

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is the approval by the Town of Mount Pleasant Planning Board of applications for a Site Plan and Wetlands Permit and by the Zoning Board of Appeals of a Special Permit for the development of Westchester University -- a co-educational liberal arts university with a Catholic orientation. The site for Westchester University is located on an unimproved 164.7 acre parcel bordered by Columbus Avenue and the Summit Office Park on the west, the Legion of Christ Inc. Training and Conference Center to the north, West Lake Drive and a residential area to the east, and Stevens Avenue and an office complex, Town recreation area and a residential area to the south. The property is zoned OB-1, which permits a college subject to approval of a Special Permit. The proposed action meets all zoning requirements.

The proposed development plan for which approval is requested includes nine buildings containing 628,400 SF of area to be used as: academic, dormitory, recreational, and administrative facilities; 24 townhouses for resident faculty/staff; 30 acres of playfields; and 755 off-street parking spaces. There will be a soccer field and a football field, which will accommodate inter-collegiate events, including bleacher seats for 250 persons.

The internal vehicular and pedestrian network will be owned and maintained by the University. The internal circulation will be by means of a two-way loop road with access only from Lozza Drive. There also is a proposed emergency road connection to the adjacent Training and Conference Center road network owned by the applicant, which would provide emergency access to Columbus Avenue and West Lake Drive. The site will be connected to the existing Town water and sanitary sewer systems at the University's expense.

All buildings will be set back at least 200 feet from a street boundary and 100 feet from adjoining property. This perimeter buffer is intended to remain undisturbed. Where the existing vegetation may not fully buffer the development, additional landscaping will be

added to increase the density of the buffer. The only location where the buffer will be disturbed is adjacent to the Training and Conference Center owned by the applicant. Site lighting will be oriented so as not to impact on the surrounding areas.

Appendix 7 of this DEIS presents a plan under which there might be additional development of about 425,000 SF in five additional buildings. There has been no decision to develop the additional buildings. It is not known when, or whether such additional development would take place. The proposed action does not depend in any way on the future development being considered. Certain of the underground utilities proposed under the applicant's plan are sized to accommodate possible future development. The purpose is to minimize future site disturbance if the additional development is undertaken. The applicant understands that any future development will be subject to its own environmental review and approvals.

B. ALTERNATIVES

1. No Action

One alternative is to leave the site as it is. This is not feasible since the property is zoned and highly desirable for a variety of uses. The property is privately owned and the owner has no intention of leaving it undeveloped.

2. Development of Project Site for Office Development Under the OB-1 Existing Zoning

a. Alternate A

Alternate A involves the development of the site as a 4,053,950 SF office park. A major portion of the off-street parking would be under the office buildings or within parking structures. This alternative would be permissible under current zoning regulations.

b. Alternate B

Alternate B reduces the development to 2,500,000 SF of office space to reduce the proportion of structure parking. This alternative would be permissible under current zoning regulations.

Both Alternate A and Alternate B would have far greater environmental impacts than the proposed action -- Westchester University.

c. Master Plan Submitted to the Town May 23, 2003

The May 23, 2003 Master Plan submitted to the Town contained 1,037,700 SF of building area. The Town Planning Board provided a number of comments which led the applicant to submit the proposed action at a lesser scale of development (628,400 SF). The Master Plan would have some greater environmental impacts than the proposed action.

d. Other Sites in the Town for the Westchester University

After a review, it was determined that there are no other sites in the Town or nearby area that are suitable or large enough for the development of Westchester University and which are zoned to permit a university.

C. POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

There are several potential significant adverse impacts that could result from the proposed action, but all will be mitigated either by elements of the site plan or off-site actions.

1. The construction of Westchester University will involve clearing and grading of natural areas and will create approximately 29 acres (17.6% of the site) of impervious surfaces (buildings, parking lots, roadways). Large portions of the site, particularly on the perimeter, will be undisturbed. Approximately 30 acres of the site, including approximately 16 acres within the development area, were disturbed by a tornado on

July 12, 2006. The winds resulted in the destruction of approximately 879 trees on the property.

