

# Benderson agrees to delay of vote pending traffic study

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Benderson Development Co. has acquiesced to demands by the Amherst Town Board to postpone a vote on the rezoning of the Buffalo Shooting Club property on Maple Road until a new, independent traffic study can be completed.

The deadline to vote on the proposed \$44 million, mixed-use development on Maple Road has now been pushed back to March 3. The board was originally expected to vote on the rezoning proposal for Amherst Town Centre during this Tuesday's regular meeting.

Benderson has sought to convert the lead-contaminated gun club site into a 32-acre "lifestyle center" blending residential, commercial and retail development. But residents living in subdivisions across from site have put up strong resistance to the project, citing increased traffic conges-

tion as the biggest, unaddressed problem.

At the last regular board meeting, Supervisor Satish B. Mohan moved a resolution — which was approved, 6-1 — asking Benderson to pay for a new Amherst Town Centre project study.

As part of the resolution, Mohan requested that Benderson let the town delay acceptance of the required statement of environmental findings, which would effectively push back rezoning approval for the project.

Benderson representatives agreed last week to both requests.

Lawyer Jeffery D. Palumbo said the developer believes that the original traffic study commissioned by Benderson adequately addresses all of the town's concerns. He pointed out that Erie County's Division of Highways and Department of Environment and Planning offered no objections to the findings in Bender-

son's study.

"Despite all of that, Benderson has, throughout the entire process, advised the town that it would comply with reasonable requests," Palumbo said, "and to put the issue of traffic aside, we agreed to fund the study and agree to an independent review."

Mohan said traffic is a serious concern because there are four closely spaced entry/exit points running between the development and Maple Road.

"Having four very close access points on a 40-mph road has the potential to lead to traffic hazards," he said.

"We have to see, thoroughly, what we should do, and use the available traffic technologies to avoid these future problems now."

Based on past experience, he said, he estimated that the new study would cost about \$15,000.

Previously, Benderson representa-

tives said the company would be willing to install additional deceleration/acceleration lanes by the development's entry points to keep Maple Road traffic flowing.

But with the Town Board's support for a new traffic study, Palumbo said, Benderson is willing to wait for the new study to be completed and its conclusions added to the town's statement of environmental findings.

Palumbo said the company came up with the new March 3 deadline after talking with town planning officials about how long the new traffic study would take.

"We're extremely confident, after the study is reviewed, that the issues will have been resolved regarding traffic," he said, "and the town will then be in a position to vote in favor of a \$44 million project that will bring substantial tax revenue to the town."

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