

Letters

Who's to blame if the sports complex dies?

To the Editor,

Whose fault will it be if the plan to construct a sports complex off Stoney Street dies next week when the state legislature runs out of time to approve the two necessary parkland alienation bills?

Supervisor Grace has been in charge of the Spectra Energy/Stoney Street sports complex project from day one. It's the supervisor's own actions that have delayed the project and may have killed it. Look at the record.

Despite months of discussions with Spectra Energy, the supervisor waited until April 22 to inform the Town Board, and the community, about the deal he had privately worked out with Spectra: in exchange for letting Spectra use a portion of Granite Knolls parkland as a temporary construction staging area for its proposed pipeline expansion project, plus giving the company a permanent one acre of parkland to house certain pipeline maintenance equipment called "pigs," Spectra would construct ball fields and a parking lot on the site once the pipeline project was completed.

After a brief presentation by Spectra, the supervisor told the board that the deal would require what the state calls the "alienation of parkland" and that that had to be approved by the state legislature. Also, because alienation legislation was only passed in June, the board had to act that night to pass the necessary home rule message.

When some members of the board objected to the supervisor's rush tactics and said they wanted to know if the Recreation Commission supported giving away parkland, the supervisor had no choice but to delay the vote by two weeks.

After the Rec Commission gave its

support for the alienation, on May 6, the Town Board passed the needed home rule message, a message that had been written under the supervisor's guidance.

Oops. On June 3, the board had to vote on two new home rule messages, one for the Assembly and one for the Senate, because the May 6 resolution didn't reference specific Assembly and Senate alienation bills. Had the supervisor taken the time to read the state's online Alienation Handbook before the May 6 vote, he would have known this.

Oops - again. At its June 10 meeting, the board was informed that the June 3 Senate home rule message was invalid because it was dated BEFORE the Senate bill had been introduced. So, it had to be voted on again. But, by this time, some critical health and safety questions had arisen about the pigs equipment, and until those questions were satisfactorily addressed, the supervisor didn't have the required three votes to pass the new home rule message. So more delay.

The supervisor will try to round up the needed three votes at a special board meeting scheduled for June 18 at 4pm, but it's not clear whether, even if the resolution passes, the Senate will be able to take up the bill before the scheduled June 19 end of the legislative session.

So if both alienation bills fail to pass, who should take responsibility for the failure? After all, it was the supervisor who waited until the last minute to bring the project forward, and it was the supervisor who failed to get the proper home rule message on the agenda.

SUSAN SIEGEL

Editor's Note: The writer is a candidate for Yorktown Town Board