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PUBLIC HEARING
January 24, 2000

HELD AT: HOLIDAY INN (DOWNTOWN)
222 SOUTH CAYUGA STREET
ITHACA, NEW YORK

REPORTED BY: ELIZABETH R. BRUCIE, RPR

PRESENT: Mayor Cohen
Support Staff
Chase & Associates
City Common Councilpeople
Citizens

JANUARY 24, 2000

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MAYOR COHEN: Ladies and gentlemen,
if I could get your attention, please. We would
like to get our proceedings started. First I am
going to entertain a motion to open this public
hearing. I have a motion by Manos, I have a
second by Spielholz.

This public hearing is now
officially open. This is a public hearing for the
public to comment on the Draft Generic
Environmental Impact statement regarding the
Southwest Area Land Use Plan. You, as you have
come in the door hopefully all of you have signed
up at the table in the back, if you are here to
speak, and you have as yet not signed up, there is
a sign-up table in the back directly below that
lit exit sign. I would encourage you to go back
there. When you sign-up you will be handed a
general hearing rule sheet and also a slip of
paper for you to sign-up on or to sign-up with.

When you come forward to speak we
are going to ask you to hand the slip of paper to
the gentleman all the way to my left, his name is
Paul. And we will process it from there up here.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 We have two podiums before us, one is labeled odd,
2 the other is labeled even. That is not a
3 reflection of the speakers, it is simply a
4 reflection of the number on your slip of paper.
5 We are staging people so that we can get as many
6 speakers as possible to speak. We understand a
7 lot of people would like to give public comment
8 and it is our intention to try and get as many of
9 you on the record as possible. We are limited in
10 our time. Because of that, as the rules state, we
11 do have a five minute time limit. That time limit
12 will be strictly adhered to. Understand, please,
13 that we are doing so in deference to the other
14 speakers. We already have over 30 speakers that
15 are scheduled to speak this evening. We only have
16 a total of four hours, at the most we can
17 accommodate if we went speaker by speaker exactly
18 one going to the other 48 speakers this evening.
19 But there are limitations to our ability to do so,
20 people will not start exactly after the other, we
21 are human beings not robots. We also have a human
22 being who is taking a written record of this
23 proceeding and that is Beth, our stenographer who
24 I would like to thank for your time this evening.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 We will be taking occasional breaks for Beth to
2 stretch out her fingers so that she can continue
3 to take an accurate reporting of the record as you
4 speak to this evening.

5 A couple of questions were asked and
6 I would like to respond to those. You cannot
7 yield time to another person, if you speak for
8 three minutes you speak for three minutes. The
9 next person does not have seven minutes, they
10 still have five. That is designed as such so we
11 can get as many total number of people speaking
12 during these proceedings. I don't have anything
13 else to report to you.

14 Any other questions from Council?
15 Okay. We are ready to begin, if you have numbers
16 one, three, five and so on, odd numbers, we are
17 going to ask you to come to the podium in the
18 center. As a matter of fact, yes. I did mean to
19 mention that.

20 I would like to clarify something
21 else for the audience, and that is Common
22 Council's involvement in these hearings. There
23 are a number of Common Council members that are
24 not here tonight, as a matter of fact, several of

1 the Common Council members who are here right now
2 will be leaving at 7:00 for a scheduled committee
3 meeting. Every single comment that you give
4 during the course of tonight, tomorrow and
5 tomorrow night will be produced in a written
6 record and a full copy of that written record will
7 be given to each member of Common Council and they
8 will have the opportunity to read in full the
9 written record. So the fact that any particular
10 member is either not here now or leaves during the
11 course of these proceedings is not an indication
12 of their lack of interest in what you have to
13 say. They are fully aware of the fact that they
14 are getting a copy of the written record. Some
15 prefer to read rather than listen. Others who
16 have the opportunity to listen are here. Some who
17 would like to stay and listen but have other
18 obligations will not be able to. 12 hours is a
19 long period of time to ask for people who have
20 other obligations in their lives. I know many of
21 you here have obligations as well. We do
22 appreciate your taking time to come out and give
23 your opinions on this draft document this
24 evening.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 Immediately to my right is Josh
2 Glastetter, Joan Spielholz, Janna Taylor, Ed
3 Hershey, Tracy Farrell, Pat Pryor and Paulette
4 Manos. (PHONETICS).

5 Okay. So what I am going to be
6 doing is this, I am going to be asking people to
7 come forward, as a matter of fact, I would like
8 numbers one through four to come forward. And we
9 are going to be essentially cuing people up in a
10 way so that we don't waste an exceptional amount
11 of time asking people to come forward and we will
12 have one person speaking, one person waiting
13 behind them. We will switch back and forth from
14 one podium to the next so that again we can keep
15 the flow going and get as many people the
16 opportunity to speak during the course of the
17 evening. We do have an electric timer with us,
18 Jeannie Lee who is to my immediate left will be
19 operating that, to introduce the rest of the
20 people up here, Stuart and Paul are both with
21 Chase & Associates, they are the consultants that
22 are charged with producing the Final Generic
23 Impact Statement, Environment Impact Statement,
24 and they are here to record and listen to all the

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 comments, then take the appropriate action. I
2 already introduced Beth our stenographer, Brucie.

3 Without further adieu, if we can get
4 numbers one and three up here and numbers two and
5 four to the podium to my left and right. Again,
6 the timer will indicate when four minutes is up,
7 you and will have one minute left. We have a sign
8 which indicates you have one minute left. The
9 timer will then indicate your time has expired.
10 If you continue talking I will bang the gavel, ask
11 you to please sit down and I will instruct the
12 next person to start speaking. With that, turn
13 your slip in. I remind you when you come forward
14 to turn your slips in.

15 The first speaker is Joe Harlan.

16 JOE HARLAN: The reason why I wanted
17 to be first, cause I am going to another
18 obligation, a bigger meeting than this, about
19 30,000 fans at the Carrier Dome. I want to see if
20 I can slip in and watch Connecticut and Syracuse
21 game.

22 As you know, I have been speaking
23 about growth for the past, I don't know how many
24 years, four or five years. I was at the meeting

1 with the Wal-Mart issue, we need growth and make
2 this area a prosperous town. Everybody complains
3 that big box buildings look sick, they are eye
4 sores. Well, take a look at the campuses, Cornell
5 and Ithaca College, those are two cities, and this
6 is getting to be a driveby thru village.
7 Everybody is going to Cortland, Syracuse,
8 Binghamton, Elmira to do their business and
9 shopping.

10 I think we need to out gang Cornell
11 and Ithaca College, especially Cornell, cause the
12 way I heard, this is a communist town run by
13 democrats and also it's Cornell is the dictator.
14 And if the only way I have been preaching at these
15 Common Council meetings we need to out gang
16 Cornell. Because these colleges are way ahead of
17 the eight ball and we are way behind the eight
18 ball and the eight ball is rolling all over us.
19 And as you can see, we cannot stop Cornell from
20 growth. But what rights if they got the growth
21 and we don't grow with it? If you are going to
22 stop these growths, why not stop Cornell from
23 growing? Cause you can see what's going on with
24 the pipeline, the incinerator and also North

1 Campus. And look at the neighbors that's involved
2 with all of what they're doing, money talks, we do
3 the walking, we go without.

4 I have talked to a lot of people
5 from Alpine all the way up to Cortland. And they
6 all say they are fed up with this town. They go
7 elsewhere to go shopping because there is nothing
8 here. I am letting you know, they are boycotting,
9 they are boycotting and recommend boycotting if
10 you don't get nothing in here. If you don't get
11 the people in to go shopping at these stores and
12 businesses, you are going to lose revenue. If you
13 lose revenue you are going to lose the stores
14 totally. Then you are going to have the riff-raff
15 run all over the town controlling the City.

16 All's I got to say is let's grow and
17 let's make an effort of it instead, because we are
18 living in a town that's got 55 nationalities from
19 around the world. We should have local access to
20 these businesses and stores instead of having them
21 set on the highway to other area towns outside
22 this town and county. You are losing money
23 outside the county, and what you are going to do,
24 if you deny this, you are sending a message and

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 what you guys, what these people are doing are
2 saying you don't set shop here, you send your shop
3 and build your shops outside this county and the
4 people go with it to go outside, out of this
5 county to go shopping. Take care of your
6 business. They don't care, they rather lose out,
7 all's you got down on The Commons is high cost of
8 everything, and also there is a lot of hippie
9 clothes and stuff like that that's high priced.
10 We need to get stuff that's affordable for low
11 income and poor families, instead of thinking of
12 the upper high class and, you know, and the rich
13 people that's around here. We got to start
14 thinking of our own people. And instead of also
15 talking about big box buildings, we need something
16 like Corning Glass Works here, a big plant that
17 hires 6,000 people with a blue collar, high wage
18 limit, above the poverty level. You need both of
19 them to work together, stores and the technology,
20 jobs and stuff like that. We could become
21 something if you are willing to work at it. What
22 I tell you a lot of people are up to destroy this
23 project, we got up to Southwest Park and Interlet
24 Island and West End and that lady from Oswego, we

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 could pick up and become something of like what
2 she has done for her community in Oswego.

3 That's all I got to say. I will
4 just sit here for half-hour or so then I am
5 heading out to Syracuse. I would rather be up
6 there where the fans are and see what goes on.
7 It's going to be a good game.

8 Let's grow man, let's not just talk
9 about it, let's do it. You talk about it, it is
10 going to be too late. And, well, I say I
11 recommend boycotting if you don't want to do
12 nothing about it.

13 MAYOR COHEN: Joe, thank you. Next
14 speaker is Tom Livigne.

15 TOM LIVIGNE: Thank you. I am here
16 to represent the Cornell Estate Department. I am
17 also the President of the Board of Directors of
18 Better Housing for Tompkins County. I don't think
19 I am here to talk about the obvious things about
20 the tax base being what it is. I am here to talk,
21 not to talk to you about the tax base increase as
22 well as the other obvious things here with jobs,
23 that type of thing, but I am here to talk a little
24 bit about sprawl.

1 And if this development doesn't go
2 through, I know from personal experience that it
3 is going to happen someplace else in the county
4 and the obvious place for it to happen is
5 somewhere in the downtown area, and this seems to
6 be the logical place. We have been approached
7 numerous times over the last five to seven years
8 by big box developers as well as other developers
9 to build something like this on our land out on
10 Route 13 at the corner of Route 13 and Hanshaw
11 Road. And we haven't to this point done anything,
12 and we don't intend to do anything. But somebody
13 out there is going to do it if it doesn't happen
14 downtown. And the logical place for it is to
15 concentrate it downtown where you have the roads,
16 you have the infrastructure and you have
17 everything that needs to be in place.

18 We have a great standard of living
19 here, we have the lake, we have the gorge, we have
20 the beauty that we have in town. But also part of
21 the standard of living is good shopping. And good
22 shopping is what this will bring to town.

23 So that's really all I have to say.
24 If you go someplace other than the downtown area

1 of Ithaca, it's going to create sprawl and it's
2 going to push things outside of the City, and it
3 is going to happen, believe me. Cause there are
4 many developers out there looking right now. If
5 they don't come to the City, they are going to
6 find out that they can go someplace else in the
7 county and I am not sure that we want that.

8 Thank you for your time.

9 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. Our next
10 speaker is Wally Woods.

11 WALLY WOODS: Yes. Good evening.
12 Retired here about three and half years ago. And
13 one of the reasons we came up here was to escape
14 from what you are now proposing. And we were from
15 Central New Jersey and we had the sprawl and the
16 big boxes, etcetera, and etcetera. Listen, and
17 trying to pick up on the different articles in The
18 Journal and so forth, this brings out all the
19 paradox of growth. And we are in this position
20 now where there is truth here and there is truth
21 here. And how do we go about working and trying
22 to solve short-term problems and thinking long
23 term. That prompted me to write a letter to The
24 Journal, which I don't know if they are going to

1 publish, but it's kind of a little, it's based on
2 hindsight and looking at the process of what
3 happened to us about 20 or so years ago. So the
4 rest of this, I will just kind of read my letter
5 with that.

6 I am just saying about 20 years ago
7 while living in Central New Jersey I observed the
8 beginning of massive development projects.
9 Developers followed a very predictable pattern to
10 subvert the local community. I see the same
11 pattern emerging here, starting with large tax
12 abatements, secret sales of community land, zoning
13 changes, development commitments before approvals,
14 and of course the usual growth that any course
15 clones like Mr. Joe West. We had them down in
16 Central New Jersey too. The exact language, the
17 same strategy, etcetera. I said we had it all.

18 The developers strategy unfolded a
19 piece at a time. Like putting a frog in cold
20 water then turning up the heat and before you know
21 it you are cooked. Well, that's exactly what
22 happened here. The Township Council easily slid
23 down that slippery slope still with visions of
24 sugar plums dancing in their heads right into the

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 developers' pockets, it is a textbook case.

2 The mayor, township attorney and
3 council really believed that they could control
4 the developers. That was a delusion. Everything
5 sounded great. New infrastructure, roads, library
6 expansion, park-land jobs, ultimately the greedy
7 mayor was no match for the Harvard lawyers.

8 Now I would like to talk about the
9 consequences. We haven't heard much about that
10 yet. This is real life. The consequences were a
11 40 percent property tax increase, no parks,
12 minimal infrastructure repair, the City bonds and
13 massive traffic. That's just the stop level. The
14 mayor, city attorney and building inspector just
15 missed being indicted. The evidence was not clear
16 enough to indicate if there was conspiracy or
17 there were just plain incompetent. Most of the
18 town council resigned, one was indicted. After
19 the shopping centers were built, ownership was
20 quickly transferred to a third party, thereby
21 escaping the construction and environmental
22 liabilities. The township had to pay those costs
23 through the City bonds. The state helped out and
24 paid a few million dollars to ease the burden on

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 taxpayers. The township changed the City charter
2 and hired a professional administrator. The mayor
3 ended up cutting ribbons and feeding the birds.
4 It was a tragic comedy.

5 The developers made millions and the
6 homeowners paid for the price. What a deal. And
7 I just have to say good luck Ithaca.

8 (APPLAUSE)

9 MAYOR COHEN: Our next speaker is
10 John Criscitello.

11 Folks, I just need to caution you,
12 if you want to applaud at the end of a speaker, I
13 can't really stop you. But that's only going to
14 take away time from other speakers' abilities to
15 speak to us later on.

16 JOHN CRISCITELLO: There is so many
17 pieces of this pie that are distasteful it's hard
18 to focus on just one. But being a homeowner at
19 401 South Cayuga Street, I would have to say my
20 main focus is traffic through our neighborhood
21 which has been an issue for years now with
22 Wegman's, Tops, K-Mart, over there wreaking havoc,
23 making it unsafe and unsightly for everybody.

24 If you really want to face the

1 facts, people in vehicles will choose the shortest
2 route to get where they are going. That goes on.
3 If you look at East Spencer Street and West
4 Spencer Street and North and South Titus Street,
5 how people cruise through that neighborhood to get
6 to the other side of town. There is no stopping,
7 slowing, it is happening now. I think with the
8 development there is no doubt that traffic will
9 increase through those neighborhoods, and just
10 compound the problem and make it worse. I think
11 that increased traffic through neighborhoods are
12 definitely a detriment for that neighborhood. I
13 think you can look at West Clinton Street or West
14 Green Street and see where the highways go low and
15 out to Meadow Street, how those neighborhoods are
16 deteriorating and neglected. It is just a
17 passageway for people to get from point A to point
18 B, forget about looking out the window or take a
19 look at the burned-out houses, boarded-up houses,
20 the garbage in the streets.

21 I am really concerned about Spencer
22 Street, East and West, being turned into an
23 arterial. My house at 401 is basically the last
24 vestige of a Victorian neighborhood. We look out

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 now on traffic all day long, unstoppable, at peak
2 hours it is really unbearable. We look out at the
3 Cayuga corner building deteriorate and boarded
4 up. And I just want to say I really hope that my
5 neighborhood isn't paved over, because we moved
6 here because it is convenient to walk, and it's
7 nice to walk. If my neighborhood is paved over
8 just so people can have convenient parking to buy
9 a cheap plunger, I surely will be disappointed and
10 probably will find some place else to live.

11 Thank you.

12 (APPLAUSE)

13 MAYOR COHEN: Number five is Paul
14 Hoaoule. Mr. Hoaoule?

15 PAUL HOAOULE: Hi. I am going to
16 tell a cautionary tale about what happened in a
17 town I grew up and I am going to talk a little
18 about the economic forces that grow the quote
19 growth.

20 Manchester, New Hampshire was an
21 industrial town that had millions that went out of
22 business in the, went out of business in the '60s
23 when I was born. In the early '70s it still had a
24 very active downtown, you could go down, there

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 were department stores downtown and restaurants
2 downtown and lots of shops downtown, lots of
3 people lived downtown above the shops, people with
4 a little bit of money.

5 Then what happened was they built a
6 highway that short circuited the downtown, it used
7 to be if you were driving north and south you
8 ended up driving down Elm Street which was the
9 heart of town. Then they built a highway which
10 went around it and all the traffic went around and
11 these commercial strips that used to be the
12 important strips going in and out of town had all
13 these businesses built on it because if you are in
14 a car it's easy to get off the highway off ramp,
15 drive into one of these businesses.

16 But the things these commercial
17 strips are such terrible traffic and so terrible
18 to drive in, they are the ways into town, you
19 would never bother to drive into town because it
20 is so terrible to drive down a commercial strip.
21 So you would drive down the strip, stop at a
22 business. If you live down here, Route 13 is like
23 that. It's the most miserable drive to come in
24 from, any other side, on Route 13 it is already a

1 nightmare.

2 What we saw happen was around 1980
3 when they built the new highway, downtown just
4 collapsed. The last couple department stores went
5 out and they built a mall. And for a while in the
6 '80s things, the economy wasn't that good, most
7 of the time. There was a few real estate booms
8 and quite a few of these people who are dealing
9 with commercial real estate went bankrupt. Result
10 of that was a lot of banks failed in the area. My
11 parents' bank changed its name like ten times in
12 their lifetime. Because just cause of all the
13 financial turbulence caused by developing
14 properties people didn't want.

