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Village Official Seeking A Variance

ZBA member wants four lots on Hill Street

BY ERIN MCKINLEY

A Southampton Village property owner—and village official—is getting resistance from his Hill Street neighbors about converting a property from an industrial use back to a residential use.

James Zuhusky, a member of the village's Zoning Board of Appeals, is seeking to have his two properties, located at 550 and 554 Hill Street, which formerly housed Despatch of Southampton Moving and Storage Company, which he owns, converted

into a four-lot subdivision that will restore the street to a fully residential area. The project would take both properties from a non-conforming use back to a conforming use.

Mr. Zuhusky will need variances from the ZBA, since only three lots are allowed by current zoning, and approval from the Planning Board.

Recently, several neighbors for both properties expressed concerns that the houses would

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create more noise than did Despatch.

Jeff Bragman, an East Hampton-based attorney representing the neighbors, maintained that eliminating Despatch was "not a huge benefit to the neighborhood. ... In fact, the neighbors think a four-lot plan would generate considerably more activity."

According to Gil Flanagan, the Southampton-based attorney representing Mr. Zuhusky, the application is seeking an

area variance for both properties. Both lots, he said, are located in separate residential zones, one requiring 1-acre lots and the other requiring 3-acre lots. If approved, all four lots would be under 1 acre in size.

He added that the concerns of the neighbors are being taken into consideration, but there are also some who support the proposal.

The first step with the application, according to Mr. Flanagan, is for the ZBA and the Planning Board to decide which one will be the lead agency on this proj-

ect. At this time, he said, it looks like the Planning Board will handle the application, because that is the primary agency to handle subdivision applications. He also added that Mr. Zuhusky has recused himself from all discussions regarding the proposal during ZBA meetings.

This week, Mr. Flanagan said he is hoping to have the State Environmental Quality Review Act, or SEQRA, process started in the next few weeks. After that, is finalized, it will be up to the village's Planning Board and ZBA to make a final decision.

Mr. Zuhusky, he said, is hoping to be able to start construction sometime next year. Mr. Flanagan added that at this time there are no construction plans in place, and a contractor has not yet been hired.

Mr. Flanagan added that the proposal is still in the beginning stages and nothing has been finalized yet. He said there will be several public hearings in the future.

"It will take some time," Mr. Flanagan said. "But first we have to establish a lead agency and start the coordinated review."