

Wal-Mart Needs To Re-think And Re-design

At the first Wetlands hearing, we heard repeatedly how Wal-Mart's engineering of the proposed Storm Water Runoff Retention Basins CONSERVATIVELY met or exceeded state and local requirements. Upon review of the plans, the intervener's engineering firm concluded that they were incomplete and failed to meet Town of Brooklyn Regulations as well as sound engineering practices detailed in various DEP publications. The applicant's team decided to go back and do 4-5 more days of drilling and testing in the area, and determined that revisions WERE needed. They apparently DID NOT have all their ducks in a row as some proponents like to claim that they did, and tonight's testimony illustrated that the revised plans are flawed as well.

The detention basins are designed to filter out solids, NOT chemical pollutants associated with parking lot runoff. There is an insufficient amount of ground between the bottom of the proposed basins, and the ceiling of the water table below them. That water table fluctuates seasonally, logically being highest in spring, and runs north into the immediately adjacent, sensitive wetlands and vernal pools which are part of the important watershed that feeds into Long Brook and the Quinebaug River. Water tables need to be monitored in the spring, during and after the melt, and have not been. It's no coincidence that WM did their initial testing in the fall and early winter and filed an application when water tables are low and accurate environmental impact studies are all but impossible to do.

Although state statutes provide 65 days for the commission to deliberate on the facts before making a decision, it was indicated at the P&Z meeting last week that the Wetlands Commission was ready to make a decision last night, suggesting that they have already made up their minds. After such solid evidence against the plans given by the opposition and the INDEPENDENT FIRM HIRED BY THE TOWN, the commission has wisely decided to deliberate on it for a month. If they allow this project to move forward regardless of the testimony presented by Attorney Shansky, Mr. Goodin, Milone & MacBroom and the concerned public, they would not only be acting irresponsibly, they'd be doing the people and the environment of the community a huge disservice and be demonstrating a clear prejudice in favor of this development. This plan is simply too big for this site! They have reduced their footprint design in other towns to as little as 109,000 sq. ft. (rather than the proposed 162,000) when needed. This would not only fit the site better creating less of an environmental impact, allow the property owners to sell, create an 'anchor' store that certain mis-guided individuals think they need in order to draw more out-of-state based chains, and provide virtually the same tax revenue. But the spokesman for the 'Welcome Wal-Mart' group, not-so-sensitively claimed that they want a BIG store. I guess there just isn't enough cheap, imported, low quality junk to pick from around here. It doesn't seem to matter what happens to Brooklyn or the surrounding communities. Al Norman of Sprawl-Busters said it best, 'We start talking about quality of life and they start talking about cheap underwear'. Wal-Mart needs to shrink this plan considerably or find another town!