15 The terrible truth about these big
16 box stores, the truth is they only last 20 years,
17 they rot. And they have to be rebuilt. That's
18 why you always see these crazy things like Pyramid
19 Mall wants to expand even though it's not full and
20 half of the places seem to be out of business, but
21 they want to build a brand new mall because if
22 they don't the roof is going to fall in. Other
23 than that, one of these stores fails, no other
24 store wants to move into it.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 So recently in Manchester, again a
2 couple years ago, you know, we have had this boom
3 in the stock market and as a result there is just
4 a lot of money around and a lot of businesses have
5 to show their stockholders they are growing. The
6 way they can do that is they can put in their
7 annual report we built so many hundreds of stores
8 this year and they are running out of places to
9 build these stores and they want to build some
10 stores here.

11 Now they really don't have to make
12 money with these stores because in this, with all
13 these baby boomers putting their money in their
14 mutual funds, all they got to do is show this
15 growth. They don't have to actually make money.
16 Because they have got so much money just to build
17 new stores. And they don't even have to think are
18 these stores really going to last.

19 And even around Manchester the last
20 couple years, commercial strips all grew a mile.
21 And it's really been terrible because I go there
22 to shop and every time I would go to shop I would
23 come back disappointed. I would go to some store
24 and a lot of times you go with some guy on

1 commission will try to sell you a whole bunch of
2 stuff you don't want, they can't answer any
3 questions at all about their products.

4 Some places I go in, you know, I
5 went, we were going to a record store at the mall
6 and all these people just followed me around like
7 I was a shoplifter. And they were doing this to a
8 whole bunch of young people that were shopping
9 there, you know, the kind of people that are the
10 heart of their business.

11 And what we have seen lately is a
12 lot of these big box stores have been putting
13 other big box stores out of business. Home Depot
14 has killed HQ. Office Max seems to be killing
15 Staples and, you know, Circuit city and Circuit
16 city killed Fretter and a bunch of other stores.
17 And you know what happened, you are left with
18 these big stores which take up space and still
19 don't create any jobs in the long term and just
20 mean you have to drive further, there is more
21 traffic. And all that's really going to do is
22 kill off all this big money from Wall Street, all
23 it is going to do is kill off the small businesses
24 that make Ithaca a really unique place that

1 attracts high tech workers here, that attract
2 people, that attract tourists here, that really
3 make Ithaca the place that I came here to settle.

4 That's all I have to say.

5 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you.

6 (APPLAUSE).

7 MAYOR COHEN: Next speaker is Olivia
8 Direnzo.

9 OLIVIA DIRENZO: Like a lot of
10 people, I originally came to Ithaca for Cornell.
11 But almost immediately I just fell in love with
12 this place because it's beautiful, it's unique,
13 it's walkable. And I am a freelance web designer
14 and an artist so I can choose to live wherever I
15 want and I chose to live here because this is a
16 nice place. I mean I come from Binghamton which
17 has beautiful old brick downtown, it could be
18 lovely, but it's completely empty, but it's, you
19 know, surrounded by all sorts of commercial junk
20 and miracle miles.

21 It just seems like Ithaca is a
22 unique and pretty town, but, you know, that's the
23 reason why I came here. But seems like you are
24 just trying to make this into Ithaca is like

1 everywhere else, like so many other places that
2 are just junkie and ugly and lost all their
3 character. That's all.

4 (APPLAUSE)

5 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. Number
6 seven is Daniel Karpen.

7 DANIEL KARPEN: Thank you. My name
8 is Daniel Karpen, professional engineer. My
9 office is located 3 Harvard Hill Drive,
10 Huntington, New York 11743. I have been retained
11 by the Citizen's Alliance, a group of area
12 residents. Attached to the back of this testimony
13 is a professional resume.

14 Point Number One. The alienation of
15 Southwest Park was an action subject to SEQRA.
16 The alienation process started with a formal
17 resolution by city of Ithaca Common Council prior
18 to July 1998. The action of passing a resolution
19 requesting that the State Legislature alienate
20 parkland cannot be separated under SEQRA from any
21 subsequent actions.

22 According to 6 NYCRR 617.2 (b):

23 >Action's include:

24 (1) projects in physical activities,

1 such as construction or other activities that may
2 affect the environment by changing the create the
3 use, appearance or condition of any natural
4 resource or structure, that:

5 (i) are directly undertaken by an
6 agency; or

7 (ii) involve funding by an agency,
8 or

9 (iii) require one or more new or
10 modified approvals from an agency or agencies;

11 (2) agency planning and policy
12 making activities that may affect the environment
13 and commit the agency to a definite course of
14 future decisions;

15 (3) adoption of agency rules,
16 regulation and procedures; including local laws,
17 codes, ordinances, executive orders and other
18 resolutions that may affect the environment; and

19 (4) any combinations of the above."

20 Furthermore, SEQRA regulation at 6
21 NYCRR 617.7 (c)(2) provide: "For the purpose of
22 determining whether an action may cause one of the
23 consequences listed in paragraph (1) of this
24 subdivision, the lead agency must consider

1 reasonably related long-term, short-term, direct,
2 indirect and cumulative impacts, including other
3 simultaneous and subsequent actions which are:

4 (i) included in any long-range plan
5 of which the action under consideration is a part;

6 (ii) likely to be undertaken as a
7 result thereof; or

8 (iii) dependent thereon."

9 A positive declaration should have
10 been issued prior to the resolution to request
11 that the state legislature alienate Southwest
12 Park. That positive declaration should have
13 included any subsequent actions.

14 There is plenty of case law to
15 support this thesis. See, for example, Onondaga
16 Landfill Systems, Inc. V. Flacke, I will leave the
17 legal citation out. This case has been very
18 frequently cited.

19 The Environmental Conservation Law
20 at Section 8-0109, Subsection 4 states: "As early
21 as possible in the formulation of a proposal for
22 an action, the reasonable agency shall make an
23 initial determination whether an Environmental
24 Impact Statement need be prepared for the action.

1 When an action is to be carried out by two or more
2 agencies, such determination shall be made as
3 early as possible after the designation of the
4 lead agency."

5 In summary, the City of Ithaca
6 Common Council violated the law by failing to
7 follow the statutory and regulatory provisions
8 from Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation
9 Law with regard to the resolution requesting that
10 the State Legislature act to alienate Southwest
11 Park.

12 Point Two. The entire Southwest
13 Area Land Use Plan area was in its entirety part
14 of a vast flood plain forest, significant remnants
15 of which still remain.

16 Early settlers cleared almost all of
17 the forest for agricultural purposes, as the flood
18 plain had rich soils. The Southwest Park was
19 farmed into 1950s. Along the east side of
20 Southwest Park and near the entrance there is a
21 flood plain forest, according to the Wetlands
22 Investigation Map 4 prepared by Stearns & Wheler,
23 dated August 19, 1994. At the southeast corner of
24 Southwest Park there are some red maple trees up

1 to three feet in diameter. These trees, which I
2 saw when I visited Southwest Park in April of
3 1999, may be 100 to 150 years old.

4 The same map shows approximately 30
5 acres of mature woodlands containing flood plain
6 forest habitat with open areas with a dominant
7 growth of grasses with some areas of wildflowers
8 or rushes or reeds or sedges. The forest is about
9 35 years old and contains cottonwood, boxelder,
10 green ash and white willow.

11 These 30 acres of forest meet the
12 definition of fresh water wetlands as defined in
13 Environmental Conservation Law Section 24-0107
14 Subsection 1, "means lands and waters of the state
15 ... which contain any or all of the following:
16 (a) lands and submerged lands commonly called
17 marshes, swamps, sloughs, bogs, and flats
18 supporting aquatic and semi-aquatic vegetations of
19 the following types: --

20 Is that five minutes?

21 MAYOR COHEN: Yes, it is.

22 Our next speaker is David Gallahan
23 from the city of Ithaca.

24 DAVID GALLAHAN: I will be

1 continuing the statement.

2 This area, which appears to be
3 greater than 12.4 acres, satisfies the
4 requirements of an individual wetland of
5 sufficient size to be included on the Freshwater
6 Wetlands Map of New York State, as promulgated by
7 the Commissioner of the NYSDEC.

8 There are other small areas in the
9 entire Southwest Area Land Use Plan that would
10 also satisfy the requirements of Article 24,
11 Freshwater Wetlands Act, to be mapped as
12 freshwater wetlands, because they are the only
13 remaining open spaces along crowded riverfronts.

14 On June 7, 1999 David Gallahan,
15 myself, petitioned the Commissioner of the NYSDEC
16 to map these areas and to place them on the
17 Freshwater Wetlands Map. Attached to this
18 testimony is a copy of the letter.

19 All these freshwater wetlands
20 satisfy the requirements of being an a Class II
21 wetland, and I won't cite or read all of the
22 details of that. They just simply by being in an
23 urban area, they qualify as a Class II wetland.
24 There are other reasons also.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 Freshwater wetlands "permit, with or
2 without conditions, may be issued for a proposed
3 activity on a wetland of any class or in a
4 wetland's adjacent area if it is determined that
5 the activity (i) would be compatible with
6 preservation, protection and conservation of the
7 wetland and its benefits, and (ii) would result in
8 no more than insubstantial degradation to, or loss
9 of, any part of the wetland, and (iii) would be
10 compatible with the public health and welfare."

11 Those are the only cases in which a
12 permit would be issued.

13 "Class II wetlands provide important
14 wetland benefits, the loss of which is acceptable
15 only in very limited circumstances."

16 This is 6 NYCRR 663.5(e)(1).

17 "A permit shall be issued only if it
18 is determined that the proposed activity satisfies
19 a pressing or economic or social need that clearly
20 outweighs the loss of or detriment to the benefits
21 of the Class II wetland."

22 I will skip over some other.

23 Mr. Daniel Karpen in his
24 professional opinion, based upon the above

1 citations of law, the probability of any applicant
2 obtaining a Freshwater Wetlands Permit for any
3 major construction in the Southwest Area is zero.

4 Point Number Three. The City of
5 Ithaca has been using Southwest Park as an illegal
6 dump for some time.

7 On May 18, 1999 the Ithaca Journal
8 in a front page news story reported that the
9 NYSDEC found illegal dumping at Southwest Park.

10 I will skip over some of this.

11 I will point out according to
12 regulation 6 NYCRR 617.2:, physical alteration
13 includes, but is not limited to, the following
14 activities: Vegetation removal, demolition,
15 stockpiling materials, grading and other forms of
16 earthwork, dumping, fill and etcetera.

17 Illegal dumping should have stopped
18 on May 1st, 1998, the date that the environmental
19 assessment form was prepared by the city of
20 Ithaca.

21 Upon information and belief, illegal
22 dumping has been intermittently taking place in
23 Southwest Park since the enactment of SEQOR by the
24 State Legislature in the mid-1970s.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 The city of Ithaca should look into
2 the alternative of removing all of the illegally
3 dumped material from Southwest Park, and adjacent
4 city land and restoring the flood plain forest on
5 the entire area.

6 Point Number Four. The positive
7 declaration is defective in that it failed to
8 include the action of officially delineating the
9 freshwater wetlands by the NYSDEC as part of this
10 project.

11 The City of Ithaca through the 1994
12 Stearns & Wheler Wetlands Investigation knew that
13 there was extensive flood plain forest in
14 Southwest Park and in the remainder of the
15 Southwest Area Land Use Plan area. Based on my
16 site inspection in April 1999 these maps appear to
17 be reasonably accurate.

18 It is obviously clear that
19 delineation of the wetlands was an action related
20 to the entire project. The New York State DEC
21 should verify, by means of site inspection, the
22 relative accuracy of the Stearns & Wheler maps.

23 And the New York State DEC should
24 hold a public hearing before an administrative law

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 judge to formally map the freshwater wetlands and
2 place them on a Freshwater Wetland Maps of the
3 State of New York.

4 Point Number Five. The City of
5 Ithaca Common Council in December 1999 voted to
6 sell a parcel of land, a part of tax map parcel
7 127-1-1, owned by the City of Widewaters Route 13
8 II Company, LLC.

9 This action is a clear violation of
10 the SEQR regulations at 6 NYCRR 617.3(g): "Actions
11 commonly consist of a set of activity or steps.
12 The entire set of activities or steps must be
13 considered the action, whether the agency
14 decision-making relates to the action as a whole
15 or to only a part of it. (1) considering only a
16 part or segment of an action is contrary to the
17 intent of SEQR. If a lead agency believes the
18 circumstances warrant a segmented review, it must
19 clearly state in its determination of
20 significance, and any subsequent EIS, the
21 supporting reasons and must demonstrate that such
22 review is clearly no less protective of the
23 environment. Related actions should be identified
24 and discussed to the fullest extent possible."

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 As this land has been cleared and
2 has been filled (See Point Number Six below), it
3 is obvious that the mandated environmental
4 safeguards that should have been brought to bear
5 on this project before any physical alterations
6 took place were completely sidestepped.

7 Point Number Six. On November 12,
8 1999, the City of Ithaca granted a permit to
9 Widewaters Route 13 II Company, LLC for the
10 placement of 80,000 cubic yards of fill on
11 property at 398-400 Elmira Road, located within
12 the Southwest Area Land Use Plan.

13 This is a clear violation of the
14 SEQR regulations at 6 NYCRR 617.3(a) and 6 NYCRR
15 617.2(ab) as cited in Point Number 3 above, and
16 the one I just cited in Point Number Five above.

17 The Court of Appeals has held that
18 after the fact compliance with the requirements of
19 SEQRA will not cure a failure to comply
20 initially. And there is a quote here of a case.

21 The DGEIS cannot be used as a
22 subterfuge to justify the illegal action of
23 granting this permit. As mentioned above, the
24 mandated environmental safeguards that should have

1 been brought to bear on this project --

2 MAYOR COHEN: Mr. Gallahan.

3 DAVID GALLAHAN: -- before any --

4 MAYOR COHEN: No, I am sorry, sir.

5 Mr. Butterbank, you are next.

6 We have this in print, sir, and we

7 can read it.

8 DAVID GALLAHAN: Okay, very good.

9 MAYOR COHEN: Mr. Butterbank. I
10 have William Butterbank from the Town of Ithaca.

11 WILLIAM BUTTERBANK: Good evening,
12 Mr. Mayor, staff, members of Common Council,
13 fellow human beings. You folks are going to be
14 very tired by the time this process is over and I
15 don't envy you having to sit here. But I
16 encourage you to try to make sense of the comments
17 and hear both the words and the passion that
18 people are bringing to this process. I think
19 anybody that's going to be speaking cares about
20 the future of our city. And we all have visions
21 that are somewhat different. What we are
22 specifically being called upon to do is address
23 the Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement
24 that lies before you. I hope all of you have

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 spent some time trying to make sense of this
2 document. I cannot pretend to read everything.

3 But I can tell you I did spend
4 several hours at it trying to understand basically
5 three things, one, what was going to be the impact
6 on my neighborhood and other neighborhoods that
7 are adjacent to that project. Secondly, what was
8 going to be the impact on local businesses and to
9 what extent were locally owned businesses going to
10 be displaced by concerns that are owned by large
11 companies out of town. And, thirdly, I tried to
12 understand how this was going to impact the usage
13 of cars in our community.

14 I can tell you on the first two
15 points that I couldn't find very much. I
16 literally couldn't find more than a few lines in
17 terms of the impact on adjacent neighborhoods.
18 And I thought, well, I must be missing something,
19 it is a huge report. I called Mrs. Lee and
20 perhaps Mrs. Lee, I know you are very busy in this
21 process, but you did not respond to my first
22 message or my second message or my third message.
23 About the fifth time I finally succeeded in
24 getting your supervisor, Chase Vancourt, I says,

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 Chase, what is going to be the impact on
2 neighborhoods? And he said, well, it really
3 wasn't in the radar screen in terms of the
4 decision-making process. We weren't looking at
5 that in looking, in developing this document. I
6 said, Chase, what is going to be the impact in
7 terms of displacement of local businesses? Once
8 again, it wasn't a question that was included in
9 this document.

10 I mean, think about this, folks, we
11 are setting in motion a process that's going to be
12 profound negative effects on Nate's Floral
13 Estates, on the Glenside neighborhood, on Spencer
14 Street. We are going to be setting up a whole
15 infrastructure that's going to be encouraging
16 people to move automobiles through those
17 neighborhoods. We are going to be adding sound
18 and light and exhaust vapors, we don't even know
19 what's going to be the effect on the immediate
20 neighborhoods. Also we don't know what's going to
21 be happening in terms of displacement of local
22 businesses.

23 The recent mayoral election,
24 congratulations, Mayor Cohen. There was also a

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 race for Common Council and Mr. Hershey, you got
2 on cable and were saying that you felt it, that we
3 needed these large stores because you couldn't buy
4 a refrigerator in this town. Apparently you were
5 not aware that you can go to Wernick's or Thayer's
6 or for that matter, Rex. You do not need to drive
7 to Syracuse to get these kind of things. But if
8 we move forward as planned with the largest -- we
9 will have to only go to large corporate owned
10 concerns, because the local ones will not be able
11 to compete.

12 Finally I would like to echo what
13 several previous speakers have said about the
14 specialness of this community. I came here about
15 30 years ago. I never went to Cornell. I, my
16 wife and I literally chose this community because
17 we spent about a year driving around America,
18 exploring other communities and when we got here,
19 we could not believe what a unique and special
20 kind of place this was. And I can tell you that
21 part of what makes it special is that not only the
22 natural beauty, but the sense of care about our
23 locality and we are in danger of losing that.

24 Thank you for your attention.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 (APPLAUSE)

2 MAYOR COHEN: Speaker number 10 is
3 David Nakita Werier. Town of Caroline.

4 If I could also have speakers 12 and
5 13.

6 DAVID NAKITA WERIER: Thank you,
7 Allen. Thank you, Council Members and for being
8 here to listen for comments for a while. I want
9 to introduce myself, I am a botanical consultant.
10 I do wetland delineations as well as surveys of
11 plants.

12 And I just want to start my comments
13 out by saying I am a little surprised that the
14 Council allowed DGEIS to be released for public
15 comment at this time, seems a little inadequate
16 and I think that perhaps in the future a little
17 more observation should be done of the statement
18 before it's released for public comment. Any
19 rate, it is out there now so let's go forward.

