



Questions and Answers About Anellotech

Friday, November 21, 2014

Dear Neighbors,

Many of you have contacted me this week with concerns about a proposal by a company called Anellotech to construct an addition to its existing building on the Pfizer Campus in Pearl River. Reports have circulated that this addition would include a 100 foot tall smokestack that would supposedly spew carcinogenic chemicals into the air. Obviously, any reasonable person hearing these reports would be concerned by the prospect that such a facility could be located in our town.

There are some things we do know about this proposal, and some we do not. But the bottom line is that I am taking concerns about Anellotech's plans very seriously and I will do everything within my power to ensure that the Anellotech project is thoroughly and carefully reviewed by the appropriate authorities. Though the legal authority to approve or deny this application rests with the appointed members of the Town's Planning and Zoning Boards, not with the Supervisor or the Town Board, personally, I will not support this proposal unless I am convinced there is no danger to public health.

Here are some of the questions that people have been asking, along with the answers, to the best of my knowledge. This is a long e-mail but I believe it's appropriate, given the high level of public concern about this proposal, to be as thorough as possible. You are welcome to reply with additional questions.

Q: What is Anellotech and what are they planning to build at the Pfizer site?

A: [Anellotech](#) is a company that aims to turn organic waste materials like

sawdust into petrochemical products that have a variety of industrial uses. In March, 2013, the company established their corporate headquarters and a research & design laboratory in a building on the Pfizer campus. The building is located in the northwest corner of the Pfizer site, approximately 1,800 feet (0.34 miles) from Middletown Road and 3,250 feet (0.62 miles) from Crooked Hill Road. In December, 2013 the company began operating a pilot plant at the site that produced samples of their products.

In July, 2014, Anellotech applied to the Town for the construction of an addition to their existing facility on the Pfizer campus, to house equipment for conducting research and testing a process for manufacturing commonly used, highly toxic, industrial chemicals (xylene, benzene and toluene) from renewable resource waste products like sawdust. According to documents submitted to the Orangetown Planning Board, the proposed addition has a footprint of 46 feet by 49 feet (approximately 80% the size of a standard suburban single family house) and a height of 84 feet. A 15 foot high vent smokestack pipe would be attached to the top of the building, bringing the total height to 99 feet. According to Anellotech, this pipe would be stainless steel and approximately 6 inches in diameter.

Anellotech says that if their expansion is approved and if their research project is successful, they will move forward with investment in a commercial scale facility for producing these chemicals in a southern state with a large lumber industry, such as Georgia or Mississippi, in closer proximity to sources of sawdust and other raw materials.

Q: What are the possible public health impacts of this facility?

A: Benzene, xylene and toluene are toxic chemicals and the community is understandably concerned these chemicals may be present in the air emissions from the facility, or that these or other chemicals may impact the environment or health through accidents involving storage and transportation. We all need verification of Anellotech's claim that their vent pipe emissions will not pose a threat to public health. These questions need to be answered, and concerns addressed, before Anellotech's plans could be approved. Orangetown does not have a Department of Health or a Department of Environmental Conservation, so the town is seeking input from the Rockland County Department of Health and the NYS DEC regarding these issues.

Q: Has the town approved this project? Did Anellotech come to the Supervisor and Town Board for approval?

A: No, the town has not approved this project at this time, although Anellotech has made presentations to the Planning, Zoning and Architectural review boards. The Town Board and Supervisor have no direct legal jurisdiction, as much as we, like everyone else, have concerns about public health. Anellotech has not asked the Supervisor or Town Board for approval because the Pfizer property is zoned for light industrial uses, and so the type of facility they plan to construct is already a permitted use and the company does not need the Town Board to give them a zone change.

Q: So does that mean this project is a done deal?

A: No. Even though Anellotech does not need a zoning change from the Town Board, there are still a number of reviews that have to take place before the Building Department could consider issuing a building permit. The Planning Board conducted a review of the project and on September 10 issued a "negative declaration" under State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) review, meaning that the Planning Board found that there would be no significant adverse environmental impacts from the project, and issued a preliminary site plan approval of the project subject to Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) review of "performance standards." The project would eventually have to go back to Planning Board for final approval.

The Zoning Board of Appeals ordinarily reviews site plans that request variances from the zoning rules, but in this case the project type meets the zoning requirement for its "Light Industrial" zone at the Pfizer campus. However, all new commercial construction must submit to a review by the ZBA of the "performance standards" of their proposed machinery, equipment, ventilation and materials. This technical review also covers odors, noise, vibration, air emissions and other engineering concerns. The ZBA relies upon an expert review by the Town's engineering department, which reviews the application and determines whether or not the proposed project is in compliance with Town code pertaining to performance standards.

In the case of Anellotech, following a ZBA meeting on November 19, where the board heard extensive public comment expressing public health concerns, the ZBA voted to postpone any decision until more information becomes available, specifically from the Rockland County Department of Health. Anellotech is scheduled to re-appear at the ZBA on January 21, 7:00 pm, at Greenbush Auditorium, 20 Greenbush Road in Orangeburg.

Q: Were Orangetown residents properly notified about meetings relating to the site?

A: Town law currently requires all property owners within 200 feet of a property going before a land use board to be notified by mail of the hearing date and time. In this case, the Department of Building, Zoning, Planning, Administration & Enforcement assures me that they did notify the owners of the 67 properties that are within 200 feet of the Pfizer site. The Town Codes in Orangetown (and Clarkstown) do not provide for notification of property owners located beyond town borders, even when they are located within 200 feet of a project site. Perhaps in the future the Town Board should consider expanding this 200 foot buffer to 300, 400, or 500 feet, in order to include a wider circle of neighboring properties for notification, and sending notices to non-town residents who happen to live within the notification area.

Q: Has Orangetown given Anellotech any grants or tax incentives to encourage them to locate in Pearl River?

A: No. Anellotech has not asked for any such incentives and Orangetown has not given them any. The New York State Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council did endorse the project in August, 2014, which could allow the company to receive assistance from the State.

Q: What happens next?

A: The proposal will continue to be reviewed by the Town's ZBA, the Rockland Department of Health, and other agencies. Anellotech will have to provide additional evidence to show that their operations will not harm residents. Residents should continue to offer their comments and concerns. As noted above, the next ZBA meeting is in January. My goal is to find out exactly what substances are expected to be in the emissions from Anellotech's proposed facility. This question has so far not been answered to my satisfaction.

Q: I have a question that wasn't answered in this e-mail, how can I get an answer?

A: Please call me or e-mail me and I will do my best to get you the information you need. I have also put together a packet of information relating to this application which is available in my office at Town Hall and which will be available early next week on the town's website. As more information becomes available I will add it to our packet.

One of the things that makes this a great town is the active engagement of residents in all aspects of our community. I look forward to a continuing conversation with all of you about this and any other issues.

Sincerely,
Andy Stewart
Town Supervisor



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