2. The currently unimproved site is presently being used by the owner for its permitted religious purposes as an outdoor place of worship pursuant to a fully realized and court determined good faith plan. The Westchester University proposal will create a visual impact on some properties with views of the site. However, the existing trees on the perimeter of the site will remain untouched and where necessary additional plantings will be added to increase the buffer. Therefore, the buildings to be developed will be visible off-site from only a few scattered viewpoints, and only in the winter months when the leaves are off the trees.
3. During construction some noise and dust will impact nearby properties, but the impacts will be largely mitigated by adherence to Westchester County Best Management Practice Guidelines.
4. There are several areas on the site which meet the wetlands definition used by the US Corps of Engineers and/or of the Town of Mt. Pleasant wetlands ordinance. In order to provide access between the east and west portions of the site, it is necessary to cross the largest wetland with two vehicular roads and a pedestrian path. A smaller wetland is crossed by a vehicular road. The plan mitigates the disturbance to the wetlands by selecting crossing points at the narrowest width locations, by using an existing dirt road crossing and by bridging the wetlands. There will be no fill within the wetlands, no impervious surfaces created, and no change to their configuration. There will be unavoidable temporary disturbance of buffer areas during the construction stage. This will be mitigated by reseeding with a native seed mix.
5. The substitution of buildings and paved areas for natural areas will increase site runoff during the peak storm periods. To address this potential impact the plan creates on-site detention areas to control runoff during peak storms and to protect

water quality. As a result there will be no increase in off-site flow during peak storms nor a decrease in water quality at all times.

6. The following summarizes the mitigation measures suggested in Section III.E.e. The determination of which conditions require mitigation was made in accordance with the specific provisions of the Scoping Document adopted by the Town of Mt. Pleasant Planning Board. Most of these mitigation measures involve only the re-timing of traffic signals, reallocating green signal time between the signal phases. No changes in signal cycle lengths are suggested. At a few locations, all on State highways, physical improvements are suggested. It should be understood that the need for these improvements occurs in the No-Build condition and while they will serve the project none are attributable to traffic generated by Westchester University.

(a) Signalized Intersections – County Roads

Columbus Avenue and Rose Hill Shopping Center. Signal Retiming – P.M. peak hour

Columbus Avenue and Lozza Drive/The Summit Access Drive. Signal Retiming

Columbus Avenue Southbound and Stevens Avenue. Signal Retiming

Columbus Avenue Northbound and Stevens Avenue. Signal Retiming

Columbus Avenue and Lakeview Avenue. Signal Retiming – A.M. peak hour

Stevens Avenue, Commerce Street and Elwood Avenue. Signal Retiming

(b) Signalized Intersections – State Highways

Marble Avenue and Saw Mill River Parkway Connector Road. Signal Retiming – allocate significant more green signal time to northbound left turn/through signal phase

Marble Avenue/Kensico Road and Broadway/Franklin Avenue. Signal Retiming. Level of Service F conditions occur in the P.M. peak hour in the 2005 Existing

and 2010 No-Build and Build conditions, and further improvements are required at this location.

Stevens Avenue and Taconic State Parkway. Install an exclusive right-turn lane on the westbound Stevens Avenue approach. Add a right turn arrow to the signal installation for the westbound right turn movement, to operate concurrently with the southbound left turn phase. Retime the traffic signal. These improvements suggested for both the 2010 No-Build and Build conditions.

Lakeview Avenue and Taconic State Parkway. Install exclusive left turn lanes on the eastbound and westbound Lakeview Avenue approaches, to operate concurrently with the eastbound and westbound through/right turn movements. Revise signal timing. These improvements suggested for both the 2010 No-Build and Build conditions.

Grasslands Road/Routes 100/100C, Knollwood Road/Route 100A, Bradhurst Avenue/Route 100. Signal Retiming. Add an exclusive left turn phase for eastbound traffic, needed in the A.M. peak hour.

(c) Unsignalized Intersections

Nanny Hagen Drive and West Lake Drive. Trim vegetation (hedge) to improve sightline to the west from West Lake Drive (an existing condition).

Nanny Hagen Drive and Route 120. Monitor traffic to determine if and when installation of a traffic signal might meet the warrants of the New York State Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Upgrade pavement on Nanny Hagen Road approach (an existing condition).

Chelsea Street and Route 100. Monitor traffic to determine if and when installation of a traffic signal might meet the warrants of the New York State Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

(d) Pedestrian Circulation

Install a sidewalk on the north side of Lozza Drive between Columbus Avenue and the Westchester University site.

The applicant will pay for the cost of the sidewalk installation, (d) above. With respect to the other improvements, the applicant will pay for a fair proportion of the costs, basically using the ratio of the applicant's peak hour generated traffic divided by the total Build year traffic at each of the intersections.