20 Rare plants. There is one rare
21 plant that is missing in the report, and all this
22 stuff is going to be in writing so I might not get
23 to it in my five minutes, I want to do the best I
24 can. I sort of want to have a little personal

1 contact with you folks as well around this
2 information. Can I get your attention or are you
3 just going to talk a little bit?

4 MAYOR COHEN: We are discussing the
5 fact that people in the back cannot hear you, sir,
6 and we are trying to figure out --

7 DAVID NAKITA WERIER: I can talk
8 into the mic. I'm sorry, Allen, this is the time,
9 this is all going to be in writing so you will be
10 able to read it too.

11 One plant is called *Ulmus thomasii*.
12 The name of it is Rock Elm, and it wasn't
13 mentioned in the report. But it's been found in
14 the Cayuga Inlet Valley at Larch Meadow as well as
15 by Lick Brook. It's a seriously endangered
16 plant. We are talking S2,S3, that means in the
17 state it is reported in 6 to 20 locations. Okay.

18 There is other rare plants that have
19 been found in the area in the past. They weren't
20 found recently. And as Robert Wesley, the person
21 that was doing the work reports in the, it's in
22 the appendix, that he was out there in November
23 doing this work and all those species are not easy
24 to find. Now there is a good chance that a lot of

1 these species won't be there, there is a lot of
2 disturbances that happened to the soil. We
3 shouldn't let that go. We shouldn't allow the
4 person that's doing the botanical work to go out
5 in November to do this work. It's very
6 important. These are important species.

7 One of the species on the list is
8 Chaerophyllum procumbens. It is a small little
9 plant. Right now it is basically only a historic
10 record from the state. In other words, there is
11 no current extent populations of this plant. If
12 there happens to be one in Southwest Park area,
13 and for some reason it gets affected by the
14 development there, this plant will be gone from
15 New York State. So it is important, and as an SH
16 listing, that means it's not considered extirpated
17 from the state at this point. That means there is
18 some hope it can be refound, that's why it is
19 listed as SH and not SX.

20 It's very important we get some more
21 work out there, perhaps this next summer to look
22 for plants again. It could be a little plug for
23 myself I guess. Just to let people know as well I
24 was out with Troy Weldy of the Heritage Program

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 this summer, in adjacent lands, we were actually
2 in Buttermilk Falls State Park, Heritage Park -- I
3 don't want to get into all the. Details, I was
4 out with Troy and we were looking for these plants
5 in adjacent lands thinking there is a good
6 possibility they could be there. We weren't going
7 on the Southwest Park parcels because it is
8 privately owned or owned by the city, and it
9 wasn't as available a resource, anyway it is
10 important stuff.

11 Moving right along. Lichens are not
12 something that is generally considered, the
13 Heritage Program doesn't have state rankings for
14 them. I am an acuologist as well, probably one of
15 the top field acuologist in the country. At
16 present I am doing some studies on if like
17 conditions for this area and there is a lichen
18 that I found in that area called Physciella
19 chloantha. Anyway that lichen has only been found
20 by me in that spot, as I know of there is no other
21 records for Tompkins County.

22 Just quickly moving on to forest.
23 Flood plain forest is already an endangered
24 community by the New York Natural Heritage

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 Program. It's an S2,S3 listing. It was put in
2 the appendix but it wasn't brought to, it wasn't
3 dealt with in executive summary. That's a big
4 oversight. This is an ecological community,
5 that's an endangered in New York State and needs
6 to be addressed. You can't just write it off. I
7 mean you can if you want, but it's a, it's really,
8 it's not good policy. Okay. There is no legal
9 standing, if you own the land, yeah, you can
10 destroy your own community. But since it's
11 endangered we are talking about the possibility of
12 only a few of these going on in the state.

13 Thank you very much. A lot more
14 will come in my report.

15 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. Number 11
16 is Peter Pfarrer from the city of Ithaca.

17 PETER PFARRER: As Mr. Cohen said,
18 my name is Peter Pfarrer. My wife and I moved to
19 Ithaca quite deliberately like some other people.
20 But only about six years ago. We live in a house
21 we bought on Lynn Street since 1998. One thing I
22 share with everyone in this room is a love for
23 this city, really fallen in love with it. I still
24 am in love with it.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 But I supported the idea of
2 commercial development in the Southwest Area for
3 some time because it has been clear to me many
4 people from this region prefer the modern,
5 strip-mall, car-centered version of commerce that
6 such development represents. Like the big
7 retailers who won't consider Downtown Ithaca for
8 development, these folks aren't interested in the
9 charm of our Commons; instead, they are choosing
10 to drive to Lansing, Elmira, and even Syracuse for
11 their shopping. And not only is this situation
12 depriving our city of much needed tax revenues; it
13 is also contributing to the very sprawl so many in
14 the community decry by turning Lansing into a
15 suburb of Ithaca.

16 Making commercial use in our city
17 along an already heavily developed Route 13
18 corridor, has always made sense to me. If a
19 Target is going to target Tompkins County, and its
20 choice is either Lansing or Southwest Ithaca, I
21 favor it coming to Southwest Ithaca.

22 Ironically, the DGEIS document
23 concerning the city's plan for Southwest is
24 already being dismissed by some of the very people

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 who called for it in the first place. So as a
2 balance to the worst-case scenarios that are being
3 presented through selective readings of the
4 document,, I'd just like to stress the Impact
5 Statement's more positive conclusions, and its
6 generally optimistic vision.

7 The DGEIS's overall conclusions are
8 clear, I quote: "Adoption of the plan and
9 development would result in the following
10 benefits: Stabilization or increase in city sales
11 and property tax revenues; opportunity for the
12 City to maintain or enhance its competitiveness
13 within the region as a desirable region to live,
14 work, shop and recreate; job creation; creation of
15 substitute parkland."

16 According to the DGEIS, the only
17 completely unavoidable impact identified in the
18 document's Summary of Impacts is an aesthetic and
19 thus subjective, and that is the change in
20 Viewshed at key view locations. This is
21 unavoidable. For other impacts identified,
22 mitigation strategies are listed. Although I
23 understand many of them don't seem to be up to
24 many people's standards.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 I quote: "The retail market analysis
2 concluded that potential development of Southwest
3 Ithaca would not have a blighting influence on
4 Downtown Ithaca." As a resident of Downtown
5 Ithaca, I am of course concerned about how
6 development of the Southwest Area is going to
7 impact The Commons, for which I have frequented
8 for years and its surrounding neighborhoods.
9 While it seems clear there will be increased
10 competition in the Southwest District, it does not
11 have to pose a threat to those Downtown businesses
12 which seem to represent what seems to be its
13 commercial niche, restaurants, bars, specialty
14 shops, etcetera.

15 In addition, many potential big box
16 customers are not currently shopping in the
17 downtown area anyway; and hopefully the increase
18 in shoppers to the City will most likely have a
19 spillover effect in downtown, which will soon be
20 featuring a State Theater and a world class public
21 library.

22 Finally, Ithacans, I support
23 continued subsidizing of the downtown business
24 district as well as other public efforts to keep

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 it alive and flourishing.

2 Many folks have brought up the issue
3 of the project's costs to the city, but the Impact
4 Statement reports that, and I quote, "The City
5 intends to develop a formula that equitably
6 distributes the costs of the off-site
7 improvements...". I will leave it to many
8 opponents here to make sure the City does that.
9 It also states: "Additional service costs for
10 schools, roads, utilities and public services are
11 expected to be substantially less than anticipated
12 additional property and sales tax revenues."

13 Joe Wetmore has argued recently that
14 we should just simply let the Southwest area
15 return to flood plain forestland. And this
16 suggestion has the benefit of being
17 straightforward and very honest, but it doesn't
18 gibe with the we're in favor of mixed-use
19 development line that we have been hearing for
20 months now from some opponents of the big box
21 development.

22 In addition, I quote. "Under the
23 no-action alternative, development of several
24 parcels within the study area would still occur

1 but with unmitigated adverse traffic, visual,
2 wetland, buried waste and drainage impacts."
3 Maybe that's what's going on with Widewaters, I am
4 not sure. It seems better to undertake a
5 comprehensive plan for the whole area.

6 Despite my admiration for many of
7 the folks who oppose this project, I think it is
8 important to remind them that this last election
9 cycle was in many ways about the very issue before
10 us. Dan Hoffman and Allen Cohen were quite
11 specific about the importance of development
12 issues to the City's future, and took clearly
13 different positions regarding them. So the
14 resulting election results should be seen, to some
15 degree, as a democratic verdict on Southwest
16 development by Ithaca's citizenry. In fact, I
17 think it's fair to say that the pro-development
18 tone of the entire Common Council (with the
19 exception of its new Green Party member) reflects
20 the desire, on the part of Ithaca's residents, for
21 more commercial activity in the city, more sales
22 tax revenues, and a more vibrant economy overall.
23 So I thank you for considering my
24 comments.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 MAYOR COHEN: Number 12 is Judy
2 Jones, city of Ithaca.

3 JUDY JONES: I am a member of the
4 Conservation Advisory Council. I am sure the
5 forepersons who follow me will all be reading to
6 you a subset of our comments which we will be
7 submit in writing at later date to you.

8 We all choose different sections of
9 the DGEIS, focussed on our own individual
10 sections.

11 So I would like to first comment on
12 the former dump site, Section 2.4 in Appendix D,
13 the remediation of some or all of the former city
14 dump would clearly be necessary should development
15 occur according to any of the six alternative
16 plans.

17 CAC believes the DGEIS needs to
18 clarify the regulatory requirements including
19 oversight responsibilities for such remediation.
20 The scoping documents specifies a closure plan
21 based on a workable plan approved by DEC. The
22 consultant for the site assessment, Clark
23 Patterson of Rochester says in the draft GEIS that
24 the site is exempt from DEC oversight since it is

1 not a listed hazardous site.

2 Section 2.4.6 of the DGEIS specifies
3 a construction pollution prevention plan to be
4 filed by the contractor and approved by the city
5 at the time of site plan review. Presumably the
6 City would oversee city implementation of plan as
7 well. A SPEDIS permit is also specified. The
8 DEIS should contain a list of regulations,
9 standards and guidelines the City would expect to
10 use in the review of such plans.

11 Public trust in the permit
12 enforcement has been damaged by recent
13 observations at the Widewaters site. Trucks were
14 seen and photographed avoiding the SPEDIS
15 requirement to remove soils from their tires prior
16 to exiting on the Route 13.

17 The CAC wants assurance with the
18 GEIS that the City could provide the kind of
19 oversight that's needed to tighten the enforced
20 permits and plans that are designed to prevent the
21 uncontained movements of soils contaminated heavy
22 metals into adjacent communities as soil sediment
23 or dust.

24 The other section I would like to

1 comment on are impacts on visual resource section
2 2.6 and Appendix E. There are a number of
3 weaknesses in the visual resources study which
4 leads CAC to conclude that the visual impacts are
5 understated in the graphic projection and
6 conclusion. The projections are based upon the
7 retention of some of the existing vegetations,
8 large trees and parking lots instead of new
9 plantings, no rooftop utilities or penthouses
10 appear in the photographs. There are no
11 conspicuous signs that building heights are
12 uniform and regularized contrary to the
13 recommendations in the guidelines for varying roof
14 lines.

15 Further, the study states that the
16 major mitigation to visual impact would be to
17 retain as much of existing vegetations as possible
18 especially the large trees. The study was
19 completed and photographs taken before work began
20 on the Widewater site where all trees and shrubs
21 were removed, thus impacts on key view, one at
22 Buttermilk Falls State Park are certainly
23 understated. Major opportunity for mitigation has
24 already been lost through allowing live water site

1 development before site plan review.

2 CAC recommends that a, that
3 vegetations removal and especially large trees
4 should be strictly minimized in the Southwest Area
5 Land Use Plan and through the site plan review
6 process.

7 Thank you.

8 MAYOR COHEN: Number 13 is Paul
9 Salon, S-A-L-O-N, from the Town of Ithaca.

10 PAUL SALON: Hi, I am Paul Salon. I
11 am a member of the Conservation Advisory Council.
12 And I will be talking about surface water and
13 drainage.

14 The Executive Summary
15 unrealistically states that the "adoption of the
16 plan would allow design criteria to be imposed on
17 development that could act to improve surface
18 water quality in the area through flood mitigation
19 and storm water management practices." The plan
20 calls for the building of up to 1.25 million
21 square feet of buildings, parking lots with a
22 projected doubling of storm run-off volume and a
23 near quadrupling of storm peak flow off the site.
24 The design of the system for a 25 year storm event

1 and lack of any storm water retention basin seems
2 inadequate to make such a claim.

3 The DEIS states that typical storm
4 water pollutants from urban areas include oil,
5 grease, sediments, solvents, various metals,
6 nutrients and salts. The treatment of only the
7 first one-half inch of run-off is inadequate.

8 According to the DEIS again,
9 "abrupt slope changes from steep to flat sloping
10 channels where tributary streams enter the inlet
11 alluvial plain result in conditions where flooding
12 can be frequent. This has been a historic problem
13 well documented along Buttermilk Creek Road where
14 residents are now concerned about the present
15 filling being conducted by Widewaters
16 Incorporated.

17 The City of Ithaca has granted a
18 permit for this filling in this controversial area
19 which violates the intent of this whole planning
20 process. The permit is presently in the appeal
21 process, yet the filling goes on.

22 The drainage swales proposed to
23 handle the flood flows from the Buttermilk Creek
24 neighborhood and the rest of the project are

1 located in a difficult position. Due to the land
2 being extremely flat and located in a 100 year
3 flood plain, it will be extremely hard to build
4 ditches at the designed slopes down to .15
5 percent, that's one and a half foot fall in the
6 thousand feet or three times the size of a
7 football field. These ditches will have very low
8 velocities allowing for rapid accumulation of
9 sediment requiring constant maintenance in order
10 to carry the designed flows. This area also was
11 totally submerged in flood waters in 1996 from a
12 storm event, of less than the 100 year frequency.
13 This type of flooding will deposit sediment and
14 debris into the ditches.

15 Most important point I probably have
16 today is that with all the engineering work done
17 in the DEIS, they state in several places that
18 brush, debris and sediment removal should be
19 performed at least annually. To me that's a cry
20 from the engineer saying we are going to try to
21 give you the best plan we can because we know we
22 want to develop. I am going to cover myself by
23 saying you are going to have to dig those ditches
24 out annually, that is going to be extremely

1 expensive. It is going to basically happen
2 annually once you remove the vegetations, it is
3 just going to be a constant procedure here. And
4 you need to have those ditches to carry the flood
5 water and also later it will be stated that you
6 need those ditches to treat the contaminants.

7 The initial sediment load due to
8 construction, erosion and lack of vegetation is
9 expected to be above normal according to the
10 DGEIS, to cleaning may be required after one
11 season, which will again remove all vegetation
12 from the ditch.

13 The Widewaters Creek Road drainage
14 ditch outlets are, or the Buttermilk Creek Road
15 drainage ditch outlets through or into the
16 substitute parkland so that the annual maintenance
17 and sediment removal will become the
18 responsibility of the City and will adversely
19 impact on the new substitute parkland. The
20 maintenance of this system and the entire drainage
21 system for the entire Southwest project will
22 become the responsibility of the City. These
23 costs need to be considered in any cost benefit
24 ratio.

1 The Executive Summary also stated
2 the project will improve water quality. This
3 seems impossible since the site was completely
4 vegetated prior to the present filling action by
5 Widewaters. The vegetative swales may allow as
6 per the GEIS for nutrient absorption by plants but
7 unless the plant material is removed from the
8 site, where the grass is removed, there will be no
9 net nutrient loss from the plant. The use of the
10 drainage swales as an area of sedimentation will
11 only reduce life of the drainage swales and reduce
12 maintenance costs. All of the sediment should be
13 removed during the maintenance and not spread on
14 the site.

15 It is our recommendation that larger
16 sedimentation and retention basins be constructed
17 and incorporated into a wetland design. This will
18 allow for a more economic and effective treatment
19 and removal of sediment, nutrients and metals
20 rather than spreading the pollutants out over a
21 lengthy drainage system. The use of sweeping and
22 vacuuming parking lots should be used only as a
23 practice to extend the life of other more
24 realistic treatment structures.

1 The DGEIS recommends sedimentation
2 control measures, such as check dams or situation
3 basins be implemented in the streams draining
4 South Hill to minimize sedimentation concerns in
5 the Relief Channel. These should be installed
6 since the Relief Channel is the major outlet for
7 the majority of the drainage system in the plan.

8 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you, Paul.
9 Betsy Darlington.

10 BETSY DARLINGTON: Hi. I also am
11 representing the Conservation Advisory Council and
12 I will be addressing the plants and annual
13 portions of the DGEIS and Appendix H. I am just
14 presenting a summary of a much more detailed
15 statement and you will get that as well as all the
16 other statements tonight in much longer form.

17 Part one, evaluation of impacts.

18 The Executive Summary, ES, as I will
19 call it later, draws the conclusion that there
20 would be no substantial impacts from the various
21 alternatives on plants and animals. Yet this
22 conclusion is not supported by either the body of
23 the DGEIS nor by Robert Wesley's survey.

24 The significant old-growth flood

1 plain forest remnant at the eastern edge of the
2 original Southwest Park would be eliminated under
3 all alternative scenarios. This is not even
4 mentioned in the Executive Summary. This is one
5 of the rarest ecosystems in the state. And I
6 think it would be criminal to just wipe it out.
7 Every single alternate wipes it out.

8 (APPLAUSE)

9 Number three, all six of the
10 alternatives are likely to have significant
11 adverse impacts on Negundo Woods, which is one of
12 the county's unique natural areas and is
13 identified as being significant in the DGEIS.

14 Four, the nearly uninterrupted
15 forested corridor currently in the Southwest area
16 is needed for wildlife and plants. It should not
17 be further fragmented, to do so would be to have
18 significant impacts on them.

19 Five, removal of so much forest will
20 have adverse impacts on air quality, air
21 temperature, and drainage, in addition to impacts
22 on wildlife and plants.

23 Six, increased human disturbance
24 will have adverse impacts on regionally rare

1 species as well as more common ones.

2 Seven, Robert Wesley's survey was
3 conducted in October to November. As Wesley
4 states, the DGEIS cannot draw realistic
5 conclusions without surveys done from April
6 through September of both herbaceous plants and
7 wildlife.

