

Section 3.11 School District Services

Comment 3.11-1-PHT: There were several comments regarding the number of new students the project would generate for the Webutuck Central School District, and whether school taxes will increase in order to accommodate these students. [Steven Benardete, November 17, 2007 Public Hearing Transcript, page 71 and March 5, 2008 Public Hearing Transcript, page 32; Bart Wu, November 17, 2007 Public Hearing Transcript, page 94]

Response 3.11-1-PHT: Since publication of the DEIS, the Applicant has worked with the Town and its consultants to arrive at agreed upon fiscal and school impact analyses. Through these efforts, the demographic projections have been revised from what was presented in the DEIS and the methodology used in the fiscal analysis has been changed. These changes are reflected throughout this FEIS (see Appendix H and Section 3.17 of the FEIS for the revised fiscal impact analysis). The Town's consultants recommend using an estimate of 96 public school children to assess the project's potential impacts to the WCSD school system. Therefore, the demographic and fiscal analyses were redone using this number, where applicable.

As described in the April 2008 MDP, the Traditional Neighborhood Alternative Plan consists of 338 residential units, which were analyzed based on the unlikely, worst-case scenario of full-time, year-round occupancy of the residential units. With a 2008 enrollment of 888¹⁵ plus the addition of the estimated 96 Silo Ridge public school students to the school system, the Webutuck Central School District is projected to have excess capacity for approximately 787 students.

With such a large excess capacity for additional students, the Silo Ridge project will not have a significant effect on the school system. Furthermore, with the small number of school children expected and the high market values anticipated for the residential units, the project will generate significantly more in tax revenue for the school district than it will require in school district services.

Comment 3.11-2-PHT: Two commentors noted the school's available capacity:

Some people were asking questions about the impact this could have on the schools and things of that nature. I can tell you as a school board member that we could absorb quite a few more kids into our school system without raising taxes and being able to take care of them and provide them a solid and sound education. So that should be something that we don't worry about. As far as school taxes and all of

¹⁵ Information provided by Mary Clinton, Webutuck Central School District, February 5, 2008.

that, \$5 million back into the community towards school taxes and all of that will help offset the burden that's placed on the property tax owners or the homeowners throughout the community. [Joe Herald, March 5, 2008 Public Hearing Transcript, page 25]

Not being totally familiar with this, I went and spent considerable time with the school superintendent to understand this issue. Presently there are 907 students in the Webutuck district, 40 of whom are educated off-site, leaving 860 some odd who are physically on site being educated there. I asked him what would be the impact of 108 new students coming into the district, and he said "how soon can you send them here?" The rationale being that the school was designed to handle between 1100 and 1200 students full-time on site, and they are now down below 900. The efficiencies go way down when you get into that kind of a ratio. So it would actually benefit the school to increase the population so that the efficiency would go up. He assured me that if even 300 new students came into the school system, there would be virtually zero capital outlay to handle that additional number of students, the addition being maybe some staff. So I just wanted to share what I had learned to the public after seeing the concern raised by the review of the DEIS. [Rudolph Eschbach March 5, 2008 Public Hearing Transcript, page 38]

Response 3.11-2-PHT: Comments noted.

Comment 3.11-3-4B: And while the school district does have the ability, at this time, to readily facilitate an increase in pupil population some parts of their annual budget, such as bus transportation, general supplies, and food service, as examples, most likely will be affected, upwards, in time. [Arlene Iuliano, Letter, March 18, 2008, Comment B]

Response 3.11-3-4B: The fiscal analysis for the project estimates a tax revenue surplus to the WCSD, which can be used to support increased demand for bus services, staff, food services, etc. Please see Section 3.17 and the updated fiscal analysis included in Appendix H of this FEIS.

