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The Hometown Opinion

By [Katherine Frankel](#) | [Email the author](#) | April 11, 2011

Business, Opinion

The Buck Stops Where? Parcel B Debate Heats Up in Purchase

Residents watch the Harrison Planning Board's current deliberations on a parcel of corporate property Purchase.

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This year marks an anniversary that is no cause for celebration.

For more than 25 years the residents of Purchase, supported by the Purchase Environmental Protection Agency (PEPA), have been fighting to stop construction of a second building on a piece of land known as Parcel B, previously owned by [Manhattanville College](#).

The issue originated with a three-parcel land sale that led to the creation of the corporate park along Manhattanville Road in Purchase. Parcel A is the current Mastercard offices, Parcel C is [The Centre at Purchase](#) and Parcel B is the land in the middle.

The Parcel B issue arose when the corporate property owner attempted to build two buildings on their site instead of one. The residents in the area blocked the move, arguing that the site and surrounding roads were not adequate to support a second building on the property.

In an ideal world, residents would feel these concerns would be heard and acted on by the Harrison Planning Board. Unfortunately, that was not the case and valuable time and money had to be spent taking the case to the state supreme court.

Complicating matters, the corporate ownership of this parcel has all the signs of a convoluted shell game, with one corporation owning the land, then leasing it to another corporation for a dollar a year, who in turn leased it to corporate tenants, with no one standing up and taking responsibility. Everyone passed the buck along so that residents and PEPA were forced to serve notices to all of the corporations and chase responses between each of them.

Upon hearing the issue the New York State Supreme Court did what one would have hoped our planning board would have done in the first place, agreeing with the residents' position that the parcel was not suitable for two buildings. The court put in a stipulation that the corporate owner could build their original building on the site only by signing a stipulation that only one building would ever be allowed on the land.

One would think that that would be the end of the matter. Not so.

Purchase Corporate Park Associates is again seeking to build a second office building on the site and has sent its application to the planning board.

While disappointing, it is not surprising that the corporate resident is not acting as a trustworthy community neighbor, instead seeking to ignore their agreement terms and the court. We get it – this corporate neighbor is only looking out for their own short-term interests regardless of community concerns, legal agreements and court ordered stipulations.

But what about the planning board? What is surprising and disappointing is that after all the history on this parcel of land that the planning board didn't immediately

shut the matter down by denying this application for the second building. The board is undertaking a full hearing on the application, despite the court ruling and settlement agreement.

And one has to ask why. If you have driven on Purchase Street over the last couple of years you have noticed how bad traffic congestion has become. Purchase Street has gone from 18' in width to 75' in some areas, with traffic signals having to be installed to handle the additional traffic generated by the office parks. The plans for this second building anticipate even further traffic increases, calling for additional widening of Purchase Street and Manhattanville Road to form turning lanes.

It was clear that the proposal for a second building was inappropriate 25 years ago and it should be even more clear now.

It was also clear to judges hearing the issue that the decision should have been made internally. In fact, the judges made a statement that this should have been an issue for municipal rule.

So now the planning board has the opportunity to do the right thing again, this time even backed by a pre-existing agreement from the applicant dating back to 1984 and a stipulation from the New York State Supreme Court.

The next planning board hearing date for Parcel B is April 26. We watch and hope that the board will at last step up and say "no" to this application, making it clear that the buck really does stop here.

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4:57pm on Wednesday, April 13, 2011

We have been seeking to get a reading on community sentiment about this latest expansion plan, and we have found that there is virtually universal opposition to the idea. Our informal polling has failed to identify anyone in who wants to see further expansion of this office complex. The fact is that the matter was resolved by the courts more than 25 years ago, and people are legitimately wondering why this whole thing is rearing its head once again. Thanks for the supportive article! Anne Gold, Executive Director, PEPA www.pepany.com

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[Ross Revira](#) Flag as inappropriate
6:44pm on Wednesday, April 13, 2011

Dear Ms Gold your comment is totally self serving. Did you poll the entire town or just Purchase? Did you think anybody was going to come out against PEPA considering the social black listing that would occur? The town needs new corporate development and the expansion of the medical facilities on Westchester Ave. Harrison is a community for all income and social levels not just for the wealthy and privileged.