

# Setting the Record Straight on the Highway Garage Project

By Susan Siegel

Supervisor Grace says that residents have been given lots of misinformation about his highway garage project. He says his opponents' statements about the project costing \$4 million are "completely inaccurate." He wants residents to know the facts.

I agree. Opinions about this controversial issue should be based on facts. So here they are — from verifiable public documents and statements.

## What size garage is being proposed?

A good question as the number keeps changing. And obviously, cost depends on size.

So far, we've heard numbers as low as 20,000 sf for just the highway garage (the current garage is 17,000 sf) and as high as 60,000 sf for two buildings, one for highway and one for parks.

## THE FACTS

- The town's 2015 grant application, available online, was for an "approximate" 40,000 sf highway garage and an "approximate" 20,000 sf parks garage. **The application showed the cost at \$4,075 million**, plus an additional \$750,000 for site work to prepare the vacated Front Street parcel.
- In June, 2016, the town submitted a formal site plan application for both garages to the Planning Board. The application included the same "concept" drawing for two buildings of approximately 60,000 sf used in the 2015 grant application. Supervisor Grace told the board that more formal site plans would be submitted at a future date.
- At the July 5 Town Board meeting (available on video), Supervisor Grace again talked about 60,000 sf but this time added that the actual space needs for the two buildings were still being worked out; it was hinted that the buildings could be scaled back in order to reduce costs.
- The resolution approving the rezoning for Crompond Terraces includes a statement that the developer has agreed to donate and erect as a "community benefit" two pre fab buildings of 9,600 sf and 12,000 sf.

## How much will the garages — of what size — cost and where will the money come from?

This gets even more confusing — and contradictory. At the July 5 Town Board meeting, Supervisor Grace said:

- "I expect the cost of the new facilities will be fully covered by the sale of the old site with a fully approved site plan."

BUT — according to the 2015 grant application, the sale of the property would generate only an estimated \$1.5 million. Does that mean the project will have to be scaled back — dramatically — from the \$4.075 million cost for the desired 60,000 sf?

AND — at the June 13, 2016 Planning Board meeting, the supervisor said that the reason the town was seeking site plan approval for the garage was to improve the town's chances of obtaining grants for the project.

- Supervisor Grace also said that the town has "secured some initial grant money through Senator Murphy's office." He didn't say how much.

BUT — at the January 19 Town Board meeting (also available on video), Supervisor Grace acknowledged that the town had NEVER RECEIVED any such grant and that he was only "EXPLORING" the possibility of a grant with Senator Murphy.

- Supervisor Grace also said that he has a preliminary quote for "under \$200,000" to erect a 20,000 sf pre fab building.

BUT — why would the town consider building a 20,000 sf garage when the current highway garage is 17,000 sf? Where's the benefit? And, because the quote doesn't include **ALL** costs associated with erecting and finishing the building, let alone site preparation costs, the quote is meaningless.

Supervisor Grace also never talks about the "hidden costs" of the project, like the cost of town staff (paid for by the taxpayers) who are working on the plans for the highway garage and mixed use building instead of on plans to repair our broken roads, drainage, bridges, and parks.

Or, is the supervisor planning on hiring a second engineer to prepare the site plans for his pet project?

Supervisor Grace has said that the highway garage proposal will be fully vetted at public hearings before the Planning Board. But given his past record of using ever changing numbers, misrepresenting state grants, and even denying the accuracy of numbers in official documents, we can only hope that the vetting will be based on REAL numbers.

Yorktown residents should not give Supervisor Grace a blank check for a project that is ever changing.