Comment 3.11-4-5H: The Resort becomes a primary home for many with children who attend the public schools, many more than projected by the DEIS. New school construction is needed to accommodate new students from both the Resort and other development (there will be other development). State aid to the Webutuck School District is substantially reduced as a result of the Resort as projected by the Report of the Hudson Group. [G.A. Mudge, Letter, March 19, 2008, Comment H, page 3]

Response 3.11-4-5H: As required by the Final Scoping Document, the DEIS evaluated the project from the worse-case perspective where all homes were occupied on a year-round, full-time basis. The school district is currently

operating at approximately 50% of its full capacity; therefore, it is very likely that expanded school facilities will not be required for many years.

As noted in Response 3.11-1-PHT, since publication of the DEIS, the Applicant has worked with the Town and its consultants to arrive at agreed upon fiscal and school impact analyses. Through these efforts, the fiscal impact analysis has been revised from what was presented in the DEIS. Please see the updated fiscal impact analysis in Appendix H.

The Planning Board's fiscal consultant prepared an analysis of the potential changes to the amount of State Aid to WCSD that could result from the proposed project. See Appendix H. Even with potential reductions in State Aid, the project would be fiscally positive to the WCSD.

Comment 3.11-5-5L: The Resort becomes a "gated community," and those who live outside are outsiders (including a large number of service personnel for the Resort, and their children who will attend the public schools). We end up with an elegant "resort community" and a subservient "town community" rather than an integrated community, which would emerge from multiple moderate development projects over time. [G.A. Mudge, Letter, March 19, 2008, Comment L, page 4]

Response 3.11-5-5L: Comment noted. The project does not preclude public access, nor does it preclude other development from occurring within the Town. The Applicant is seeking a waiver from Section 121-12.1(F) of the Zoning Law regarding the proposed gated access.

Certain project facilities and amenities are available to the general public and these include the hotel, the hotel restaurant and lounge, Village Green shops, and winery restaurant. Guests of the hotel can make reservations through the resort operator for any of the available resort amenities, including golf and spa.

Club membership is only available to Silo Ridge Resort Community residents. Certain preferential treatments (such as tee times) and Club facilities (such as private dining, lounge, and locker rooms at The Club) are benefits of this Club membership. The golf course will also be available to the public on a limited basis.

Comment 3.11-6-14I: What if workers migrating to this area become a burden on the school system and health services? [William J. Burke, Letter, November 30, 2007, Comment I, page 2]

Response 3.11-6-14I: Most of the employees of the project are expected to come from the surrounding region. While some employees may relocate to the area from somewhere outside, they may or may not choose to live in Amenia.

As noted in Response 3.11-4-5H, with the school district operating at approximately 50% of its capacity, any growth in district enrollment due to employees of Silo Ridge will not overburden the WCSD. Any Silo Ridge employees that become new residents of Amenia will pay property taxes to offset increases in demand for Town and WCSD services.

Comment 3.11-7-GP115: Some portion of the section on *School District Services* (3.11) relies upon the demographic and fiscal data to support the applicant's position. We refer the Planning Board to comments prepared by the Hudson Group. It is likely this section (and for the preferred alternative) will require some attention as the issues to related to fiscal and demographics are addressed. [Greenplan, Inc., Letter, April 6, 2008, Comment #115, page 21]

Response 3.11-7-GP115: Comments from The Hudson Group have been incorporated into this FEIS for response. As noted in Response 3.11-1-PHT, the fiscal and demographic analyses for the project have been revised through coordination with the Town, The Hudson Group, and other Town consultants.

Comment 3.11-8-41SS: With respect to schooling the additional children, what is the current student capacity of the Webutuck CSD? How much would it cost to enlarge or build facilities to accommodate an additional 91 to 600 students at the primary, intermediate and upper school locations? How many additional school buses are necessary, and how many additional school and transportation personnel are needed? [Bart Wu, Letter, March 25, 2008, Comment SS, page 10]

Response 3.11-8-41SS: Please see Responses 3.11-1-PHT and 3.11-3-4B. As discussed in Section 3.11 of the DEIS, the WCSD's bus system would have excess capacity even with the addition of students from the Silo Ridge project.