8 Eight or nine, whatever the number
9 is I have lost track, an ornithologist, Wesley is
10 a plant ecologist, not a wildlife biologist. An
11 ornithologist at least must study the site during
12 spring migration and the breeding period.

13 Part two, conclusions and
14 alternatives.

15 The DGEIS conclusions are puzzling
16 and do not jibe with anything that is known about
17 wildlife or plants. The CAC would like to propose
18 a more balanced vision for the City.

19 The CAC recommends excluding
20 existing woodlands and wetlands (primarily in
21 unfilled portions of the original Southwest Park,
22 the old-growth flood plain remnant, and southern,
23 unfilled portion of the proposed Cherry Street
24 Industrial Park Extension) from rezoning and

1 development. Add these areas to the new Southwest
2 Natural Area.

3 Three, seek a mix of development in
4 the remaining Southwest area, not exclusively
5 large-scale retail. Some other development types
6 tend to have less impact and to allow for
7 retention of more natural features.

8 Four, capitalize on tourism and
9 especially birding in the City's Southwest area,
10 in light of proximity to the State Park, the Black
11 Diamond Trail, and the new city park/natural
12 area.

13 Six, re-establish a fine flood plain
14 forest, as another draw for tourists (as well as
15 wildlife).

16 Seven, enhance the area as a draw
17 for birds and other visitors, and bring in
18 businesses that cater to them.

19 Eight, build new businesses on the
20 areas that have already been filled by the DPW, in
21 areas that are currently developed, but could
22 support more intense development, for example,
23 multi-stories, and, if safe to do so, in the old
24 city dump area. From Judy Jones's analysis, it

1 may be totally unsafe to do so, however.

2 Let our legacy be one that enhances
3 and capitalizes on the natural attributes of the
4 area. We can, at the same time, increase income
5 to the City.

6 Let us not destroy the natural
7 qualities of the area, and simply leave large
8 shopping malls for our children, grandchildren and
9 beyond. This is the city's last opportunity to do
10 something wonderful rather than shortsighted and
11 outdated. Let's show the rest of the country that
12 is it is possible to increase development without
13 destroying vast acreages of natural area.

14 I wanted to just say a couple more
15 things from Paul, Paul ran out of time.

16 Wetlands are important resources,
17 providing protection against flooding and they
18 serve as reservoirs for storm water and storm melt
19 events. Wetlands also provide habitat for
20 specific plants and animals. 10.98 acres of
21 wetlands have been delineated within the Southwest
22 area. We heard tonight that area is probably
23 larger than that. It is a very unusual system
24 that they used for delineation. We support the

1 maintenance of all wetlands on-site and the
2 mitigation of disturbed wetlands to be
3 reconstructed on-site, by the expansion and
4 enhancement of existing wetlands.

5 We do not support the creation of
6 new wetlands in the new Southwest Park until a new
7 management plan has been developed for the park.
8 We are concerned about adding more water with
9 contaminants in Negundo Woods. Additional
10 consultations by a forester or ecologist are
11 recommended. The use of mitigated wetlands --

12 MAYOR COHEN: Number 15 is Martha
13 Fischer, city of Ithaca.

14 MARTHA FISCHER: I read the
15 transportation section of the Draft Environmental
16 Impact Statement. So my comments will be related
17 to that.

18 First, in relation to intersection
19 capacity analysis -- I am kind of nervous. The
20 authors provide tables portraying the current
21 level of services and the future levels of service
22 for three or four different parameters. One of
23 them is alternative five, two of them are, one is
24 a 20-year no-action scenario which includes annual

1 background and traffic growth rate of 1.2 percent,
2 and a 200,000 square feet of development. Another
3 one of the scenarios includes development of levy
4 parcel only in 20 years.

5 I would like to have those two
6 scenarios clarified in such a way that the
7 differences would be outlined clearly with the
8 development that's going on in the levy parcel
9 right now, they seem to be one in the same. That
10 would be great if that could be clarified.

11 Some more about level of service
12 stuff. I read about the 27 affected
13 intersections, and found that the planners decided
14 that they need to be mitigated to what's called
15 level E. Level E entails a wait of 40 to 60
16 seconds, along with that is, they measure
17 frustration and discomfort on the part of the
18 driver, that seems to me to be an unacceptable
19 level, if that's going to be held at that low
20 level, then mitigation isn't offered for impacts
21 to air quality, and to noise considering that the
22 heavy amount of traffic at some of the
23 intersections.

24 Mitigation wasn't offered for

1 intersections of Meadow and Seneca Street, and at
2 Meadow and Green Street, and I am not really sure
3 why those two were left out. Cause when I read
4 the neighborhood analysis section, it talks about
5 the sections, a couple of sections of Meadow
6 Street, one between Buffalo and Seneca and the
7 other between State and Green Street as increasing
8 by 22 and 25 percent respectively. It seems like
9 there might need some mitigating efforts at the
10 intersections that coincide with those sections of
11 Meadow Street.

12 Another point about the neighborhood
13 analysis is that Spencer Road isn't included at
14 all. And it runs parallel to Route 13 and is very
15 close, it runs into Route 13 very close to where
16 the levy is. And it seems to me -- well, it's
17 clear to me is that there would be lots of
18 negative impacts on that area.

19 Then another point that I wanted to
20 bring up was that the environmental impact
21 statement talks about three goals and objectives
22 of mitigation. And the first one is to encourage
23 greater use of multi-modal transportation. I
24 looked through the rest of the section for

1 transportation, and I didn't find any other
2 mention of multi-modal transportation.

3 What will be done to improve it? I
4 mean there is lots of pages involved for
5 automobile traffic. I would like to see the
6 mitigation of, you know, that includes multi-modal
7 transportation to be included in the environmental
8 impact statement.

9 Related to bicycle and public
10 transportation and pedestrian analysis, would the
11 planners also include as mitigation plans, include
12 education of the public about sharing the road
13 with pedestrians and bicycles? And would the
14 planners also include details of public transit
15 related mitigation? Thanks.

16 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you very much.

17 (APPLAUSE)

18 MAYOR COHEN: Number 16 is Harry
19 Bowman from the city of Ithaca.

20 HARRY BOWMAN: Yes. I would like to
21 talk a little bit about growth. Now, you know, in
22 this particular area, the population has not
23 really increased in recent decades. And one would
24 reasonably assume that the demand that those

1 people have to shop would be roughly constant. So
2 we really would not expect there to be an
3 expansion in the demand for retail space. When
4 you look at retail space in the City of Ithaca,
5 you find that there is a great deal of empty
6 retail space. This would seem to indicate that
7 there is already more retail space than is
8 necessary to meet demand.

9 This particular development,
10 according to some estimates, nearly doubles the
11 stock of retail space in this area. It seems very
12 unlikely that there will ever be a demand for that
13 much retail space in this area. Now that I have
14 said, however, that it is unlikely that it will
15 fill, maybe I am wrong. Let's say that it does.
16 I happen to live on Prospect Street, you know,
17 which is right out here in, by the police station,
18 and I looked at the plan here and assuming that
19 those numbers on the parking lots are the number
20 of parking space in those lots, this development
21 has 4,498 parking spaces connected to it. Let's
22 say that just a few of those cars were coming down
23 Route 96 here, you know, coming down Aurora Street
24 and then they want to get to this development.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 Well, they would take a left onto Prospect Street,
2 then they would probably take the closest, the
3 shortest route which would cause them to turn onto
4 Spencer Street and head out that way. That will
5 take them right in front of the police station.
6 Now since I live in the area I know that traffic
7 is already sometimes backed up in front of that
8 police station. And if you take a look at the
9 roads there, it would be very difficult to widen
10 them. You would have to demolish some houses and
11 probably dig out quite a bit of earth to increase
12 the width of that road. So, you know, even if it
13 fills there are still a lot of problems associated
14 with this project.

15 (APPLAUSE)

16 MAYOR COHEN: 17, Michael Culotta,
17 city of Ithaca.

18 MICHAEL CULOTTA: Good evening. I
19 am here as a member of the Conservation Advisory
20 Council. Can people hear me? I read the section
21 on community character and economic development in
22 the DGEIS, and found it really educational. A lot
23 of things in there that I had never seen in print
24 anywhere and feel like it would be a good section

1 for anyone considering this plan to read carefully
2 and thoroughly.

3 In there it kind of poses the
4 question that's a difficult one to answer. What's
5 a city to do, its tax base, this tax base in
6 Ithaca which has depended in the past on real
7 property tax is now increasingly dependent on
8 sales tax revenues to cover the cost of
9 administering city services. The intent of
10 Southwest Park as currently designed is to
11 directly bolster this tax revenue base decline,
12 which is estimated in the DGEIS at \$150,000 a
13 year. And it leads to that, with that figure in
14 mind, I would like to move then to this whole
15 DGEIS discussion, is retail the best way and
16 retail sales, the best way for Ithaca to increase
17 its tax base?

18 It's kind of a question of scale and
19 that's really what I think is one of the most
20 important messages in this complete and
21 comprehensive document is scale. What it
22 envisions as far as retail sales in Ithaca under
23 alternative five which calls for 800,000 square
24 feet of new retail space in the Southwest Park is

1 78 million dollars of new sales for Ithaca
2 resulting in 1.5 million in new sales tax
3 revenues. But of the, of that component of new
4 retail sales, there is also a large component of
5 transferred sales, from existing businesses to the
6 new retail area. That number is 55 million of
7 transferred sales.

8 What is the mitigating factors from
9 transferring the sales of 55 million dollars from
10 existing retail businesses? Well, what I did was
11 I, in looking at the analysis, I took an
12 assumption on how many square feet that means to
13 the transfer of retail square footage that's now
14 going to be, the sales is going to be transferred
15 to the new space, and I figured it up and it ends
16 up being about 300,000 square feet of retail space
17 that would be affected by or reduced by the
18 transfer of sales to the new retail section.

19 And it's this area that I feel is
20 most concerning with respect to the DGEIS. Can
21 Ithaca control how, and can Ithaca mitigate for
22 the loss of existing businesses to 300,000 square
23 feet of retail space? And how much space is
24 that. Well, let's talk again a little bit about

1 scale.

2 The DGEIS envisions Ithaca
3 transformed from its current evolved retail kind
4 of evolved retail landscape where you have some
5 nice interesting retail sections up in
6 Collegetown, you have Downtown Ithaca which has
7 specialty retail to an area which now nearly
8 increases the retail space by almost double. And
9 300,000 square feet is approximately the size of
10 Wegman's, K-Mart and Tops added together. So
11 basically you are going to be displacing space
12 about the size of Wegman's, K-Mart and Tops to new
13 areas. This kind of a scale loss really seems
14 like it would disrupt a lot of Ithaca's current
15 economy as it currently exists and as it is
16 currently evolved. And I am wondering if there is
17 any real plan or sense of scale to this
18 development.

19 Thank you.

20 What city, the City envisions is a
21 site plan review process and the City Zoning Board
22 that can hopefully control this transfer of
23 space. But I question whether that's sufficient.
24 And I am wondering if we bit off more than we can

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 My second point is that my concern
2 over the impact on existing Ithaca businesses
3 which the previous speaker spoke very eloquently
4 about. But my concern is about the health of
5 existing Downtown and the Commons. The scope of
6 this project which is said to be 55 acres and is
7 going to be larger than the current Pyramid Mall
8 and the Commons combined, seems to be out of scale
9 and out of proportion to the size of our community
10 and will have negative impacts on our local
11 economy, not to mention our own local businesses.

12 A third point is that we are in an
13 era of drastic economic changes with the Internet
14 and the rapid growth of e-commerce and the
15 economic viability of brick and mortar retail
16 stores is increasingly being called into question,
17 particularly in small markets like ours. If big
18 box retailers that are the target of this
19 development begin to feel the pinch, these will be
20 the first stores they close and our tax payers
21 here will be left holding the bag.

22 My final point is about the issue of
23 smart growth. It's currently big news everywhere
24 except the pages of the Ithaca Journal that

1 development, for development sake does not make
2 for an attractive community. Instead more
3 communities are moving away from
4 vehicle-dependent, mall-type development, toward
5 integrated communities that include retail
6 residential park, and even industrial space
7 integrated together.

8 For many small cities that have
9 already gone down the path that Mayor Cohen is
10 pushing Ithaca down with this plan, the current
11 Ithaca Downtown and the Commons would be objects
12 of envy for some of these other cities that have
13 already made these mistakes. Instead of heeding
14 the lessons of these cities, which are lessons
15 they have learned are economically undermined
16 downtown, severe traffic problems, car dependence,
17 replacement of local businesses by generic chain
18 stores, and the subsequent loss of character that
19 makes these cities unique, Ithaca is poised to
20 repeat these very same mistakes. I urge the
21 Council to rethink this initiative and consider
22 more beneficial approaches to development.

23 Thank you.

24 (APPLAUSE)

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 MAYOR COHEN: Number 19 is Eric
2 Miller from Danby.

3 ERIC MILLER: Good evening. My name
4 is Eric Miller, as I said. I am a resident of
5 Tompkins County living in the Town of Danby. And
6 I have lived in Ithaca for five years. I, like
7 many people who have spoke this evening, have
8 chosen Ithaca as my home and I am a homeowner in
9 Tompkins County and I have been employed by the
10 city school district for five years. And the
11 reason that I, one of the reasons that I chose
12 Ithaca, from the millions of places I may have
13 chosen to live, was the character that's unique to
14 our community of downtown and the feeling of
15 community that you get and ability to access
16 stores by walking and in being in a historic
17 downtown area.

18 And also an added attraction was the
19 access to natural places so immediately and close
20 to our downtown area, Buttermilk Falls being right
21 on the edge of downtown, people being downtown
22 being able to walk up Cascadilla Street is a very
23 unusual and attractive To me it would be
24 very disappointing to take another beautiful

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 natural area so accessible to downtown to
2 completely pave it over and turn it into a
3 concrete jungle which may look very nice for the
4 first year with all the grand opening banners and
5 the very nice flat black asphalt and the bright
6 yellow lines, but as those start to fade away and
7 the asphalt starts to crack and the businesses
8 start to change over or go out of business, it's
9 going to seem like a real waste of really
10 beautiful area and resource to leave completely
11 paved over.

12 I hear a lot of people speaking
13 about development versus no development, shopping
14 versus no shopping. And you know these
15 dichotomies, which for me it is not about whether
16 there should be shopping or no shopping,
17 development or no development, but it feels like
18 the plan as it's been proposed and the maps as
19 they have been proposed are highly uncreative use
20 of the space for a town that has very many
21 creative people.

22 I would like to see the energies
23 that are going towards this very simple design go
24 to really enhancing what we already have. We have

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 so much empty space as it is, Route 13 has a lot
2 of empty space along it that's just kind of
3 wrecked down lots and some, you know, different
4 kinds of just empty parking lots and things. I
5 think I would like to see the millions of dollars
6 that are going to have to be spent on creating the
7 infrastructure for this development and
8 maintaining it spent to enhance what's already
9 here. And to, just to bring it to life, instead
10 of just trying to spread it so thin.

11 I guess that's all I have to say. I
12 don't have statistics or quotes to bring to this,
13 just my personal opinion. Thanks.

14 (APPLAUSE)

15 MAYOR COHEN: Our next speaker,
16 number 19, is Joseph Wetmore.

17 JOSEPH WETMORE: Thank you for this
18 opportunity to address the committee. I have also
19 submitted written comments which I hope will be
20 seriously considered, although I have little hope
21 that they will be. This is because I have
22 observed several of these approval processes here,
23 I have learned some of the tricks that city
24 officials use to ignore or dismiss comments they

1 don't like.

2 Trick number one: If a commenter
3 makes a point that is problematic, declare it non-
4 substantive. For example, when considering the
5 Wegman's expansion, the draft environmental review
6 indicated that Wegman's didn't vacuum the parking
7 lot and concluded that the new much larger lot
8 could be vacuumed once a week and end up cleaner
9 than before. This was presented as a mitigation
10 measure to include cleaner run-off. Citizens
11 pointed out that Wegman's actually vacuumed the
12 large lot twice a week, so vacuuming a larger lot
13 less frequently probably wouldn't improve the
14 quality of run-off. This observation was declared
15 non-substantive.

16 Trick number two: Declare the
17 comments illegible. During the Wal-Mart hearings
18 there was a three-inch stack of written comments.
19 In the process of sorting the stack, all the
20 handwritten comments were dismissed as illegible,
21 including one submission which had the commenter's
22 name printed clearly in block letters, above
23 neatly typed copy.

24 Trick number three: Misperceive the

1 comments. During the Wal-Mart hearings, written
2 comments were delivered to many members of the
3 lead agency. At least one of those never made it
4 into the public record, let alone to consideration
5 by that agency. Who knows how many other comments
6 were lost this way.

7 Trick number four: Declare that you
8 will do something, then change your mind. During
9 the scoping sessions for the Southwest Project,
10 Susan Antash made it clear that they believed that
11 SEQR prohibited them from examining the economic
12 impacts of the project, specifically, the effects
13 on downtown Ithaca. When it was pointed out that
14 such logic would preclude examining the tax gain
15 the city might receive from the project, they
16 said, you are right, we will take it out. This is
17 an example of why we ask for public comment. Of
18 course if you look at the report, you will
19 discover it went right back in.

20 Trick number five: Rig the clock.
21 After giving Clark Patterson Associates hours to
22 present the 1,200 page document, give citizens
23 only five minutes to respond. The public may
24 actually believe that you will read the comments

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 you don't have time to listen to.

2 (APPLAUSE).

3 If you decide to actually pay
4 attention to citizen input on this proposal,
5 please consider the following:

6 The Southwest Area development plan
7 will result in a danger to public health and
8 safety, higher taxes, higher fees for city
9 services, and a nightmare of traffic jams in our
10 neighborhood. This destructive proposal will
11 cause major damage to our environment or local
12 economy and unique character of our community.

13 In scramble for revenue at any cost,
14 you are proposing to provide a baker's dozen of
15 big box retail chains to pollute our city with
16 their ugly buildings and uglier employment
17 practices.

18 In order to reward the developers
19 and speculators who fund your political campaigns,
20 you are hell-bent on creating the largest new
21 shopping center in Central New York, regardless of
22 the damage it does to our downtown, our local
23 businesses, our neighborhoods, and the streets our
24 children walk and ride their bikes on.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 MAYOR COHEN: Ladies and gentlemen,
2 we are going to resume the hearings now. Will you
3 please have a seat. Number 20 is Nancy Ramage,
4 city of Ithaca.

5 NANCY RAMAGE: Good evening. I
6 would like to make two brief points. The first
7 has to do with the question of fill. I would like
8 to ask the City, not in this particular venue, but
9 in another one to explain how the permission was
10 given for the fill to be put there in the
11 Southwest area after the permit had been denied by
12 Mr. Eckstrom.

13 And I would also like to mention
14 that I think the spill of the fill that goes from
15 the area where the buildings will be that go, the
16 spill that slopes into the area that is supposed
17 to be saved as parkland is inappropriate and
18 should be removed.

19 And thirdly, in regard to the fill,
20 the fact that there is a buffer zone required, but
21 the plan is that the buffer zone be within the
22 parkland is a mistake, and the fill, the buffer
23 area should be within the commercial zone and not
24 in the area that is a park area.

1 My second point has to do with the
2 downtown, and I refer you to what I considered an
3 excellent letter in the paper the other day by
4 Harvey Fyside, the quality of life in Ithaca is so
5 dependent on our shops, our book shops and our
6 many other kinds of special stores, someone
7 earlier mentioned appliance stores like Thayer's,
8 there are Bishop stores and the many other
9 downtown stores that will be threatened by the new
10 kinds of shops that are proposed for the Southwest
11 area.

12 And I would plead with Common
13 Council to consider that it's not only an economic
14 issue, but also a question of quality of life in
15 Ithaca. Thank you.

16 (APPLAUSE)

17 MAYOR COHEN: Number 21 is Ernest
18 Bury, city of Ithaca.

19 ERNEST BURY: Thank you for your
20 patience. I see the list is well over a hundred
21 now. I would like to introduce myself, I am a
22 landlord who tries to provide affordable
23 energy-efficient housing, which is very difficult
24 to do when you have a stagnant economy and your

1 taxes keep going up.

2 Regarding housing, it is no
3 coincidence that there are so many cars heading in
4 all directions from Ithaca like to Elmira, because
5 there they can afford to live. So it's really
6 difficult to provide housing for what I call
7 service personnel. I don't think there are many
8 service personnel here tonight.

9 Regarding the destruction of
10 businesses, I drive out Route 13 several times a
11 week and I noticed just in the very recent past,
12 four buildings have disappeared. So we are
13 already destroying buildings, taking them off the
14 tax rolls. So it would be a real pleasure to see
15 something going up out there to add to the tax
16 roles, so hopefully I don't have to pay \$100 per
17 month per unit per taxes.

18 The next part of my talk has to do
19 with credibility. I am a cofounder of the group
20 called Trash which four or five years ago tried to
21 provide a more rational alternative to the white
22 elephant we have out there now. Where were all
23 the people that were so concerned about the
24 wetlands, the wildlife, the trees, etcetera, when

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 they built that monstrosity right smack in the
2 middle of it. Talk about run-off. They have
3 plenty of run-off and it is pretty bad stuff that
4 people bring in on their vehicles when they have a
5 load of who knows what. I didn't hear any
6 consistent environmental objections to that
7 project at the time. Now what makes it
8 particularly specious is there were viable
9 alternatives available for the Solid Waste Center
10 such as Wallace Industries, and the Triangle
11 facility.

12 Another comment I heard tonight,
13 well, how about the impact on small businesses.
14 Well, again, credibility is in doubt because I
15 know what Ida Webber who ran a small recycling
16 center for decades, she tried valiantly to keep in
17 business when the government came along and put
18 her out of business. So I would hope that people
19 would realize there are many service people that
20 are, like one person I just recently ran into was
21 making \$9.50 an hour, and he was one of the higher
22 paid people that I deal with. They would like
23 affordable housing. Thank you.

24 (APPLAUSE)

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you. Number 22
2 is Patrick Savolskis, city of Ithaca.

3 PATRICK SAVOLSKIS: Thank you. I
4 will try to keep this real brief because I know
5 there is a lot of people that want to speak. I am
6 a homeowner down on North Titus right near where
7 this development would occur. I feel we need some
8 development. I am not saying that this is the
9 perfect answer, but I do know that when I go
10 shopping I don't really shop in Ithaca. The
11 stores here, while some of them have some things,
12 they are not everything that we are looking for,
13 we have to go elsewhere to find a lot of
14 materials, we cannot find things here in the
15 city.

16 All I am asking is when development
17 is considered, I think it does need to be
18 considered. I think it does need to be done
19 smartly. I don't think the City should give away
20 the farm. I do understand to bring businesses you
21 sometimes have to make some concessions. But just
22 be careful of doing anything that people feel that
23 you are hiding. But I do feel that the
24 development needs to happen. I am worried about

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 my property tax. I am worried about the mix of
2 stores. I don't see that on the Commons. When
3 the Commons is nice when nice weather. I was down
4 there the other day. People weren't walking
5 around. I don't think the mix of stores is there
6 to bring people to the downtown area. I would
7 like a place where I feel I can go shopping
8 instead of driving half an hour or 45 minutes away
9 to Lansing or Elmira. Those are the places many
10 people go, at least that I go. I am not going to
11 speak for other people.

12 If Ithaca does not put those kind of
13 businesses in, I think people will keep going out
14 of town. I mean those stores do well, I think
15 they do a lot of business in area because people
16 drive here from there. Stores here don't draw
17 that much business in. So I do support the
18 development. I am not, I don't know if this is
19 the best thing, though, I think it's not
20 necessarily a bad thing. And I just ask that
21 people that are leading the city to do it
22 carefully and do it smartly. A lot of you are
23 smart people and I think you will do the right
24 thing. But just, you know, be careful. That's

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 all. Thank you.

2 (APPLAUSE).

3 MAYOR COHEN: I think I have 23 and
4 25 here. If number 24 is here please come forward
5 and bring your slip here. Number 23 is Katherine
6 C. Robertson, City of Ithaca.

7 KATHERINE ROBERTSON: Hi, I am a
8 homeowner in southside. I am also a small
9 business owner in the City of Ithaca. I think it
10 is a real shame that in the interest of politics,
11 in the interest of keeping this issue black and
12 white, the first speaker was derided for some of
13 things he said. I think this has become a class
14 side debate for people who don't want development
15 or whatever reason and people who want more
16 shopping or more choices, I don't see it.

17 I don't want more traffic in my
18 neighborhood and I don't approve of gigantic tax
19 abatements for big box retailers.

20 However, aside from the daily
21 necessities in Ithaca, I spend all my
22 discretionary income out of town. If I have
23 discretionary money, I go to Elmira, I go to
24 Syracuse, because I don't have the choices I need

1 of things here in Ithaca as far as shopping. So
2 maybe Ithaca hasn't been, quote, unquote, ruined
3 by big box retailers, maybe that's because people
4 like our first speaker here tonight and people
5 like me spend their money elsewhere at other big
6 box retailers. That's it.

7 (APPLAUSE)

8 MAYOR COHEN: Number 24 is Kristen
9 Solana-Walkinshaw, Town of Ithaca.

10 KRISTEN SOLANA-WALKINSHAW: Hi. I
11 don't have any statistics or anything like that, I
12 am just a mom and a wife and a pharmacist. And I
13 am, you know, one of the pharmacists at one of
14 those big box places.

15 But all that aside, I just want to
16 say that one of the things I really love about
17 living in Ithaca is that most of the people that I
18 know think really well about the decisions they
19 make, they think really well about how those
20 decisions affect other people. And it's hard for
21 me, I guess, it's hard for me -- nobody is looking
22 at me. Hi. Are you? I just wanted to make sure
23 I had your attention. I just, I, that's what I
24 want from you guys is to think really well about

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 these decisions, about the long-term effects that
2 those decisions are going to have.

3 I am totally for growth, and I want
4 to, but I want to do it smartly, I want to do it
5 in a well thought out manner. We have so much
6 retail space available already. I think we need
7 to be really creative about how we use that space,
8 we need some creativity about how to use the
9 existing space. I think this is an incredibly
10 creative plan that we have, but maybe a little too
11 creative.

12 And I think I want to share that I
13 come from Houston, Texas. And that's like capital
14 in the United States of traffic, the capital of
15 sprawl, the capital of strip malls, it is also the
16 capital, it has more per capita strip bars than
17 anyplace in the world and I hope that's not where
18 we are headed. You know, I don't want to go
19 there. It's a really ugly city for the most
20 part. And they didn't think about it, they grew
21 really fast and they didn't think really well
22 about it. So you can tell, you can go and see
23 pockets of places that just went up, and, you
24 know, plywood places and they just went up and

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 they look ugly. And they cut, they went and clear
2 cut all the trees, then they put in the mall.
3 There are some really pretty places there, but
4 they were well planned communities where they
5 planned the housing, they planned where the
6 buildings were going to be, to leave existing
7 trees and leave existing brush. And my parents
8 live in a community and the wildlife still comes
9 through their backyard because of the way the
10 community was created.

11 But so anyway, I am going to be
12 short and just, what I want from you guys is to
13 renew my hope. I want you to renew my hope that
14 Ithaca can be different from Houston. That I want
15 you to think really well. I want you to renew my
16 hope that elected officials can be different.
17 Thanks.

18 (APPLAUSE)

19 MAYOR COHEN: If I can have number
20 25 in front of us. This is Orrin Dickerson from
21 city of Ithaca.

22 ORRIN DICKERSON: Thank you, Mayor
23 Cohen. Thank you, Council, and thank you fellow
24 Ithacans for being here for the hearings. I

1 especially wanted to thank you all for letting us
2 have this forum to talk about what's on our mind.

3 As I said, my name is Orrin
4 Dickerson. I live here in Ithaca, I own a home in
5 North Aurora Street in the Fall Creek. I work
6 with the city school district, I also earn my
7 money here in Ithaca and I am a registered voter.

8 I wanted to talk a little bit about
9 my spending patterns when it comes to things like
10 necessities. Food, I do shop in Ithaca for all my
11 groceries. I shop at Greenstar, I shop at
12 Ludgate's, I do shop at Tops and Wegman's. When
13 it comes time to eat out at a restaurant, I am
14 going to going down to Viva. I bank on the
15 Commons as well. My local bank is down there and
16 they have a 24 hour ATM which I really like. I
17 find it is a good value for my money to do those
18 things in town.

19 Other things I choose to do
20 elsewhere because I deem it a better value for
21 money to go out of town to shop for them. I won't
22 list the many things that I buy in Syracuse or
23 Elmira or Binghamton. I would prefer to buy them
24 here in Ithaca, I regret having to go out of town

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 to get better value for my money by leaving Ithaca
2 and taking Ithaca money with me.

3 If there were those stores on the
4 Commons I would be very happy to walk from my
5 house downtown and shop there. If there were new
6 development somewhere in town and a bus that took
7 me there, I would be happy to take the bus there.
8 I am not saying I want to drive a car and park in
9 a huge parking lot. Whatever the City and the
10 taxpayers and the people who shop will support, I
11 would be happy to support as well. I think that
12 many people like myself are already voting with
13 their money and voting with their feet or their
14 wheels and leaving town with that money. I think
15 that the City Council is trying to do what they
16 think the people would like. I realize that there
17 are thousands, tens of thousands of people in
18 town, obviously we are not all here tonight.

19 But I do think that the election was
20 a chance for you all to put into action the plans
21 that you said that you were going to do. Ithaca
22 is a city, I think Ithaca should acknowledge that
23 and say if we want to be a city, continue to grow,
24 we need to let people spend their money here.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 That's all I have to say.

2 Thank you.

3 (APPLAUSE)

4 MAYOR COHEN: Is either number 26 or
5 27 here? Okay, if not then number 28 is Elizabeth
6 Feldman from the City of Ithaca.

7 ELIZABETH FELDMAN: I want to start
8 out just by saying that this is kind of
9 frustrating, I am really nervous, I have never
10 talked to this many people before, for my big
11 night finally doing it, I wish there were more of
12 you here, I guess that would have made it a little
13 more satisfying, but I will go ahead anyway.

14 Some other people have come up here
15 tonight and talked about other towns that they
16 have been in or that they grew up in that have
17 been ruined by over-development and by strip malls
18 and by traffic. And I guess I could do that, both
19 of my parents are from New Jersey and left New
20 Jersey as soon as they were old enough and moved
21 to Massachusetts where they now live in a quiet
22 town surrounded by other people from New Jersey.
23 But I don't want to talk about New Jersey.

24 I would like to talk about a town

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 that didn't build huge malls, that didn't allow
2 Wal-Mart to move in and has no strip mall section,
3 this is Elmhurst, Massachusetts where I grew up.
4 Today Elmhurst is a thriving small town surrounded
5 by universities, filled with natural outdoor
6 spaces and maintains a vibrant Main Street with
7 successful independent book stores, clothing
8 stores, coffee shops, and other retailers.

9 When I first moved to Ithaca it
10 surprised me how much Ithaca was like Elmhurst.
11 It seemed that two towns were really similar.
12 Most importantly, people love Elmhurst. Young
13 people move there in search of jobs, college
14 students remain there after graduation, children
15 who grew up there really return often to start
16 families and senior citizens often stick out the
17 cold weather that we have in Massachusetts just
18 like in New York rather than moving to Florida. I
19 love Elmhurst and I would be happy to return there
20 some day to start my own family.

21 However, last year I ventured to
22 Ithaca where I now live and work, and I love it
23 here. Ithaca is really similar to Elmhurst in a
24 lot of ways. Yet really quickly I decided that it

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 surpasses my own hometown in its sense of
2 community and partnership. Are you typing or are
3 you listening? I am just curious.

4 MAYOR COHEN: I am doing both
5 actually.

6 ELIZABETH FELDMAN: Could you listen
7 and not type?

8 (APPLAUSE)

9 ELIZABETH FELDMAN: I just -- I
10 worked on writing this.

11 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you, Elizabeth,
12 please continue.

13 ELIZABETH FELDMAN: Okay. Please
14 listen.

15 MAYOR COHEN: It is your time.

16 ELIZABETH FELDMAN: I am sorry, I
17 think that is really rude. I would like you to
18 stop my time. I really asked you to listen.

19 So far Ithaca is the only place
20 outside of Elmhurst which I would be happy living
21 out my life. However, I fear and suspect that if
22 Ithaca permits the Southwest area plan to go
23 ahead, it will send the City down a path less like
24 the one Elmhurst has taken and more like the one

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 my parents' old New Jersey neighborhood has
2 taken. I foresee a noisier, less centralized,
3 less creative and more mundane town than the one
4 we all now enjoy. If this happens, I will
5 certainly not stay here, and neither will so many
6 others who came here at some point in search of
7 community, stability, open land, beautiful woods
8 and a small town feel that Ithaca now offers.

9 I would like to ask all of you to
10 think back to the day you decided to live in
11 Ithaca. Ask yourself what were the features that
12 you were attracted to. Why did you stay? I am
13 sure that at that point there was no huge
14 Southwest Land Development because it hadn't
15 happened yet. Now ask yourself if those same
16 features that you liked about Ithaca when you
17 decided to stay will remain intact if the
18 Southwest Park goes ahead. I think that's an
19 important question.

20 (APPLAUSE)

21 MAYOR COHEN: Number 29 is Dan
22 Hoffman, city of Ithaca.

23 DAN HOFFMAN: Good evening. I have
24 lived in the Ithaca area for over 30 years, before

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 that I grew up in New Jersey. It gets a little
2 weary having your state picked on all the time.
3 Fact is that New Jersey has learned from its
4 mistakes and is now a leader in smart growth and
5 in restoration of open space. Some have tried to
6 paint the Southwest plan as an either/or, win/lose
7 situation. It doesn't have to be that way. And
8 it doesn't serve our community's interests to
9 perceive it that way. I will get back to that in
10 a minute.

11 The draft GEIS which I have read
12 through, even though it is couched so as to
13 minimize the apparent impacts of what's clearly
14 the preferred alternative, alternative five which,
15 you know, involves a million square feet of new
16 commercial development, even with that
17 inclination, it's clear from the GEIS that the
18 impacts on Ithaca will be dramatic and far
19 reaching. The impacts on development on that high
20 end of the scale. They include greatly increased
21 traffic up to 50 percent more on streets such as
22 South Albany Street which are already feeling
23 under siege by heavy traffic. Loss of business by
24 existing and locally owned stores. The loss of

1 significant areas of open space, wildlife habitats
2 and natural assets in the Southwest area. Visual
3 impacts which the GEIS admits cannot be mitigated
4 for the larger scale projects. Unknown municipal
5 costs associated with this development. I believe
6 there will be other significant developments as
7 well which are not adequately addressed in the
8 GEIS, including impacts on air and motor quality,
9 flooding hazards, the impact on the quality of
10 life in nearby neighborhoods, and the quality of
11 the remaining recreational and natural resources
12 in the Southwest area.

13 In response to the radical scale of
14 the City's proposed plan, some say don't develop
15 at all in the southwest area. The GEIS itself
16 while conceding that 1.25 million square feet of
17 new commercial space is too much and the impacts
18 cannot be satisfactorily mitigated concludes that
19 the impacts of one million square feet of new
20 space are acceptable. Million square feet of new
21 commercial space including 800,000 square feet of
22 new retail is still a huge project with massive
23 impacts on the environment and nearby
24 neighborhoods and the local economy.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 Now City Council understandably
2 wants to encourage new business growth and
3 recreation of new retail opportunities and many
4 people do want new retail activity here.
5 Ultimately, though, the question here should be
6 one of scale and of balance. By opting for one
7 extreme, trying to create a new retail center two
8 or three times as large as the current downtown
9 and filling and developing virtually all the
10 undeveloped parts of the site, except for the
11 substantive parkland, the City would be taking a
12 huge risk in creating a huge risk ---opposed to.
13 Some of those impacts are traffic, cost of new
14 infrastructure and service, threat to existing
15 business and the destruction of virtually all the
16 other woods and wetlands in the area.

17 On the other hand, by doing nothing,
18 the City may forego the opportunity for the
19 attraction of certain kinds of new business and
20 possibly new revenues for the City. Between these
21 two ends of the scale, there is a lot of room,
22 literally 160 acres and a reasonable middle ground
23 possible.

