

June 1, 2026

New Lebanon Planning Board
Town of New Lebanon
New Lebanon, NY 12125

RE: Public Comment – Tilden Commons

Dear Members of the Planning Board,

I am writing as a property owner in the Town of New Lebanon who happens to live on Route 20 near the proposed Tilden Commons project. I am submitting this letter as a formal public comment in opposition of the proposed 41-unit, affordable housing units and grocery store. I can appreciate the need for more affordable housing and the community's interest in having a grocery store closer to town however, I believe that the location for this project presents certain risks to the surrounding neighborhood and to the New Lebanon community. I have attended several meetings in person, listened to the recordings, and reviewed documentation.

The State Environmental Quality Review Act or SEQRA is designed for government agencies to identify potential environmental impacts and consider how alternatives may reduce those impacts. The types of impacts reviewed may include water supply, groundwater, traffic, noise, community character, land use, and public services. To date, concerns have been brought to the attention of Tilden developers by the board, engineers, and the public that seem to remain unresolved today.

The site which the proposed Tilden project would occupy sites on a principal aquifer which can be a significant source of drinkable groundwater for our town. NYS Department of Health Regulations require that a public water system must be located at least 200 feet or more from a sites septic system to prevent contaminants from potentially entering the drinking water supply. Tilden developers have stated that they will seek a waiver from NYS Department of Health of this safeguard. The request for a waiver raises questions about whether adequate protection of groundwater resources has been demonstrated and whether the potential impacts to neighboring private wells have been fully evaluated. It is also hard to believe that this subject has rarely been discussed in public meetings. One would think that this would've been addressed and discussed sooner rather than later.

Furthermore, the hydrogeological evaluation appears to have limitations, including the inability to monitor many nearby wells and acknowledged interference from off-site pumping during testing. The report shows that only 5 neighboring wells were included and the remaining wells were unmonitored during testing. The report also notated interference from off-site pumping, which complicated interpretation of test results. While the report ultimately concludes that adverse impacts are unlikely, that conclusion is based on limited monitoring data and assumptions regarding well depths and aquifer conditions. Given that this project is proposed within an area that serves as an important groundwater resource for the community, I respectfully request that the Planning Board carefully evaluate whether sufficient data exists to support a

finding that neighboring wells, groundwater quality, and long-term aquifer sustainability will not be adversely affected.

The water table in this part of New Lebanon is 4-6 feet below grade. It is wet and we are surrounded with the creek on both sides of Route 20. Based on my experience as a nearby property owner, this area is characterized by shallow groundwater, wet soils, and recurring flooding during periods of heavy rain and snowmelt. Given these existing conditions, I am concerned that the addition of impervious surfaces, stormwater infrastructure, and a wastewater system could alter drainage patterns and affect neighboring properties. I don't feel that enough has been explored about potential flooding to Tilden's neighboring properties; this would include those West of Tilden along Route 20.

Other issues that seem relevant to SEQR are traffic, noise, and the library.

The current noise level and volume of traffic – especially during the warmer months – is almost intolerable now on 20. So much so that I can't open my windows while watching TV or have a conversation in the front of my home. With more density of people and families coupled with deliveries for the proposed grocery store, traffic and noise will increase for everyone living along that route. What will prevent deliveries from being made early in the morning for either supplies or trash? Existing neighbors don't want to hear tractor trailers beeping while they back up or dumpsters being banged while picked up. There doesn't seem to be enough of a separation between parking and entrance for proposed Tilden residents, tractor trailer traffic, and traffic entering the store. This, to me, is a huge safety issue for children especially!

Also, to accommodate deliveries there is a proposal to widen Tilden Road which results in loss of property on both sides of Tilden. More importantly, the library parking area is small to begin with and many times I go by and see cars parked on the grass and out into Tilden. Parking will now be more of a challenge should the road widen and this seems to be a negative impact on the few resourceful programs offered in town-especially for children and families.

One of the last meetings I attended in person I was shocked to witness developers almost seeming to strong arm the planning board into making an important decision that night. I was happy to see the board, especially the chair, not fall prey to intimidation tactics and can only hope that they continue to do due diligence and protect the citizens of New Lebanon.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Planning Board issue a Positive Declaration under SEQR and require the preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Study so these issues can be thoroughly evaluated before any final decision is made.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Francoeur
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