

Town of Orangetown

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Andrew Y. Stewart, Ph.D.
Supervisor

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Orangetown Selling Former State Psychiatric Center Land to Datacenter

On Tuesday, January 31, 2017, the Orangetown town board discussed selling sixty acres of former NYS hospital land to a single-user datacenter developer. The price is subject to negotiation and will remain private for now. The identity of the buyer will be disclosed at or before the regular town board meeting on Tuesday, February 7.

Supervisor Stewart said, "Myself and the town council feel strongly that datacenters are a great fit for this site – they generate very little traffic and they pay taxes. High density housing is not acceptable due to tax and school impacts, and very few businesses can afford the \$40M estimated cost of abatement and demolition at this site. Since time is money, to get this deal I worked with town staff to create a very aggressive review and approval process that, if all goes well, will yield final site plan approval by the Planning Board on June 14, demolition in July and construction beginning in November. I thank members of the Town Board, and town staff in the Building, Engineering, Attorney, Finance, Assessor and Parks Departments, for helping to make this deal work. Mostly, I thank the datacenter's team of professionals for choosing Orangetown and helping to make our dream of redeveloping the former state land a reality. We are also very hopeful NYS Empire State Development will provide adequate support, and all the other contingencies fall into place as expected."

On January 31, the datacenter developers presented a conceptual site plan showing a large building roughly centered in the "core" area of the town's RPC land, a 60 acre parcel bounded by Convent Road on the north, Oak Street on the south, and lying between First and Third Avenues. First and Third Avenues would remain open for public traffic. The Town Board will discuss proposed zoning, to be called "RPC-Office Park", the terms of sale and the approval process. At its meeting on February 7, the Town Board will commence a state-mandated SEQRA review on the sale of public land and adoption of zoning for the site, including setting a public hearing on these actions for March 14.

Since the cleanup and redevelopment of the site yields a net environmental benefit of reduced rainwater runoff and reduced contamination, and there is space for ample setbacks from residential and institutional neighbors, the approval process is fairly predictable. A major focus for the Planning Board, which should receive detailed site plans by late March, will be the planning and permitting of the demolition and construction process to prevent any negative impacts on neighbors from dust, noise or traffic. Assuming the developer meets deadlines, the project may be ready for final site plan review as early as mid-June, with demolition and construction taking place between July and early 2018.

Orangetown is proud to already have several large and small datacenters operating here. Town staff collaborated closely with the development of the Bloomberg data center, including an easement for fiber optic cable along the edge of town land. The Bloomberg project, and others nearby, demonstrated the availability of fiber optics, electricity and security, three crucial factors for data center development. The fourth factor is the clarity and efficiency of the review and approval process.

Stewart said, "Weeks ago, the applicant told me their proposal hinged in part on the town providing a pathway to approval by the end of June. We provided that roadmap and set of deadlines for submission of complete plans. Orangetown is "all hands on deck" for this project, and I am very impressed with the professionalism and intensity of the applicant's teamwork as well. Working together we can get this done and finally turn the corner on the RPC site."

Assuming this project moves forward as planned, there are still other vacant town and state lands to be developed. Specifically, the Draft Redevelopment Plan, which can be accessed on the town's website, and the Orangetown community, have long sought improved access to the waterfront via a new park on the shores of Lake Tappan. In addition, the upland area known as "Lot 1", located opposite the town soccer complex, and the lands located between Orangeburg Road and Old Orangeburg Road, north of the Blaisdell Rd intersection, are possible development sites. The town can satisfy the state-mandated allocation, written into the deed of the land from NYS, of 216 acres for community and recreational use by keeping in public ownership Broadacres Golf course, waterfront land and assorted smaller areas, including a portion of Lake Tappan the town owns.

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