

Good evening members of town council and citizens of Sparta. My name is Neill Clark and I speak to you today not only as a resident of Sparta but as President of Sparta Responsible Development. We are a grassroots non-profit organization that supports economic development that engages and considers the larger public and appropriately weighs the environmental, infrastructure and societal costs of economic development.

We represent a diverse swath of residents from Sparta and the surrounding communities affected by Sparta's economic development decisions. We are stay at home Dads, legal, accounting, and engineering professionals, successful business owners and tradespeople. You saw our diverse coalition at the last standing-room only planning board meeting.

Candidly, a group like ours shouldn't have to exist if we believed that those entrusted with our vote and our tax dollars had our best interests at heart. Unfortunately the Diamond Chip debacle has eroded our trust and confidence.

Why has the Diamond Chip application eroded our trust and confidence in town leadership? It's because that application proposes a development so out of character for any development in our town. Its size eclipses that of Rockaway mall and the high school combined. You could probably fit every warehouse that currently exists in Sparta in just one of the buildings proposed by Diamond Chip. Indeed, Diamond Chip has nearly 20 times the number of truck bays of any warehouse in Sparta.

How could a rational town leader not only allow such a development but literally role out the red carpet by drafting an ordinance tailor made for this development thereby making it very difficult to actually consider and address the environmental, traffic, and groundwater concerns such a development pose. And if you think these factors have a lot of sway under a permitted use application which is what Diamond Chip is proceeding under- then I recommend you have the land use lawyer Town Council just retained explain to you the differences between a permitted and conditional use application and the town's legal avenues for stopping a development under those two very different conditions.

But it's not too late to do the right thing and so tonight SRD and I have two requests of town council that I think will show the public that you are listening and are taking our concerns into consideration.

The first is to do what Councilman Chiariello tried unsuccessfully to do at the last town council meeting. Pass a motion tonight that requires town council to formally explore amending Ordinance 21-01 so that it would stop warehouses of the size and scope of Diamond Chip. Vague assurances that you are looking into it

or that the ball is rolling isn't going to cut it. You need to put it in writing and let the citizens know that you hear them and are committed to a process that adequately takes into consideration all the costs that large scale development like Diamond Chip has on our quality of life and environment. SRD wants to help you get this right and if you commit to actually considering amending the ordinance we can help you during that process and we respectfully request that you engage us in those discussions.

The second request is that you make a motion tonight to explore passing a moratorium on land use applications of similar scope and scale to Diamond Chip while Sparta considers amending Ordinance 21-01. Such a moratorium wouldn't put a halt to other land use applications and stop economic development. Instead it pushes pauses on land use applications of the size of Diamond Chip that have so outraged citizens. Sparta would not be alone in passing such a moratorium should it decide at end of the process to pass such a ban. Other towns like Mansfield Township in Burlington County have passed such a ban after hearing public outcry very similar to what you've heard from citizens of Sparta and the surrounding community. Like the motion to explore amending 21-01 you would not be issuing a moratorium tonight you are simply exploring and reserving the right to do so and setting a time frame for a decision.

Again, Sparta Responsible Development stands ready to help you craft such a moratorium and figure out how to execute it.

We don't have to be adversaries in this process. We can work hand in hand to get this right and lead Sparta in the direction I know each of you want and were entrusted to provide. A Sparta that hums with economic activity but doesn't turn a deaf ear to concerns of environmental, infrastructure and quality of life degradation.

Now's the time for temerity not timidity. If you can be so bold as to pass an ordinance that ushered in a development that far eclipses any development in Sparta's history then you can certainly do the cautious and respectful step of passing these two motions tonight. Show us you are listening, take the helping hand that's being offered, don't smack it away.

Thank you