24 If the issues of appropriate scale

1 and balancing of variance needs can be addressed
2 rationally by all sides. The key here is careful
3 creative zoning and land use planning. If we can
4 agree, for example, that 700,000 square feet of
5 new development is enough, then the middle ground
6 becomes visible. If it's proven to be safe, we
7 can rezone the entire former city dump area for
8 commercial development and we can have new
9 development in that area. But instead of rezoning
10 all of the original Southwest Park, we can leave
11 the southern half which is filled with wetlands
12 and woodlands as a natural area. We can do the
13 same with the property the City has just built for
14 the extension of Cherry Street Industrial Park,
15 the southern part of which includes wetlands and
16 woodlands that could be preserved.

17 Essentially what I have described is
18 a reconfigured version of alternative three. And
19 the GEIS provides ample justification for
20 restricting the scope of the new development as I
21 have described. I hope that Common Council will
22 be, will approach this issue very carefully and
23 will look for the middle ground that I have
24 described.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 Thank you.

2 (APPLAUSE)

3 MAYOR COHEN: Number 30 is Diane
4 Olden from Danby.

5 DIANE OLDEN: Hi. My name is Diane
6 Olden. During the break, I just want to tell a
7 little quick story, I think I have the time. I
8 had a little tiff with the mayor about the fact
9 that Council wasn't here. And I want to apologize
10 to you publicly for losing my temper. One of the
11 things that I feel very frustrated by is not
12 feeling listened to. And it feels the imbalance
13 of power is getting greater and the stakes are so
14 high I just put it to my passion and I do
15 apologize for losing my temper with you.

16 I am sad that Council isn't here and
17 I really believe that hearing comments is very
18 different than reading the comments. Hearing them
19 from the source and feeling the heart of what is
20 happening here is so vital. Thank you.

21 So anyway, I am going to address the
22 community here tonight. So thank you all for
23 coming. So I grew up in Trumansburg, so I'm a
24 local, I have sort of, I have longevity. And I

1 don't want to make that seem like it's more
2 important, but I want to take away one of the
3 potential names that I can be called, you cannot
4 call me a transplant. I lived all over the
5 country, I traveled, I left in 1979, and traveled
6 all over the country, mostly in the west. And I
7 returned in 1985 to make my homeland my home. I
8 saw all sorts of strip mall development. I saw it
9 all over the place and what struck me the most was
10 that we hadn't done that here. And what a
11 powerful thing that is.

12 So I have been, I want to talk
13 particularly tonight about the Widewater site
14 which is now known, I would like to rename it
15 Laurax land. I have been involved with the
16 protection of that land for over, for actually for
17 longer than any of you have been on Council and
18 for longer than you have been the mayor. I would
19 like to point that out. And I want to speak
20 tonight about that land.

21 Tonight you are going to get my
22 heart, you will get my intellect in my written
23 report. So I wrote the following in Redwood
24 Forest when I was in California I stayed in a

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 redwood tree for a few days. And what I would
2 like to do tonight is dedicate that to all the
3 beings on the land here who make that land their
4 home. And the trees that have been destroyed and
5 are slated to be destroyed by that development,
6 and those trees have been there since before I was
7 born on this land.

8 So here is my story. (SINGING):

9 Out walking quietly in the harvest
10 moon, I heard a haunting and beautiful tune.
11 Looking over, I saw a fell tree and walked near a
12 sister to be. Do you hurt, what can I do I said,
13 and kneeling began to cry. She said I'm fine,
14 through all of my years, I surround myself
15 peacefully to die. But you were cut down I
16 shouted aloud, don't you hate us for this. Hate
17 is a human curse she said, but in the earth lies
18 eternal peace.

19 Then she said please listen to me,
20 for my time is passing on. You must help spread
21 the light we all share, so my spirit may live on.
22 Dance with life gently she whispered to me, in a
23 song that was calming and warm. I leave you now
24 to go back unto my original perfect form. I said

1 a prayer and left head down, remembering her
2 magical sound, and smiling, began to dance so
3 lightly upon the blessed ground.

4 Protect that land.

5 (APPLAUSE)

6 MAYOR COHEN: Next speaker is number
7 31, David Kingsbury from the city of Ithaca.
8 David.

9 DAVID KINGSBURY: Good evening.
10 First I would like to say I agree that it's pretty
11 outrageous that so few Council members stayed. I
12 am a local artist, I have been a resident of
13 Ithaca since 1978. I chose Ithaca because of its
14 progressive nature and physical beauty. I am
15 currently involved in three organizations that are
16 very vital to the unique character of Ithaca. I
17 am a member and past board member of the Ithaca
18 Farmers Market, a member of Handwork which
19 represents 40 smaller locally owned businesses,
20 and my own business, Turtle Island Pottery. I
21 list these to demonstrate how much I am involved
22 with retailing in the City.

23 I have for 22 years met and
24 continued to meet thousands of people that come to

1 Ithaca to buy and I engage them in conversation.
2 And many say they come to Ithaca because it's so
3 beautiful, it's so unique. But lately I have
4 actually run into people who express concern at
5 what has happened so far on our own Miracle Mile
6 out on Route 13. I just came from a meeting of
7 Handwork where we were unanimous in feeling that
8 the City really should focus more attention on
9 revitalizing downtown.

10 I am not anti-growth, I actually
11 think humanity is much like wine yeast in that we
12 will keep growing until we choke on our own
13 waste. Growth is inevitable, but let's make it
14 smart, let's slow it down, let's make it in
15 keeping with the unique and beautiful character we
16 already have here but are in danger of losing.

17 (APPLAUSE)

18 MAYOR COHEN: Okay. Number 32 is
19 Tony Ingraham from the Town of Ulysses.

20 TONY INGRAHAM: My name is Tony
21 Ingraham, I live in the Town of Ulysses, but I
22 have lived in the City of Ithaca and the
23 surrounding area for more than 30 years. The fact
24 that I don't live in the City I hope does not

1 cause you to discount what I have to say, because
2 I do pay sales tax in the City of Ithaca and will
3 continue to do so. And I am reminded of that old
4 slogan, no taxation without representation.

5 So my comments this evening
6 represent my own opinions and not those of the
7 agency for which I work.

8 For more than 20 years I have been a
9 professional environmental editor and I am
10 intimately familiar with Buttermilk Falls State
11 Park and the public's use of it. I have a number
12 of points to make regarding the DGEIS. I am very
13 disappointed to see that all of the six
14 alternatives considered in the DGEIS involve
15 location of a huge freestanding discount super
16 store and its associated parking lots directly
17 across the road from Buttermilk Glen.

18 The DGEIS is lacking in not
19 recognizing the unique aesthetic character of this
20 area by providing other alternatives of a much
21 more conservative nature. Optimally any land use
22 in the Widewater area as we are coming to know it,
23 would be municipal parkland or other uses which
24 would -- or vegetations in the character. This is

1 a serious omission in the DGEIS.

2 The DGEIS alternatives show up to 14
3 to 16 large retail stores in the study area.
4 Therefore, there are numerous alternatives in the
5 rest of the study area in Southwest Park for the
6 super store being constructed right now across
7 from Buttermilk Falls. The Widewaters store is
8 being built in the most environmentally sensitive
9 and controversial portion of the entire study
10 area. If it must be built, there is plenty of
11 room for it elsewhere in the plan and it should be
12 moved.

13 The DGEIS both undercounts the
14 number of relevant views and the amount of time
15 visitors can be expected to linger at them in
16 Buttermilk Falls State Park. The DGEIS discusses
17 visual impacts of the alternatives proposed
18 labeling a view from the gorge trail in Buttermilk
19 Falls State Park as key view V-1. This view is
20 next to Buttermilk Falls itself, and is a
21 significant place for visitors to catch their
22 breath on the steep ascent of the gorge trail. It
23 is also the best location for park naturalists
24 leading groups to stop to interpret the glacial

1 history of the Cayuga Valley and the formation of
2 the falls themselves. Degradation of the
3 aesthetic quality of this view will result in the
4 damaging of an important educational resource of
5 the park.

6 Key view V-1 has a grandstand view
7 of the Widewaters footprint pad for its impending
8 mystery super store. I have been up there in the
9 park and I have photographed it and I can vouch
10 for that. Shortly up the trail is a second
11 outstanding view of the valley at an overlook
12 established by running defense to the gorge rim
13 above the falls. The Widewater store location is
14 placed squarely in this view. The aesthetic charm
15 of this and V-1 are already ruined by the
16 construction operations underway.

17 There are other views in the park
18 that may be affected by the construction of the
19 super store. There is a view along the rim trail
20 that should be evaluated and there is a view along
21 the road to the campground that should be
22 evaluated.

23 So including only one view from the
24 park in the DGEIS is inadequate and underestimates

1 the effect of the six alternatives upon the park's
2 view shed.

3 There are other aesthetic impacts in
4 the park that are not addressed in the DGEIS
5 currently, noise from traffic and commercial
6 activity on Elmira Road can be heard well up into
7 the gorge above the falls along the gorge trail.
8 Surely the 764 trips per hour at peak times by
9 vehicles into and out of the Widewaters store site
10 will significantly increase noise pollution in the
11 gorge, damaging the very qualities for which the
12 trail was constructed, certainty, tranquility and
13 pleasureless beauty.

14 Second, noise from Elmira, noise can
15 already be heard in the campground by overlooks
16 the side. Increased traffic, turning, stopping,
17 acceleration, deceleration, honking will surely
18 increase the noise pollution in the campground
19 from all the development site alternatives. Noise
20 impacts will continue into the night in the
21 campground as may light pollution along the road
22 to the campground and in the west end of the
23 campground itself. These impacts have not been
24 evaluated.

1 Finally the cumulative aesthetic
2 impacts of increased noise, visual pollution and
3 traffic will combine significantly to degrade the
4 overall feeling that visitors will have when they
5 come to the park. The waterfall and the gorge and
6 forest beyond provide a healing refuge for the
7 public escaping for a short while from the
8 hurriedness, clamor and stress and visual
9 pollution of everyday life in an urban
10 environment. Buttermilk Falls is a priceless
11 resource for the public, psychological, physical
12 and spiritual health.

13 MAYOR COHEN: Number 33 is Mary
14 Hegarty, city of Ithaca.

15 MARY HEGARTY: Hi. If I could kind
16 of repeat and say I grew up in Westchester County
17 and the land that I grew up in is now corporate
18 park. And it really breaks my heart and I could
19 get into the passionate emotional side of it, but
20 it's kind of been repeated a few times just about
21 how Ithaca is different and why I am here is
22 because it's different. And one of the things
23 that restored my hope in humanity, I heard on MPR
24 this amazing report that the government, I think

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 it was of Iceland or Greenland, I don't remember
2 exactly, actually listened to its citizens and
3 believed that they actually believe in little
4 people and that development couldn't happen
5 because they believed in fairies and little
6 people. And I was like, oh my God, their
7 government actually listened to them. And
8 believed them. Maybe they didn't believe them,
9 but honored their belief system and there is no
10 development on this particular area that was
11 considered very fragile and important to the
12 little people. So that's just to say that that
13 was for me some hope for government and humanity
14 and citizens to interface.

15 When I looked through the DGEIS
16 briefly, I was really amazed at the scale of it,
17 very shocked. I have a bunch of proposals in
18 writing, probably won't get them in, I definitely
19 think it is too large. Alternative two and three
20 are smaller but again too large. With Internet
21 commerce rising I think the big box retail
22 shopping is definitely going to decrease and I
23 think it is going to be obsolete. I suggest that
24 building A not happen at all, and to leave that

1 land alone as a flood plain because it is
2 important to watershed management.

3 Mixed use definitely should be
4 considered. Alternative two had the most mixed
5 use. I am recommending more. Some retail, I
6 recommend technology, computer companies, light
7 industry. I am recommending a nature center or
8 something, a water museum or Finger Lakes museum
9 or center or winery info center or museum perhaps
10 in conjunction with ecosystem that's happening on
11 Stewart Park. This is exciting to me. I think
12 from my knowledge, I don't think there is actually
13 a Finger Lakes museum, like this is an amazing
14 place that we live in, beautiful. And maybe I am
15 wrong, there might be a Finger Lakes museum. But
16 people, tourists could come, first stop Ithaca,
17 New York, check out, get their bearings and talk
18 about, it could be an amazing project. It could
19 either be a focus on water, it could be a focus on
20 the wineries, we could get into the history of
21 it. It could be a very really exciting project
22 that could bring in jobs, bring in creativity,
23 bring in tourism, and really accent our natural
24 beauty. So this idea, this could attract schools

1 from all over, much like the Science Center does
2 and it could attract tourism.

3 Some other for the mixed use I would
4 like to see some residential. I would like to see
5 a community center. I don't know if you notice,
6 but our community seems really segregated. I
7 don't know if this would do it, but perhaps a
8 community center would get more cultures
9 interfacing and together and working towards a
10 common goal. So those are the mixed use. I have
11 a few other ideas but I won't get into all of
12 them.

13 Another point I have is I have a
14 major concern about the destruction of wetlands in
15 the flood plain as has been said already tonight,
16 more pavement causes silt and toxins to just
17 run-off into the flood channel. It is definitely
18 going to lower our water quality. Our drinking
19 water comes from the lake and what's one of our
20 main tourist attractions is our amazing lake and
21 the gorge.

22 So my question is: Do we want to
23 further jeopardize this by lowering the water
24 quality at the mouth of the Cayuga Lake? And

1 lowering the water quality of the entire lake
2 eventually.

3 So in closing consider, Council,
4 and, Mayor, please, heavily the long-term, rather
5 than the short-term. I think some people shop in
6 Elmira and Waterloo to go to the outlet malls, I
7 hear different people talking differently
8 tonight. But my, I shop almost predominantly here
9 in Ithaca. Sometimes I go out to Syracuse because
10 I want to get out of town. You know, I think
11 that's inevitable that people shop elsewhere
12 sometimes because, you know, you want a different
13 scenery, you want to get out of town, you take a
14 drive. I really don't, I don't know why in Ithaca
15 we need to attract shoppers mainly. I don't think
16 that is what we are about. People come to Ithaca
17 for unique small stores.

18 Thank you.

19 (APPLAUSE)

20 FAY GOUGAKIS: I choose this one
21 because I wanted to be more closer to the
22 audience.

23 MAYOR COHEN: This is Fay Gougakis,
24 City of Ithaca. Thank you, Fay.

1 FAY GOUGAKIS: Thank you. Good
2 evening everybody. I am actually going to speak
3 tomorrow, I wasn't prepared to speak tonight. I
4 was just going to come and listen. But because I
5 am allowed to speak again tomorrow I have a few
6 thoughts that I wanted to share with everybody
7 tonight.

8 Number one is we talk about honesty,
9 and, Mayor Cohen, you said that in your statement
10 to the City as well as Council, and my concern
11 with all of what's happening is I don't think you
12 are being honest with the community. And I will
13 tell you why I feel you are not being honest
14 because for one the whole purpose we're here
15 tonight is because of that statement, the DGEIS.
16 We were supposed to wait for that to come out
17 before any development to start. And yet you had
18 Widewater out there cutting trees and putting fill
19 in. I call that dishonesty. I call that ...

20 (APPLAUSE).

21 I call that deceiving this
22 community. The rezoning, the tax abatements, that
23 restaurant in Interlyon, I hope all of you come
24 out for those public meetings starting with next

1 Wednesday, they want a tax abatement, okay, but I
2 am not going to talk about that tonight.

3 The things that are going on are
4 fast tracked, they are going as fast as they can
5 go, and I find that very secretive and I find that
6 very deceiving to this community. And what's
7 pulling that I think are a lot of private
8 interests, I don't know who's going to get the pay
9 off, we could only suspect. Okay. Is that the
10 whole driving issue here is the taxes, we want to
11 lower taxes? Is this development going to lower
12 taxes? Why do we have to develop the whole plot
13 of land out there? Why do we have to do it so
14 fast? We are going to be here, folks, for a long
15 time hopefully. Hopefully we won't blow ourselves
16 up.

17 Again, I wasn't ready to speak
18 tonight, but one of the other things that bothers
19 me is the labeling. Even on your show, on Simm
20 you lie, I sit there and I watch it and there is
21 Barbara Rosnossis (ph), the usual suspects are
22 going to show up at the meeting, right, Allen, the
23 usual suspects, I am one of them. Okay. Is it
24 right to call people concerned about their

1 community the usual suspects? No, I don't think
2 so. They care, they care just as much as the
3 people who are sitting home and looking at the
4 majority here, the same thing with Wal-Mart. The
5 majority here are people who don't want to trample
6 over the land, okay.

7 Now granted, granted I ran for
8 Council, okay. Granted development is going to
9 happen. I am not saying not for it to happen.
10 But it's got to happen right. And it's not
11 happening right and it's happening dishonestly.
12 And that's what really bothers me. And that whole
13 piece of land and Buttermilk Falls which we prize,
14 and I prize and all of us prize, and we are going
15 to just trample it with a huge big box that's
16 already started, mind you it already started and
17 this city, maybe could get away, you think you
18 could get away. No, this city will not allow you
19 to get away with what you did, with allowing that
20 soil to go on and those trees to be cut off.

21 DAVID GALLAHAN: You will be sued.

22 FAY GOUGAKIS: Okay. But to label
23 us oh it's those environmentalists again, they are
24 going to destroy our development. No, there is

1 such a thing, Mr. Cohen, as appropriate
2 development and that's not what's happening. The
3 abatement, the tax abatements, that's not fair.
4 So until you do things fair, I cannot trust you.
5 You have lost my trust with this kind of
6 development. Okay.

7 (APPLAUSE).

8 Have you considered, if you have
9 children, let's say if you have children, Mr.
10 Cohen, okay, what will your children see in 50
11 years from now? Okay. What kind of Ithaca are
12 they going to see? Okay. But unfortunately you
13 have a Common Council that agrees with you time
14 and time again. Okay. I want, I challenge you,
15 where are they anyway? Be nice if they were
16 here. One or two days out of the year for an
17 important meeting, they should have been here. I
18 am sorry.

19 (APPLAUSE).

20 And you shouldn't be typing, you
21 shouldn't be typing. You can put, close your
22 computer for two nights. Okay. And listen to
23 these people. Because you know why, you know why,
24 you are not listening to people. You are not.

