

1668 Trumansburg Rd.
Ithaca, NY 14850
September 23, 2003

Ulysses Town Planning Board
Attn: Richard Coogan
Ulysses Town Hall
10 Elm Street
Trumansburg, NY 14886

Members of the Ulysses Town Planning Board:

I would like to express my concern over some of the features of the public storage units which have been proposed for construction at 1658 Trumansburg Rd. (Tax Parcel 34-3-11.1). I own the property adjoining this lot at the back (1668 Trumansburg Rd., Tax Parcel 34-3-7.21, zoned single-family residential); my residence, which is currently assessed at \$90,000, is within 70' of the proposed facility.

My first question regards zoning: Does zoning in this area permit commercial development set back further than 300' from Route 96? The proposed development extends over 400' back from Route 96; it was my understanding when I purchased the property at 1668 Trumansburg in 1994 that the depth of the commercial zoning was limited to 300 feet--this applied at that time to all the properties, including the residences, south of Van Dorn's Corners fronting on the west side of Route 96 (including 400' at the north end of my property fronting on Route 96).

The 200' set-back from Route 96 appears to be motivated by a desire to hide the facility out of sight of the highway... unfortunately this makes it rather obtrusive, from the point of view of my living room, and my neighbor's back yards! As designed, users of the rental units on the northernmost side would be situated in view of the rear windows of residences to the north, substantially diminishing their privacy. It appears no margin or buffer is provided in the back, and the plan as proposed apparently eliminates all trees along the back and side of the lot. (The current Draft Zoning Ordinance of 2002 would require that commercial projects abutting medium density residential districts should incorporate a fence or a vegetative buffer 35' deep.)

As a residential neighbor I would prefer a site plan that left more space at the back of the lot, along with some trees or a fence as a screen along the back and sides of the property.

Several other features of the plan appear to have the potential for undesirable environmental and social impacts on the neighborhood:

1) Is there adequate provision for drainage of the site in the site plan? The soil on this site is very poorly drained; during periods of heavy rainfall or snowmelt it becomes waterlogged. The "drainage swale" in the site plan is labelled with three "dams": what is the purpose of these dams? Will the plan adequately handle additional run-off which will be created by the large roofed area of the buildings?

The inclusion of the "dams" raises a question over whether there will be problems with standing water in the drainage swale, and correspondingly, infestation by mosquitos. Since the adjacent area harbors abundant wildlife, including pheasant and wild turkeys, controlling mosquito infestations using

pesticides would be undesirable.

The plan specifies a “prepped surface” for the roadbed without specifying the material. Depending on the material used, this could aggravate problems with runoff.

2) The only fence specified is, oddly enough, across the *front* of the buildings housing the storage units. This is labelled as a “Silt Fence” in the drawing, so it’s not clear what function this fence is supposed to fulfill; however, it appears it is intended to screen the facility from observers on Route 96. It seems to me that this would conflict with both the public safety of the local neighborhood and the security of the facility, since such a shield would screen the site from the view of passers-by on Route 96, including police vehicles.

Unfortunately, it is the case that such public storage facilities may attract undesirable activities, such as on-site camping, storage of stolen property, or illegal dumping of trash, and this lone fence across the front would help to conceal such activities—which might include theft of items from the storage units.

3) As noted above, sometimes renters of such facilities violate their contracts by engaging in illegal dumping, a problem which has been greatly aggravated since Tompkins County now levies fees on users of the Waste Facility, and moreover restricts access to the Waste Facility to residents of the County who have paid the County’s Waste Removal tax and purchased a vehicle sticker. What provision is to be made for trash collection and removal from the facility? With no fence surrounding the facility, renters may be tempted to resort to dumping trash on the adjoining properties.

4) Provisions for 23 50-watt sodium lamps create a concern over the amount of light emitted by the facility. Will this lighting be on all night, or limited to the evening hours, or triggered by access to the facility? Are these intended to provide “security” as well as lighting for renters? There is a legitimate need to provide adequate lighting for renters during reasonable business hours, and the lighting is not excessive for that purpose. As regards security, with the fence provided in the plan across the front of the facility, it’s difficult to see how overnight lighting could enhance the security of the facility, since the fence would (presumably) block any view from the highway.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns regarding the site plan under review. In my opinion, if a zoning variance is required for construction of this project as currently planned, it should be denied.

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders