

**KNOW
FIMFO**



To:

Town Of Highland Planning Board
Upper Delaware Council
National Park Service, Upper Delaware
Department Of Environmental Conservation - New York State
Department Of Transportation - New York State
Department Of Health - New York State
Sullivan County Division Of Planning And Community Development
Delaware River Basin Commission, Commissioners & Executive Director,
Sullivan County Industrial Development Agency,
Assemblywoman, Aileen Gunther

From: KNOW FIMFO & Delaware Riverkeeper Network

Date: September 14, 2022

Subject: *Supplemental comment regarding proposed Northgate Resorts development in Barryville, NY called Camp FIMFO*

Northgate Resorts wants to transform an affordable family-owned summer camp on the Delaware River near Barryville, NY into “Camp FIMFO”, a national RV destination and Water Theme Park planned in a known flood zone. While Northgate asserts its proposed project will maintain the same number of campsites before and after development so as to suggest that its development project would not be a major change of use, the truth is that major changes and development are planned – as one Upper Delaware Council Commissioner stated, this may be the largest development in the region. In addition to adding the Mountain Roller Coaster, a mini-golf course, and a swimming pool to accommodate the entire grounds, of the 342 campsites that exist currently, only 56 will remain tent campsites – an 84% reduction; the rest will be turned into sites for RVs including water and sewer hookups, permanent cabins, or sites with constructed glamping pods or safari type tents. The footprint and impact of a tent campsite versus RVs, cabins and glamping pods -- including hookups for water, sewer and power -- is dramatically different. Further, the transformation from tent sites to RV and glamping will clearly price-out large segments of the population. While full consideration of that social justice issue may not be the responsibility of Northgate (though you would think it should be), it should be fully considered by local, regional and state agencies whose mission is, in part, to weigh the environmental and social justice issues on projects such as this.

As community members who have reviewed the documents and plans Northgate Resorts is placing on the record with government entities and agencies, we find it is increasingly clear that there is a wealth of missing information and a multitude of questions in need of answer. The lack of transparency, and claims

that stretch credulity, add to public concern and opposition. From what is already known about the project and the applicant, there is sufficient reason for concern and to simply reject this proposal.

Before the Highland Planning Board or any other government agency greenlights this project, we need to receive full and complete plans, environmental analyses, traffic assessments and economic information, including what the company will pay in taxes to support the many public services it will require, from use of roads to emergency services and police support.

FIMFO says that estimated water usage will be 25,000 gallons per day (gpd), and yet the project is designed for 40,000 gpd. Is FIMFO anticipating additional future expansions for which it is planning and preparing? If so, what are they? It is important that any approvals given today are based on an understanding of the full plans FIMFO has for the site. Absent full information, no government entity or agency should be granting approvals for this project.

What legal limitations will FIMFO be placing on the undeveloped portions of the site to give assurance to the community that what is proposed and approved today is the full expected development planned for the site?

What is the full capacity of the planned septic treatment plan being proposed? Is the planned capacity intended to accommodate future development FIMFO has in mind but is not disclosing to the town, community and regulatory agencies?

The septic plan says that some of the systems may be as close as 100 feet to water supply wells on the site. What expert analysis has been prepared to determine if such close proximity between sewage treatment and water supply wells is safe?

The assertion that the coaster will only attract 17 additional vehicles a day seems disingenuous. What information has been provided to confirm this assertion? What limitations on usage of the coaster can FIMFO give to assure this will be the maximum use?

Why is FIMFO proposing significantly more parking than it says it needs? Is this to accommodate future development? Or additional traffic should FIMFO decide to open up the swimming and mini golf facilities to the public?

Given the changing plans, it is unclear where FIMFO is planning to build the swimming pool and mini golf facilities: In the 100-year floodplain? Or the 500-year floodplain? Or in existing forested land that would be cut and cleared and change the unique and mature forested riparian corridor of the Upper Delaware corridor? No decisions regarding this project can be made absent final details on the location of these facilities vis a vis the River and floodplain. Being in either the 100-year or 500-year floodplain is a hazard waiting to happen for the River. Climate change has been increasing the level and frequency of flooding in our River communities. Placing any such infrastructure in the floodplain will most certainly introduce structures and chlorinated water, and potentially other chemicals, into the River when the floods do come. No such construction should be approved for either the 100-year or 500-year floodplain, or on the forested slopes that protect the water quality of the River and make the River the scenic quality it holds through Wild & Scenic designation.

While the application materials do not discuss details regarding critical elements of the swimming pool and foreseeable hazards given its location in proximity to a river that floods, we have consulted with a pool expert and identified other key issues and foreseeable hazards that must be discussed and addressed:

- The pool will require high voltage power to support the pumps. Power would also be needed for things like lights. It is dangerous to have such power on land that could be subject to flooding. This infrastructure is at risk from being washed into the river in the event of a major flood event.
- Fencing will most certainly have to surround the pool area for safety purposes. This fencing, during times of high water, will catch debris and has the potential to be washed away into the river creating additional downstream hazards depending on where it ends up.
- There is the potential that during flooding the pool may actually pop out of the ground and be washed downstream.
- The pool will require significant quantities of chemicals stored on site that may spill in concentrated levels during flooding
- Even during routine maintenance when the pool is being cared for, there needs to be a plan to prevent chemical spillage and other foreseeable hazards.

Among the suspect assertions from FIMFO is that the mountain coaster being proposed will not result in increased noise to the community. We would like additional information to back up such a claim. Lighting of the pool and lighting of the coaster and lighting of additional cabin areas and infrastructure would also be obtrusive to the ecology and the scenic night skies of the Upper Delaware Basin. Even downward lights affect and influence the behavior and health of stream insects and can lead to increased predation and decreased natural patterns these animals rely on with existing night time skies. (LED lights are of course energy efficient but the very nature of the brightness of these lights disrupts natural systems and can even influence tree health – artificial light has many drawbacks.)

Application materials for the project say that currently unpermitted septic systems on the site will “more than likely” be decommissioned. We would like firm confirmation that decommissioning will, in fact, happen. It is inappropriate not to make this commitment, suggesting that the system might actually be put back into use by the operation, thereby bypassing the review and approval of the facility as part of the permitting process by agencies and the town.

When discussing parking, application materials say that on the east side of the site, 302 parking spaces will be provided but then states that only 83 vehicles are anticipated. It also says that it will be increasing parking on the west side at the welcome center by 53 spaces. Why is there any need for parking on the west side of Route 97 if all parking needs are being accommodated by the parking lot on the east side? In addition, why is the parking on the east over 3 times the asserted anticipated number of vehicles? All of this would suggest that there are more phases of the project anticipated; and/or that the public use of the coaster, pool and minigolf are far greater than what is being asserted (i.e. 17 vehicles for the coaster and no public vehicles for the pool and mini-golf which FIMFO says will not be open to the public). Pavement for parking inflicts ecological harm, increasing stormwater runoff, increasing the area where vehicle pollution such as oil and brake pad dust can build up and be washed away during storm events, and prevents natural plantings that can provide ecological benefit to the site. FIMFO should only be allowed to provide the parking necessary to meet its asserted needs.

Project materials say that there will be 43.7 acres of disturbance, additional impervious area of 6.9 acres, forest loss of 14.3 acres and lawn increase of 7.4 acres. Given that FIMFO goes to great pains to say that there will be no increase in the number of camping sites, so as to suggest that the project has a small footprint, why is there so much loss of forest and increase of impervious surface? What is the total tree

clearing FIMFO is proposing and where? It seems the new project elements should be confined to the already developed areas of the existing site and no new forest loss or disturbance should be allowed.

FIMFO will increase the need for public services in local communities, as well as create additional stress on existing infrastructure, such as roadways. It is incumbent upon FIMFO pay its fair share of these costs through taxes. Will FIMFO be required to pay its fair share of taxes?

FIMFO has failed to provide critical details on the amusement park elements of the project essential to fully understand what is being planned for and what the potential impacts will be from this aspect of the development. Among the outstanding questions on that front are:

- How long are the water slides?
- How long is the roller coaster and how will it be operated?
- Will the coaster operate year round? Or just during camping months?
- What is the expected size of the swimming pool and how many swimmers will it accommodate?
- What will be the infrastructure, paving, etc surrounding the pool area?
- What will be the impacts of lighting on our ecology and communities?

While Northgate resorts goes to great pains to say the project will not result in a “substantial” increase in traffic, it is clear that the project is intended to increase usage of the facilities by campers and day visitors, so the assertion lacks credibility. There needs to be an independent review of the traffic claims.

According to the Upper Delaware Council, one of the proposed septic system locations was not the subject of soil investigations; and as it turns out, according to UDC meeting notes “this location may have the least-well drained soils of all the proposed locations”. This location needs full and careful assessment. We do wonder, how did the applicant miss assessing the soils on the area where there may be the least-well drained soils? An oversight? Maybe.

What steps will FIMFO be taking to ensure that all of the new RVs and cabins and glamping facilities will not be washed into the River when it floods? What are the plans to remove all these structures in order to prevent that foreseeable hazard? With RV’s also come additional outdoor lighting of those RV’s – this is the reality we see in many areas where RV pads have been increased. What will be the rules for generators which cause air pollution and noise and disrupt the quiet solitude the Upper Delaware is known for?

What are the months of operation for the RV and glamping sites? Given the new infrastructure being built to support them, they seem to be designed for year-round use.

Will FIMFO be required to put in place legal limitations to ensure no additional development will happen on this site? Or is this simply phase one of a larger plan? We need to know, as it impacts every decision regarding this proposal and site.

Will the new glamping and RV housing be visible from the river or road? What forested or newly planted trees will be required to ensure no viewsheds are disrupted?

What requirements will be placed on FIMFO to ensure the Barnes Waste Site doesn’t leach into the FIMFO campground?

If/when traffic is (inevitably) increased along 97, how will FIMFO ensure pedestrian safety?

What will be the parameters to prevent/minimize noise and light pollution?

What will be the parameters to prevent/minimize visual and aesthetic impacts from recreational river paddlers and the tens of thousands other vacationers and leaf-peepers seeking the natural beauty that this proposed development will most certainly diminish?

What steps will be required to ensure there are no adverse impacts on eagle behavior, feeding and nesting? What other species may be impacted and in what way? And what about adverse impacts to stream insects and fish that help clean the Beaver Brook and the Delaware River with their function as macroinvertebrates and that also feed the bird life?

What green measures will FIMFO employ to save energy? And/or will FIMFO be investing in green energy options such as solar and geothermal to minimize its fossil fuel footprint? Will green roofs be employed?

More information is needed on the blasting proposal. It is not enough to say that licensed professionals will be hired. Details are needed to evaluate this aspect of the project, as well as to properly assess its overall implications.

The FIMFO amusement park with RVs, glamping and cabins is a major change in the use. The information that has been provided to date is sorely lacking in the detail and full information needed to assess the ramifications of this project. Other communities across the nation have rejected projects of this kind (including some proposed by Northgate) and are fighting similar proposals in places like the Lehigh Valley where some of these resorts are defunct or closed down. We believe that the Town of Highland and the State of New York should follow suit. The precedent that will be set if this project is allowed to go through as proposed will have severe consequences for our communities, River and region. Northgate knew what it was buying when it purchased this site – a steep slope, densely wood, riverfront property largely in the floodplain that welcomed a diverse array of people from all over to enjoy nature, tent camping and our beautiful Delaware River. The current business the existing facility brings already likely exceeds carrying capacity on the busiest days for the river and is a solid business as it stands. People flock to existing area every weekend in the summer months. This is the appropriate, and agreed upon, use of the site -- no exceptions or exemptions should be granted that would threaten the scenic Upper Delaware River region.

Respectfully Submitted.