at all hours of the day and night. It would be possible for a business to be put in, with even more noise and disruption of our residential atmosphere, well back from the business atmosphere of Route 123. While it may very well be appropriate for the areas fronting Route 123 to be used for General Business, to rezone the areas behind the frontage property on Route 123 must require a clear plan, and particularly a plan which would include protective zones between any type of residence or

business construction and the residences located at 5 and 9 East Street, and along Robins Wood Lane. There also must be a clear plan for ingress and egress into that back property. Even now, with people just coming into the property to use the Vista Market, there are regular accidents. More use will increase the risk to community residents and to others passing through Vista.

We also wonder whether part of the plan could include some affordable housing. We fully support the need for the Lewisboro Community to find places in which to place affordable housing, and a small number of carefully designed units could easily be placed at the back of the existing Vista Market property in a manner which would not create unpleasant noise, or destruction of the existing green area at the back of that property. Of course, Vista should not be the only part of Lewisboro which incorporates affordable housing, and any plan should not intrude on the atmosphere and integrity of the residences now existing here in Vista. We cannot tell from the Petition whether some affordable housing option is part of what is being considered, but perhaps maintaining a residential zoning would be appropriate for this purpose.

We fully support the notion that Vista should have a community center. As much as Copia has added significantly to the vitality of Vista, the community center of Vista is at Oakridge Commons, across from the Vista Fire House and near two gas stations, as well as the newly constructed storage facility. The Petition is incorrect that the area next to Copia is a community center for business -- moreover, the history of neglect for that property shown by its owner leads us to the sincere concern that any added business on that property will not increase the quality of business in the area, but rather will decrease the quality of the entire area. Even now, while the Vista Market tenants are doing significant work on the inside of the building, the outside remains an eyesore, including consistently damaged parking areas, and what appears to be a mess in the back area of the property. As far as we know there are (or at least have been) tenants in the rather decrepit back building (whether they are or were legally residing there we do not know), and there are areas where illegal dumping has been permitted for years (again, as far as we know). This has gone on without limit by the non-resident owner, who has no interest in the vitality of the community, because he does not live here. His interest is to insure maximum return on his investment. We recognize that the Town has an interest in increasing tax revenues based on increased business in the area, but a willy-nilly change to this property will negatively affect the value of residential properties in the area, so any tax revenue would be offset by decreased property tax values of those residences.

We respectfully ask the Town to take these concerns into consideration as the Petition is considered. If we were not already planning to be away we would be there to put our concerns forward in person, but as I noted, we only just became aware of this Petition. We request that before any decisions are made a full hearing is permitted with notice to the affected residents whose property abuts the properties in question, so that all of us may be heard.

Please do not hesitate to contact us, although we will be unavailable for about a week, due to our vacation. Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,
Lisa Smith and William Bowen