1 You are listening to your developers and you are
2 listening to your agenda. How many people voted
3 in this community, 4,000 out of the 40,000 that
4 live here. That's not enough for me. Okay.

5 MAYOR COHEN: Thank you, Fay. The
6 next speaker.

7 (APPLAUSE).

8 MAYOR COHEN: Number 35 -- number 36
9 please come forward. Saraina Monoblossom, city of
10 Ithaca. What town do you live in?

11 SARAINA MONOBLOSSOM: Caroline.
12 That was one passionate thing Fay just did. Sorry
13 I can't really follow-up with that one, but I will
14 do my best.

15 First of all, I love Ithaca as much
16 as anybody else in this room and hopefully as much
17 as you do if you live here. Occasionally I go to
18 Elmira, I go to Cortland, Binghamton. I say thank
19 God Ithaca is not Cortland and not Binghamton, it
20 is not that developed.

21 (APPLAUSE).

22 The big businesses that you are
23 talking about bringing in do not care about this
24 community. This community cares about itself. If

1 you bring them in they stay for what, 20, 30, what
2 maybe 40 years. They don't bring in good jobs,
3 they don't bring in lasting jobs. They bring in
4 cheap labor that people has a high turnover rate.
5 And when they leave they don't care what state
6 they leave this place in. They can leave it
7 deserted as a ghost town and it doesn't matter to
8 them because they made big profit.

9 And there is no shame truthfully in
10 saying that you had a bad idea and that you backed
11 out of it.

12 (APPLAUSE).

13 But what I do think is important is
14 that we have businesses here, family business,
15 people who stay here that care about this area.
16 You should consider putting more money into them
17 and doing more stuff like Greenstar, they have a
18 community that cares about it. I do believe that
19 not every place, every piece of land that doesn't
20 have a house, a road going through it, or a store
21 is going to waste. I believe it's meant to be
22 that we leave some places alone.

23 Maybe that place in Southwest Park
24 is to be left alone. There are plenty of other

1 places that are already developed that you could
2 put, place this into. You could do better stores,
3 K-Mart is not a high quality store, neither is
4 Wal-Mart. I believe that bigger is not
5 necessarily better. And growth should not mean
6 destruction.

7 Thank you.

8 (APPLAUSE).

9 MAYOR COHEN: Number 38 is Nancy
10 Manos from Dryden.

11 NANCY MANOS: I didn't really come
12 prepared to speak this evening. I think you are a
13 little bit outnumbered, if you still have the same
14 position you had coming in. I am very puzzled by
15 a couple things.

16 One I am puzzled about the decision
17 to allow fill in the absence of a plan and to make
18 the decision sort of when everybody is getting
19 ready for the holidays and nobody is paying
20 attention and there is no opportunity to comment.
21 There are serious issues involved in putting lots
22 and lots of cubic yards of fill in a marsh. I
23 mean there are serious, serious issues.

24 I am also concerned about the

1 economic effects. Not only are we looking for tax
2 revenues, but we are also looking for ways to have
3 sensible smart growth in this town that does not
4 bring us more municipal costs. What are the costs
5 of fire protection, root maining, plowing, those
6 things? I don't know.

7 In terms of what I guess is a public
8 perception here about being listened to, I am
9 reminded, must be 35 years ago, I was a
10 participant in an Army Corps of Engineers hearing
11 about a proposal to build a Hudson River
12 Expressway down in Westchester County. The Corps
13 of Engineers sat patiently through 40 witnesses.
14 39 statements were against the project, one
15 statement was in favor of the project. The next
16 morning the colonel who conducted the hearing left
17 for Washington from LaGuardia airport with a
18 grocery cart full of documents that were all
19 pieces of testimony, he basically on the plane
20 drafted a recommendation that the project be
21 approved. Needless to say we were a little
22 surprised at why we bothered to go out. I will
23 also say that the Hudson River Expressway does not
24 exist.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 Thank you.

2 MAYOR COHEN: Speaker number 39 is
3 David Colt from the city of Ithaca.

4 DAVID COLT: Actually I am like the
5 discomfoted New Jersey, are you from my hometown
6 Paramus? Anyway, unlike you, I am rather glad to
7 see the reduced approaching negligible presence of
8 Council and the attention of his Honor the mayor
9 approaching zero because we need a few visual
10 ideas, as the editors say, to remind us that we
11 are on our own here if we intend to save our
12 town. So as, I am going to cheat the angles here
13 because these minds we know are closed. What
14 these minds may do, because may be still connected
15 to their muscles, interests me.

16 In fact when I think about it, I
17 feel sort of like that-- that's to remind you that
18 you are the people that interest me. So we are
19 going to cheat the angles here.

20 I reminisce my box of deities which
21 are sawed-off shotguns three minutes -- people who
22 know me know. Like the poor staffing guys in
23 Africa, that's terrible. I thought instead of any
24 of that I am going to try, even within the five

1 minute frame, a parable, I think there is a
2 parable which is largely to the point.

3 Judge says, Mr. X, can you account
4 for your behavior? Guy says, Judge, as a child I
5 played the violin, the other children shunned me,
6 but I followed my star and I studied every day.
7 The group of toughs called Legs O'Donnell and the
8 dead man's lot gang, is that better than Southwest
9 Park, dead man's lot gang, put out the word that
10 if they ever caught me on their turf they would
11 beat me silly. So I stayed away from dead man's
12 lot.

13 One winter evening I was hurrying
14 home, I had studied late and I knew my mother
15 would be worried. So I took the shortcut across
16 dead man's lot. Halfway across I looked up and
17 there was O'Donnell and his gang. They said they
18 were going to beat me. I felt that if I was going
19 to get a beating I would take it for that in which
20 I believed. So I took out my violin and played.
21 I played as I had never played before. And when I
22 had finished, I looked up, prepared to take my
23 medicine and I found that I was alone.

24 Many years later I was taking a cab

1 through Midtown and I passed by the artists
2 entrance of Lincoln Center -- that's capital
3 country, capital of Manhattan County -- artists
4 entrance of Lincoln Center and I saw several men
5 who looked familiar and I asked the cabby if he
6 knew who those men were. He said they were the
7 Juilliard String Quartet. I paid off the cab and
8 I stepped out on the sidewalk. I stared at them.
9 The Juilliard String Quartet were no other than
10 Legs O'Donnell and the dead man's lot gang.

11 It became clear to me that my
12 playing for them on that cold December night had
13 turned them from a certain life of crime, present
14 company excepted of course, a certain life of
15 crime and had inspired them to become the most
16 accomplished string musicians in the world. I
17 drew nearer to them, and I saw recognition come
18 into their faces. And then they beat the shit out
19 of me.

20 Now it behooves us to recognize that
21 we are not going to turn the dead man's lot game
22 into the Juilliard String Quartet, the leopard
23 will not change his spots, no matter how sweetly
24 we play our violin and how deeply and passionately

1 we tell moving stories. These people are
2 committed to a certain mode of life, and the
3 prizes thereof.

4 If like me you have a haunting
5 nagging nostalgic superstition that there might be
6 more to a town than a shopping strip, because to
7 me there may be more to life than buying stuff, an
8 old fashioned idea, but then I remember when Paul
9 Ribson (ph) was the first Jewish mayor of
10 Paramus. You probably don't. Anyway, something
11 so important that Aristotle thought -- which does
12 not mean anthropologists zoom in on the voting
13 booth. Means that human beings like to hang out
14 and be townies. If you feel that way, then before
15 you leave this room you make sure the young lady
16 with the typing -- where have you gone Charlotte?
17 Well, the old fellow with the tiger spirit and the
18 tiger hall -- make sure we have you on our yellow
19 legal pad or I will take it on the fly in here,
20 because we are not going to take it lying down,
21 being paved over and submitted, submerged under
22 this sea of vomit. It is us that has to rise up
23 off our butt and do something.

24 (APPLAUSE)

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 MAYOR COHEN: Number 40 is Erica
2 VanEtten, city of Ithaca.

3 ERICA VANETTEN: Hi. My name is
4 Erica. I am a lifelong resident of Tompkins
5 County and hope to continue to be so if it's still
6 a place that I really passionate and feel like I
7 have a responsive community to live in. I worked
8 for local business and I am presently
9 self-employed.

10 What I want to talk about tonight is
11 local businesses and long-term businesses and what
12 I have seen as being a social and economic
13 infrastructure that they waived in the community.
14 It goes far beyond the products that they sell on
15 a given day, a given week, a given trend. Local
16 businesses have a long-term investment, a
17 multi-level investment in the community. When
18 they need to renovate, they hire local carpenters,
19 when they need lawyers, they hire local, local
20 accountants. This is webbing of these businesses
21 that is not going to happen if there is Home Depot
22 or these larger industries that come and bring
23 their own lawyers and accountants and do that work
24 outside of our community. Also long-term

1 businesses, local businesses have a personal
2 rather than a corporate relationship to our
3 community as many people have already talked
4 about. And they also have the power, because they
5 are a small locally owned, the power and the
6 flexibility to respond to the needs of the
7 community. They can't just say, well, my
8 supervisor isn't working this week, or I don't
9 have that kind of control, the decisions are made
10 in Atlanta. They can make the decisions here.
11 Which is why I really value the local and the
12 long-term committed businesses in our community.

13 So let's look at the plans and the
14 amount of retail space that's allotted in these
15 plans which some of the numbers run about twice
16 the amount of space there already is in the town.
17 And I would attest that this is beyond low income
18 shopping alternatives like K-Mart, and that type
19 of need based shopping, and these boxes are going
20 to be filled, must be planned to be filled by
21 specialty stores, such as specialty camping stores
22 or book stores or, you know, those kind of natural
23 food stores, whatever, chain stores. And those
24 are going to be competing directly against our

1 local businesses. It's not a matter of a local
2 business can't own a K-Mart, these are going to be
3 directly competing against like Cayuga Mountain
4 Bike Shop that does work in the community. Or
5 other local specialty stores.

6 So people have come here and said
7 they go to other communities to shop. I think
8 that's great information.

9 So let's find out, well, what are
10 they looking for, they are not going to other
11 communities probably just to go to K-Mart, they
12 are going to the special kind of shopping, I don't
13 know what they are going for exactly, that's great
14 information and let's use that information to
15 support our local communities to meet that
16 market. Then we can have that same shopping down
17 here. Instead of rolling over and shooting our
18 local community and all the people involved in
19 that in the foot.

20 So this is really a big piece of
21 land that we are talking about. And all the plans
22 that we, that are on the table don't, are very not
23 creative, are very much just rolling over and
24 saying, oh, just bring in something that's maybe

1 20 percent better than what we have. Instead of
2 taking that land and we have a whole, we have a
3 whole community of committed and caring and
4 creative people, creative citizens.

5 And I would like to see long-term
6 planning, looks beyond this big box trend that who
7 knows how long it will last, and reflects the
8 diverse interests. And I am just one and there is
9 more here and there is many more diverse interests
10 not here tonight. And I don't think the plans we
11 have reflect the diverse interests of our
12 community, not just my interests, but the diverse
13 interests and the multi-level interests and the
14 trickle down interests.

15 So I would like the plans we have, I
16 would like to return to the drawing board, come up
17 with some more, have some honest public discussion
18 and some thoughtful plans played out in front of
19 us.

20 Thank you.

21 MAYOR COHEN: Number 42, Elan
22 Schapiro from the Town of Ithaca.

23 ELAN SCHAPIRO: I came here only
24 three years ago for the same reasons that so many

1 people have stated. My remarks will be brief
2 because I feel like people who have been here a
3 lot longer and whose commitment has been long-term
4 have spoken so well that I really don't want to
5 repeat the beautiful words that have been spoken.
6 You will notice I am trying to speak to the
7 audience and speak to the Council and the Mayor
8 because I think my biggest concern right now is
9 that we really look for middle way, we find a way
10 to find a path that honors the people who feel
11 like their shopping needs are not being adequately
12 met, and honors the creativity of this town and
13 the need that we have to me serve its unique
14 character.

15 It's so easy to fall back into the
16 kind of polarization that it's easy to experience
17 here. We know that's not going to get us to where
18 we all need to go. Somehow or another we got to
19 maintain a tone that looks for diversity, a
20 reasonable scale, a sense of dialogue, a sense of
21 trust. I am not being mamby pamby about this. I
22 think that sense of trust has to be earned. There
23 is a reason why there is so much rancor in this
24 room right now. Nonetheless, I think we all owe

1 it to ourselves to maintain dignity and respect
2 for each other. I would like to try to do that,
3 continue to do that with Mayor and Common
4 Council. And I would like everyone else here to
5 realize it is our sacred job to treat everyone
6 with respect and I understand that we all have a
7 reason for our perspectives and that we have to
8 honor them.

9 The main point I think that is
10 coming from the smart development crowd, and I am
11 certainly one of them, is that we have such
12 amazing strength here that if we support those
13 strengths and build them, we will create a place
14 that is thriving economically and that is
15 beautiful to be in. We have such charm, such
16 natural resources, such creativity in the arts,
17 such educational resource here, such a strong
18 tourism place, that if we design it in our own
19 terms in a way that's uniquely within our
20 character, we will build a strong, durable
21 economic base that could leave room for people who
22 want to have less expensive shopping, but at a
23 scale that's dramatically less huge than the one
24 that's being called for here.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 The key point I want to make again
2 is that what's really the problem to me is the
3 erosion of trust that has happened by the way the
4 process has occurred. We really need to address
5 that.

6 (APPLAUSE)

7 Even if the majority of people
8 strongly wanted this Council and strongly wanted
9 this mayor, if there is a 30 or 40 percent
10 smart-growth crowd or anti-development crowd or
11 however they are labeled, if those people become
12 more and more infuriated and more and more
13 insulted, it is going to really hurt any
14 development that anyone has here. So we have to
15 work on careful truth of each other and careful
16 dialogue at a level that is really not happening
17 right now.

18 Thank you very much.

19 (APPLAUSE)

20 MAYOR COHEN: Number 43 is Joan
21 Bokaer, Town of Ithaca:

22 JOAN BOKAER: Okay. First of all, I
23 don't know if I -- can you hear me? I am a little
24 uncomfortable, there is this dichotomy, and I feel

1 like you are getting a lot of insults hurdled at
2 you and then a lot of applauding, I don't know, I
3 am feeling uncomfortable. So I want to say that
4 here, like cause I am about to say some things
5 that will be difficult for them to hear and I
6 don't want you applauding, because it is really
7 important to me and I don't want you diminishing
8 it.

9 I also share with a lot of people
10 here a sense of desperation and tremendous sadness
11 because, and I know you are really well meaning, I
12 have certainly spoken with you, I have spoken with
13 you, Susan, and you are good people. And I am
14 really, I have this horrible feeling that you are
15 destroying our city. And I think that's what is
16 coming through. And I don't want it to come
17 through in a way that just makes you defensive or
18 makes you want to just dismiss everyone here.
19 Because there are some very thoughtful people.

20 And before I get into what I really
21 want to say, I also want to point out January 1st
22 in the New York Times, there was an article about
23 how the big malls at the edge of cities or near
24 cities all over the country are dying. And the

1 Internet has a lot to do with this. So just to
2 keep that really in mind as you are thinking about
3 the future of Ithaca. Because I know you are
4 trying to do the best, in your mind, for this
5 city.

6 I just want to point out a series of
7 events, the sequence that has me very disturbed.
8 May 19, the CNH Engineers that were hired by
9 Widewaters to do a Phase II investigation listed
10 the intended use of the property, and that was a
11 200,000 square foot shopping center with adjacent
12 parking. That was listed on May 19 by the
13 engineers of Widewater.

14 On July 2nd, Rick Eckstrom, the
15 building commissioner, refused a fill permit
16 application to this group based on, I imagine
17 their intended use.

18 Shortly thereafter Rick Eckstrom was
19 very strangely suspended. It just seemed so
20 strange at the time I couldn't figure out why all
21 the sudden he was suspended.

22 Four, October 24, Widewater
23 rescheduled, or resubmits their application. Now
24 in the meantime an acting building commissioner

1 was appointed, the City attorney issued an opinion
2 to this acting building commissioner saying
3 Widewater didn't need an environmental review
4 because they didn't know their intended use.

5 Six, November 12, after the
6 election, the issue for a fill permit, I mean the
7 fill permit was issued, very quickly, very
8 quietly.

9 And then December 31st, the acting
10 building commissioner resigns and today now, I
11 maybe have that number wrong, I may have that date
12 wrong, but it doesn't negate the series of events
13 I am describing.

14 Now you drive down 13 and there is
15 this massive thing right across from Buttermilk
16 that just happened so quickly, it just happened.

17 So I think, I would like to see
18 these, the sequence of events addressed. I hope
19 it isn't what it looks like here. I hope for you,
20 Alan, it isn't what it looks like here. But you
21 know. That's all.

22 (APPLAUSE)

23 MAYOR COHEN: 44 is Jody Kessler,
24 city of Ithaca.

1 JODY KESSLER: Thank you. I am
2 going to read some excerpts from a letter that I
3 will be submitting to the City.

4 I live on Hillview Place, just a few
5 blocks from The Commons. Over the past few years
6 I have seen a very disturbing trend in the
7 business climate of this community. In
8 particular, I have noticed that more and more
9 large, big box chain stores have sprung up along
10 Route 13, whereas The Commons has had an
11 increasing number of vacant storefronts.

12 I am concerned that our beautiful
13 city is losing its unique charm, as the area that
14 once served as the hub of the community slowly
15 succumbs to the ravages of large scale retailers.
16 As a property owner, I am concerned about how this
17 trend will affect the value of my property if the
18 downtown area continues to deteriorate.

19 And other people have commented on
20 my concern about the money being drawn away from
21 local businesses. So I won't read that part.

22 I fail to see how this type of
23 massive retail development that you are proposing
24 could possibly help The Commons. I feel that the

1 needs of downtown and local businesses are being
2 ignored in favor of large national and
3 multi-national corporations that are not
4 necessarily concerned with the best interests of
5 our community.

6 And other people have very
7 eloquently addressed the traffic issues so I won't
8 talk about that. But I will say that there is no
9 calculation made in the GEIS for the effect that
10 this increased traffic may have on emergency
11 services. But it is obvious that congested
12 roadways will cause delays in the response time of
13 police, fire fighters and EMTs and other emergency
14 vehicles.

