

Ambitious Tyngsboro development plan wins early support from selectmen

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Walter Erickson, of Westford Road Development LLC, details his company's plans for a major mixed-use project before the Board of Selectmen last night. The three-phase development would sit on a 102-acre triangle bordered by Westford and Middlesex roads. SUN / JOHN COLLINS

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TYNGSBORO -- Christmas came early to Town Hall yesterday at 6:05 p.m., Selectman Bob Jackson said.

That's when developer Walter Erickson, speaking for Westford Road Development LLC, unveiled his company's proposal to build a three-phase project on a 102-acre triangle of woodland bordered by Westford and Middlesex roads. The development would include:

* a 40-acre solar-cell farm;

* "Potash Hill Office Park," a \$13 million, 200,000-

square-foot office building;

* and "Tyngsborough Commons," a \$43 million "lifestyle center" modeled after Mashpee Commons, which would combine 150 two-bedroom condominiums with 126,000 square feet of commercial and office space.

The land, currently owned by Sycamore Networks Real Estate, sits beside the Tyngsboro Sportsmen's Club.

The ambitious project would create hundreds of jobs, generate yearly tax revenue of \$1,065,000 for the town, contribute a new soccer field and playground for public use, and enhance Tyngsboro's image as a modern, "green energy-conscious" community, while requiring very little in the way of town services, Erickson said.

"It's quite exciting to learn of this development in what is really the last remaining golden-nugget undeveloped parcels in town," said Selectmen Chairman Rich Lemoine.

Selectmen voted unanimously to write a letter of support, offering their general backing to Erickson as he goes before the Planning Board, Zoning Board and other town committees seeking approvals to move the project forward.

Westford Development LLC is partnering with Ansar Energy LLC to set up the solar field, a \$18 million project that should be eligible for 30 percent matching federal "green energy" funds, Erickson said. The solar panels on the land will generate 5 megawatts of electricity, enough to power about 1,500 homes on the New England Power Grid, he said.

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"Christmas comes early to Tyngsboro with a proposal like this," Jackson said. "I will make every effort to help you move this project forward."

Selectman Elizabeth Coughlin was even more enthusiastic.

"Tyngsboro, you're not dreaming. This is real and it's happening. This thing is so big, fantastic and so significant. ... I'm so happy that I lived long enough to see this," she said.

Erickson said Westford Road Development hopes "to be in a position to begin construction in the fall of 2010. However, to meet this time frame, we will surely need the town's cooperation."

Erickson, a lifelong Tyngsboro resident, most recently built the upscale Maple Ridge housing development, and Tyngsboro's only highway billboard on land he owns next to Route 3. He told The Sun that the Westford Road Development, as proposed, would be the largest project ever constructed in town.

The project was in the conceptual stage for about six months prior to last night's unveiling to the selectmen, he said. Previous development proposals for the land fell short because of a lack of a town sewer line connection in the property, which Erickson said his development company will finance.

Selectman Karyn Puleo congratulated Erickson on his "incredible vision in taking this huge piece of land, incorporating the photovoltaic energy idea, and giving us a taxable parcel. It's a win-win for everybody," said Puleo.

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