

Pace University Consolidation Project Nears Final Approval

By Neal Rentz

The Mount Pleasant Planning Board is set to approve the first phase of Pace University's proposal to consolidate its Pleasantville and Briarcliff campuses.

Following several months of review, the board voted unanimously at its July 3 meeting to close the public hearing and to instruct town planning consultant Pat Cleary to prepare a resolution to approve the first part of the multi-phase project. The board is scheduled to vote on site plan approval July 15.

The university's plan, which was first announced nearly three years ago, would see Pace sell its 35-acre Briarcliff campus and add dormitories and an artificial turf field to the 200-acre Pleasantville campus.

Landscape architect Andrew Tung, who is representing the university, told the board that Pace officials had addressed several concerns raised by town officials and residents during the hearing.

A sign containing a digital readout will be placed on Bedford Road to display how fast motorists are driving, Tung said. When a vehicle exceeds 35 miles per hour, the driver's rate of speed will flash. However, the machine will not take photographs of vehicles' license plates, he

said.

The university will also conduct a series of stormwater tests in the area where the new artificial turf field will be installed to monitor runoff, Tung said. Additionally, school officials will work with local authorities to come up with a plan to ensure emergency vehicles can access the campus when the nearby Saw Mill River Parkway is closed due to flooding.

Pace will also encourage as many drivers as possible to use Entrance 1 to enter the campus, the access point that is farthest away from neighboring homes and one that is more commonly used, Tung said. That was a sentiment shared by Mount Pleasant Police Chief Louis Alagno in a letter last month to the planning board.

The university has also agreed to increase security on the campus.

"Chief Alagno is satisfied with the response to his concerns," board member John Cohen told Tung.

Tung said the internal campus roadway system would be revamped during the project's first phase. Entrance 1 would be connected to the Saw Mill River Parkway, which would encourage motorists to use that entry point, he said.

Planning board member Denis

McCarthy said Pace should continue to test the stormwater near the new artificial turf field for more than one year, as Pace has proposed.

Another board member, Regina Pellegrino, said university officials made positive changes in its plan based on comments made at the hearing.

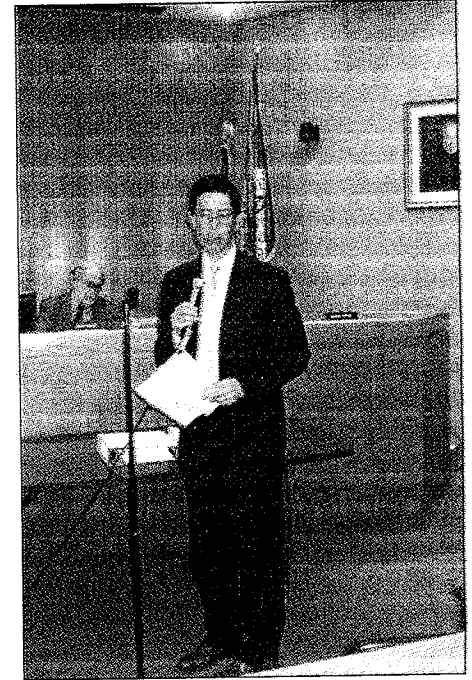
"I'm very happy with a lot of the results," she said.

Pellegrino asked Tung if Pace would make a formal commitment to permanently maintain the open space on the northern portion of the Pleasantville campus.

Tung responded that he hopes the land would remain open space in perpetuity. However, he said that while his client had no plans to develop that area, the university was unwilling to have a binding agreement.

Planning Board Chairman Michael McLaughlin said he supported the college's plan, addressing most of the board's concerns.

The entire project with subsequent phases is expected to take five to eight years to implement.



NEAL RENTZ PHOTO

Andrew Tung, a landscape architect retained by Pace University, discussed the proposal to consolidate its Pleasantville and Briarcliff campuses last week. The board will consider a resolution to approve the plan July 15.