

## JOINT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR THE TOWN OF READING AND THE VILLAGE OF WATKINS GLEN HELD WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2022

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The joint meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm by Town Supervisor Steve Miller. Present for the Town of Reading was Supervisor Steve Miller, Deputy Supervisor Pat Gill, Councilperson Robert Everett, Councilperson Christopher Stamp, Councilperson Cheryl Richtmyer, Clerk Terry Alger. Present for the Village of Watkins Glen was Deputy Mayor Louis Perazzini, Trustee Laurie DeNardo, Trustee Nan Woodworth, Trustee Bob Carson, Village Clerk Fred Warrick and Code Enforcement Officer Scot Cole. There were approximately 14 other persons in attendance.

### PUBLIC HEARING

Town Supervisor Steve Miller informed the public that the Boards are jointly meeting to hear Raphael Specchio, Jr. ("Junior") on his petition for annexation, and any public comment, of the premises known as Summit Place (Tax Map #64.08-1-34) in the Town, which adjoins his other premises on the western boundary of 356 N. Glen Avenue (Tax Map #64.08-2-21) in the Village.

Attorney for Junior, Aimee Churchill addressed the Boards stating that her client has a lot in the Village that is not large enough to do anything with and he has adjacent land in the Town, and he is petitioning to annex a portion of that from the Town into the Village.

Town Supervisor Steve Miller informed the public that any determination made will be based on the best interest of the public for both the Town and the Village. He opened the floor to Junior to provide his reasons why the annexation was for the public good.

Junior explained that the result would be a lot in the Village that is feasible to build a house on.

Steve Miller requested comments from the public.

Resident Steve Compese, using the map provided by Junior, he pointed out the two pieces of property and called joining them an architectural amenity. He further explained it as an amenity to the Village as well as the Town for the following reasons:

1. Another building lot on the tax roll; and
2. It will protect all the building lots that border it in the Town by the fact that it will make a buffer.

Junior adds: once annexed, he will be able to put a gate all around that property, and a gated driveway at the end of Howard Avenue, so there won't be any access going into that lot. It's an asset to the Village because it will stop traffic flow at Howard.

*NOTE: By traffic flow, Junior refers to 4-wheelers.*

Resident Judy Richards lives on Howard with access to Summit. She asked if the driveway is going to be on the end of Howard (lot in Village), then why did Junior build a driveway off Summit (lot in Town), which she said is a really bad place to have a driveway if you're familiar with Summit.

Junior responds he did not build a driveway down Summit and explained that the pile of dirt there that looks like a driveway is actually fill dirt for a ditch that he cannot finish filling until the annexation is approved. He said it is only there temporarily.

*NOTE: Junior owns both lots and would not need the annexation granted to fill the current ditch on his properties.*

Resident Scott Blackwell addressed Junior directly and said it came straight from his mouth that it would be a driveway and said it was nothing but an eye sore. Junior responded saying it will be lawn and not a driveway once cleared.

Town Supervisor Steve Miller commented on the use of the term "buffer" explaining all private property is a buffer. Unless you warrant a thoroughfare, all private property is buffered. No public person can drive across that piece of property without permission from the land owner. He asked Junior what would be different from the properties in question versus any other private property in the Town or Village that is already a buffer.

Junior's response was again that the property would be gated. Went on to say he needed to annex so that the smaller piece owned next to it can be larger – conforming to 15,000 sq. ft.

Councilperson Chris Stamp asked Junior if the annexation was so the lot would be big enough to build on it, which Junior confirmed yes.

Councilperson Cheryl Richtmyer commented to the Boards that Junior wants to put these two properties together so he can add footage and build a secondary lot to sell two houses.

Junior responded saying he would only build one house, because the second house already exists on the lot (within the Village).

*Note: The current home at 356 N. Glenn is owned by Junior and arrangements have been made to sell to the current tenant of that home if the annexation is approved.*

Town Supervisor Steve Miller once again asked Junior to provide the public good that exists. Junior responded saying the Village gets water, sewer, electric revenue.

Village Trustee Bob Carson informed the Town Board that there is currently not Village electric, sewer, water up there now for the lot currently in the Town and the Village would need to run all that to a new residence built if annexed, costing the Village tax payors an estimated 100k - 200K.

Town Supervisor Steve Miller commented that resident taxes paying for one piece of property to benefit one individual does not appear to be in the overall public good and not a firm argument. Junior responded that he had a much stronger argument but not for here (at this meeting). He told the Boards that the Town of Reading has already approved the release and it's now between he and the Village.

Village Trustee Nan Woodworth respectfully told Junior if there is anything more to discuss that this meeting is the time and place to do it.

Junior stated that the Village Code Enforcement Officer Scot Cole told him he had to have the additional other footage so that was his reason for the petition. To sell the tenant on N. Glen one part of the land and keep the other.

Village Code Enforcement Officer Scot Cole informed Junior that he had already went in front of the Zoning Board about splitting that lot and they denied it. Junior responded that he never went to the Zoning Board.

*Note: It was later confirmed that he did go through the process in March of 2022 and was denied a variance by the ZBA.*

Town Supervisor Steve Miller explained to Junior that the Codes Officer's responsibility in this instance was only to inform him of what he is permitted or not permitted to do. The choice to annex to make a larger lot was a personal decision and not because of a mandate by the Code Enforcement Officer. Steve repeated again, annexation must be in the best interest of the public and he has yet to hear a convincing argument.

Village Clerk Fred Warrick added that what Town Supervisor Steve Miller keeps pointing out is that the petition appears to be for sole personal gain by Junior and because of that reason alone it does not appear to be in the best interest of the Town or Village.

Resident Judy Richards asked Junior how will this annexation better her or any other resident. Junior responded again saying the revenue for water, sewer, electric will benefit for years and years to come. Resident Judy Richards replied that what the Village receive in revenue would be a drop in the bucket compared to the cost it would take to provide those services.

Village Trustee Nan Woodworth again reminded Junior that right now was the time to discuss anything that needed to be discussed. Town Supervisor Steve Miller added the Boards are going to walk away from this needing to make a decision, and if Junior had anything else he wanted to say to help his cause it needed to be here and now.

Village Deputy Mayor Louis Perazzini asked Junior if he was planning to build. Junior responded not at the moment. That he hasn't made that decision.

*Note: This contradicts prior statements made by Junior.*

Junior stated he might put a house on it. He might sell it. He hasn't put thought into that until he knows if could join those properties.

Resident Scott Blackwell asked Town Supervisor Steve Miller to confirm if the joint petition by surrounding residents opposing Junior's request was received. The Boards confirmed receipt.

Town Supervisor Steve Miller asked again for Junior to provide some valid examples of public good of which Junior replied it's another great lot that the Village needs. Junior stated he was done talking and said he made his point.

Village Clerk Fred Warrick acknowledged Junior has concluded his presentation and suggested any final public comments.

Resident Steve Compese added when previously speaking about a buffer he meant it would be 2 lots. Junior wants the 2nd to be a single-family residence and having that would help insure and buffer all the other single-family lots. He mentioned it's a lot harder to get to someone else's property than crossing an empty lot.

#### **ADJOURN**

With no further comments from the public, the joint hearing was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectively Submitted,

Fred Warrick  
Village Clerk