15 The promotion of tourism is an
16 essential way that we can increase revenue in the
17 area. It seems ironic to me that a city that aims
18 to attract tourists with slogans like Ithaca is
19 Gorges, would build a massive unattractive chain
20 store directly across from Buttermilk Falls State
21 Park. There is no doubt that the noise, traffic
22 and visual pollution from this monstrosity will
23 negatively affect tourism in one of our areas most
24 beautiful natural resources.

1 One way to attract tourism is to
2 create a vibrant, rich, downtown area that has
3 unique character and charm. I believe that
4 visitors do not want to vacation in areas that are
5 characterized by strip malls that contain the same
6 stores that they can find in every other city, and
7 they don't want to be greeted by congested roads
8 as they enter Ithaca. They want to enjoy the
9 relaxed atmosphere and local flavor that The
10 Commons can offer. Tourists also want to enjoy
11 the magnificent beauty of our state parks, as well
12 as the striking natural areas that we have within
13 our City, such as Cascadilla gorge and Ithaca
14 Falls.

15 A healthy and vibrant downtown area
16 that is culturally rich, eclectic, inviting to
17 pedestrians, aesthetically pleasing and
18 economically thriving is what gives the community
19 its heart and soul. It has the ability to serve
20 as the hub of the community, the cultural core,
21 and a gathering place with local residents,
22 visitors and students can intermingle, and is
23 easily accessible to those who prefer to walk or
24 don't have vehicles.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 I urge the City to reconsider its
2 current plan to develop Southwest Park, and
3 instead put its energy into revitalizing the
4 downtown area, utilizing the already existing
5 infrastructure.

6 In closing, I must mention my
7 feelings of dismay and outrage at the way the City
8 has handled or mishandled the area across from
9 Buttermilk Falls State Park. Some very disturbing
10 questions come to mind regarding this issue.

11 One: Why was this decision made
12 behind closed doors without informing the public
13 about the city's plan for the use of that land?

14 Two: Why is construction being done
15 on a flood plain, posing risk to adjacent homes
16 and natural wetlands?

17 Three: Why was the construction
18 project done before the completion of an
19 environmental impact statement?

20 Four: Why did the mayor not mention
21 plans for that area before the November election?

22 (APPLAUSE)

23 Five: Why was the sale of this land
24 approved when the majority of the people at the

1 public hearing spoke out against it? Let's hope
2 there is not a repeat of that here. Why are we
3 not being told outright about the specific plans
4 for that parcel of land?

5 It doesn't take a rocket scientist
6 to figure out that the mayor and his supporters on
7 Common Council clearly did not want a replay of
8 what happened a few years ago when Wal-Mart wanted
9 to build a store on that same site. The City knew
10 there would again be a public outcry, so they
11 chose to push the deal through behind closed
12 doors, (during the busy holiday season when people
13 were preoccupied with other concerns), without
14 informing the citizens of its plans.

15 In my opinion, this type of
16 exclusivity and secrecy is shameful, and I cannot,
17 in good conscience, allow this development to
18 proceed without putting up a fight.

19 Thank you.

20 (APPLAUSE)

21 MAYOR COHEN: Our next speaker is
22 Marion Deats, city of Ithaca.

23 MARION DEATS: I live on Spencer
24 Road. There is a fair percentage of people in the

1 audience tonight who are my neighbors on Spencer
2 Road. And living on Spencer Road I can talk about
3 -- oh, I just noticed I am supposed to be at
4 podium one. The focus of this isn't, it's not
5 necessary to focus on my neighborhood, on Spencer
6 Road and my neighborhood being Buttermilk Park
7 where I walk all the time.

8 Everything that I had jotted down as
9 notes to say tonight to address has already been
10 addressed. I just want to add my voice to many of
11 the issues that have been said tonight.

12 I also have some images that play in
13 my mind, images of the past and images of the
14 future, images of the past, not too very long ago,
15 1996 I believe it was, when our back yards flooded
16 in Spencer Road and when we were scooping up carp
17 out of our back yards and taking them to
18 Buttermilk, carp. When we were canoeing on the
19 parking lot of K-Mart, literally, you know, taking
20 inflatable rafts in April I think it was and
21 canoeing.

22 I am very concerned, if that
23 situation happened, what the implications would be
24 without, with paving that entire area over.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 Another image I have in the past is
2 that horrific Ann Page I believe development it is
3 in Elmira. Every time I drive down Route 13 and I
4 see this acres and acres of ghost town, does
5 everybody know what I am talking about? That's a
6 scary image to me. It has been said tonight four
7 times I think about the future of big box
8 commerce. What's going to happen to our park 20
9 years from now? Is it going to look like Ann
10 Page? I mean that's kind of a nightmare
11 scenario.

12 I can't deny that I go to Syracuse
13 occasionally, I go to Carousel Mall myself to
14 shop, it's fun to get out of Ithaca. The world is
15 full of variety and variation, so be it. It's
16 great, but do we have the market here to support
17 something even close to that? I mean who would
18 come here? Population wise it is just infeasible
19 to think we have the population who would frequent
20 a place like that. Who is going to come? People
21 from Elmira? Arnot Mall. Who is the projected
22 market for this scale of development?

23 The other point I want to make is
24 the theme that we hear tonight, it's a sizeable

1 majority of us, it's a characteristic of our
2 community, it cannot be denied, it's a quality of
3 our community in Ithaca. It's something,
4 something to hear, something to listen to.

5 Other than that I think everything I
6 have been thinking of saying has already been
7 said. Thanks for listening. I agree, I think I
8 have had dialogue with several people I am talking
9 to right now. I think that we are reasonable
10 people. And I hope that we can keep our minds
11 open and try to go through this one
12 intelligently.

13 Thank you.

14 MAYOR COHEN: We will take a five to
15 ten minute break for our reporter.

16 (RECESS TAKEN)

17 MAYOR COHEN: We are ready to start
18 with number 47. This is number 47, Eric Skalwold,
19 City of Ithaca.

20 ERIC SKALWOLD: Okay. I am not
21 nearly as knowledgeable on the issues as people
22 who have been speaking before me. So I will take
23 very little time with my comments. One thing I do
24 know is that people who care about the

1 environment, people who are worried about the rain
2 forests being cut down, to not fill in a wetland
3 with a bunch of dirt. And I will join the people
4 who may be suing to have that stopped or removed.

5 Speaking of what's going on across
6 from Buttermilk, we have, there are a number of
7 issues that need to be addressed before we think
8 about development. One of the things is we have
9 gotten all but vital downtown and its rental
10 practices of one or two landlords that keep it
11 from being a vital downtown. Nothing has been
12 done in the past several years, even though there
13 has been some talk about what to do about it.

14 We need to fix what's broke before
15 we try and create something new. The way to fix
16 it is with zoning ordinances and with taxation.
17 We can settle taxation so that will make it so it
18 isn't profitable for Jason Fane to keep rental
19 property empty.

20 Before going any further with this
21 big box development, it would be nice if we got
22 the situation right. If we are going to do
23 development, we need to see what's going on in the
24 world. And if you do, you will notice that big

1 box development is as passe as downtowns.

2 If we are going to do something, do
3 what's on the cutting edge of development. What's
4 on the cutting edge of development is to recreate
5 the charm that downtowns have, to recreate the
6 charm that Ithaca has, to recreate the charm that
7 people like myself drive 40 and more miles to
8 commute outside of town to bring our income back
9 to this town because it's a wonderful place to
10 live.

11 The charm of this city has a value
12 beyond the personal value to me and other people
13 who live in it. For you people to think about
14 ruining it is despicable. You need to get on a
15 bus, all of you, and you need to go to Geneseo
16 where I did my graduate work, it was a charming
17 beautiful town. It had been destroyed by big box
18 development. All the charm and the downtown are
19 now gone. That's what will happen to Ithaca if
20 you continue with this big box development.

21 You haven't analyzed the financial
22 effects of destroying what is essentially Ithaca
23 and you certainly haven't looked into the kind of
24 development that if you are going to develop you

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 should develop in something that will tie in with
2 the community. We already have a downtown we
3 already have. Thank you.

4 (APPLAUSE)

5 MAYOR COHEN: Is number 48 here?
6 Number 49 is Daniel Cogan from Enfield.

7 DANIEL COGAN: Hi, my name is Daniel
8 Cogan. I do live in Enfield now but I have lived
9 in the City of Ithaca for most of the time I have
10 been in Ithaca which I moved here in 1992. Again,
11 I moved here because Ithaca was such a special
12 place. I have a background in engineering, I have
13 a master degree from Cornell in environmental
14 engineering and I am currently a computer
15 programmer. I tell you that because the reason I
16 am a computer programmer and not an engineer is
17 because I didn't like the fact that engineering
18 was mostly about making assumptions and then
19 calling it an answer.

20 Now, you have in front of you a
21 \$300,000 document that was produced by engineers.
22 And it's full of assumptions and those assumptions
23 basically tell you what you want to hear. Now you
24 have had a lot of people come up tonight and

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 attest to the fact that there is not enough retail
2 in Ithaca. So the problem is now we need to
3 quantify that. So what do we do? We go to census
4 data and we go to Clartos who provides the
5 statistics that are useful for that. And then we
6 try to show that, yes, indeed, there is a huge
7 untapped potential.

8 The problem is if you look at the
9 data that's shown, it turns out that there is more
10 retail spending in the 15 mile radius of Ithaca
11 which is Tompkins County than the people here are
12 spending. So, therefore, we think, huh, well,
13 that doesn't really show what we need to know.
14 For instance, on page 216 it says that the total
15 retail spending in 1997 was 613 million dollars.
16 Well, that's actually for the 14850. ... 775
17 million dollars of retail sales and only 602
18 million dollars of retail spending. So,
19 therefore, people are obviously coming in here to
20 spend money and they are not all spending it
21 elsewhere.

22 We do know people are going
23 outside. So what do we do? Well, we decide we
24 have to increase what we consider our sales area.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 So let's increase it to 30 mile radius which
2 includes 80 percent of Chemung County, 80 percent
3 of Tioga County, all of Schuyler County, half of
4 Cortland County. And we will say, well, people
5 will come here from those areas, people who will
6 come here from Cortland and people will come here
7 from Elmira and Horseheads and Owego. But then we
8 are going to make an assumption, well, only half
9 of those people will come here and then that will
10 be more reasonable. We will make another
11 assumption there. So then suddenly if we made
12 those assumptions we can suddenly say, well, there
13 is a huge untapped market of 500 million dollars
14 that we can tap into.

15 Now I was making some assumptions
16 today and I was looking, okay, well, this room
17 here I figure is about 75 feet by, here I wrote it
18 all done, 75 feet by 40 feet. So that's 3,000
19 square feet, there is about 150 people in this
20 room. That's one person every 20 square feet. So
21 let's build more meeting rooms and so if we built
22 800,000 square feet of meeting rooms and we figure
23 there is about one person every 20 square feet
24 that is going to be 40,000 people coming out to

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 our public hearings. Unfortunately, that's
2 unreasonable. The population of Ithaca is only
3 30,000 people.

4 Let's make an assumption of five
5 percent of the people who live in New York State
6 will also come. That increases it to 90,000
7 people. So now suddenly we have 90,000 people
8 plus the 30,000 people in Ithaca. I think we can
9 reasonably assume we are going to get 40,000
10 people out at our next public hearing in our
11 meeting room.

12 Now I want to tell the story about
13 what happens to me when I get hungry. When I get
14 hungry I don't pay very good attention to what's
15 going on, I don't think very clearly, and I
16 usually make way too much food because I am
17 starving you see. So now I think we can say that
18 Ithaca is hungry, and, you know, it's obvious
19 that, you know, the revenues are flat and we need
20 some new revenue.

21 But I think we maybe are a little
22 over hungry here. We are biting off way more than
23 we can chew. I think what we need to do is take a
24 step back, have a little snack. And then after we

1 do that we can think a little more clearly and we
2 can realize, well, maybe a million square feet of
3 new commercial space is a little more than we
4 need. I think we could probably get by with, ah,
5 something a little bit more modest and not cause
6 all these problems.

7 I think it is interesting that
8 alternative six, the traffic impacts are
9 unmitigatable. Well, that's pretty strong, so
10 let's drop back to alternative five which we can
11 just barely mitigate those impacts. I think that
12 shows right there that we are bucking up against
13 the wall of what's mitigatable. And I think we
14 need to drop back even further.

15 Thanks.

16 (APPLAUSE)

17 MAYOR COHEN: Number 50 is Chris C.
18 Bobrowich, from the city of Ithaca. Thank you,
19 Chris.

20 CHRIS BOBROWICH: Okay. As you
21 said, I am a resident of the City and I have been
22 now for ten years. I very much love living here
23 and hope to continue to live here.

24 However, I have some concerns about

1 the possible negative changes that would come
2 with, in regards with the quality of life in this
3 community because of the size of the proposed plan
4 that we are speaking about.

5 Before I continue along those lines,
6 though, I would like to say that I do think that
7 there are stores and businesses that are needed in
8 this city, especially since Woolworth's closed its
9 doors. There are many people in this community
10 that afford, need those types of places to buy
11 from, they cannot afford more expensive stores.
12 However, I am not sure that the size of the plan
13 being promoted would be the best for improving the
14 quality of life in our community.

15 In that regards and as well as in
16 other regards, I have some personal experience
17 regarding this that I would like to share with
18 you. I don't know if anybody has spoken to this
19 so I will go on with it. I grew up in Staten
20 Island, New York during the '50s and '60s. It was
21 during this time that the Arizona bridge was
22 built. The bridge was the first to join Staten
23 Island to the rest of New York City. It was
24 expected to cause many people to move on to Staten

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 Island because of easier access to the rest of the
2 City and it did. One half of -- which is fine.
3 One half to -- however, it's the way in which
4 development was completed that created some
5 problems.

6 One half to one mile from my house
7 lay a considerable stretch of swamp land that
8 divided my community from the beach. Once the
9 bridge was built and people started to move in, a
10 considerable amount of this land was filled in so
11 that many homes could be built because there
12 really weren't many other places to build homes.
13 At least not on that end of the island which is
14 closest to the bridge. Many homes were built, and
15 closely together so that little swamp land was
16 left to soak up the rains. Prior to this my
17 parents' home did not have problems with flooding
18 however, following this large scale construction,
19 my parents' house as well as my neighbors and
20 surrounding streets had frequent problems with
21 flooding.

22 As a current resident of Ithaca I am
23 very concerned that the amount of development
24 being looked at in an area of our city that seems

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 to act in a similar way to the swamps of my
2 childhood home will do the same, that is create
3 flooding far beyond what is believed possible.
4 And based on the previous speaker and his comment
5 about assumptions, I have to question how much we
6 do know would be the impact of that on the land
7 from the city.

8 Now the next point I wanted to make
9 was about the traffic. And I know a lot of people
10 have spoken to that. I would like to repeat it,
11 though, because it just makes the point. How many
12 times must history repeat itself before we learn
13 from its mistakes? The costs of the increase in
14 traffic and the problems that that brought,
15 pollution, noise pollution, delays on roads that
16 weren't built for such traffic.

17 This is one of the reasons why me
18 and many of my childhood friends left Staten
19 Island. I mean there certainly were others, but
20 that was a good part of it, it affected the
21 quality of life. I don't think this would have
22 happened if the government had the insight to look
23 at the impact of what could happen, not just into
24 the immediate future, but into the future of the

1 children and beyond that, and make a plan based on
2 those things. Which is something I am not sure we
3 are doing here given a lot of the comments that
4 were made.

5 There are related reasons, one was a
6 lack of attention to providing services such as
7 adequate bus service, is that going, is that
8 addressed? As our elected officials, I hope you
9 consider the impact that such changes may have on
10 our community. How will this affect the
11 homeowners that remain, will they stay or go? Is
12 it something worth taking a chance on?

13 On a personal note I was recently
14 told that the citizens of Vestal, New York were
15 led to believe their property taxes would decrease
16 when many large chain stores opened in their
17 area. Over time their tax only increased due to
18 the need for the area to provide infrastructure
19 such as roads, water and sewer. And so the
20 political people involved with bringing in the
21 stores were soon elected out of office.

22 Thank you.

23 (APPLAUSE)

24 MAYOR COHEN: Number 51 is Daniel

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 Tourance, Town of Ithaca.

2 DANIEL TOURANCE: I am deeply
3 concerned by the process that's been going on, in
4 particular with the Widewaters development. I
5 remember several years ago when Wal-Mart proposed
6 to build on that site, the City finally agreed
7 with certain restriction, for example, I think we
8 reduced the size from 130,000 square feet to a
9 115,000. We wanted trees in the parking lots, and
10 the building had to be moved closer to the road.
11 I have yet to see any similar restrictions placed
12 on the Widewaters development. It's just being
13 welcomed with open arms. I am sure even if there
14 were some restrictions on it, we would, still
15 could have some reasonable development in this
16 area.

17 I should also say I would like to
18 compare this to the treatment of the Black Diamond
19 bicycle trail which has been proposed for years,
20 it doesn't even have a final location. I have the
21 map of the Southwest development plan and even on
22 here it says location to be determined. Like,
23 it's as if it were some new idea that just came
24 along.

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 Why isn't there the same concern
2 shown for the Black Diamond trail that there is
3 for Southwest Park? Why are we not being informed
4 of this. The Widewater development, the 80,000
5 yards of fill, Wal-Mart only proposed to put in
6 50,000 yards, and yet now with 80,000 yards, the
7 City determined that they didn't even need an
8 environmental impact statement. Why? For 50,000
9 yards they did, but 80,000 they don't. Seems very
10 strange to me.

11 We heard from a lot of people
12 tonight who go shopping in Elmira, Cortland or
13 Syracuse, and I am sure they do have things there
14 that they don't have here. I mean this is a
15 fairly small city, it's not, we have 30,000
16 people, Syracuse has 200,000. But I would also
17 like to point out that the population of those
18 areas has been declining, Syracuse has declined by
19 at least 20 percent. Elmira has gone down, I
20 don't know the figures, but similar amount. What
21 are people saying? They like to shop there, but
22 they don't want to live there.

23 (APPLAUSE)

24 I mean I would rather have a place

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 where I would rather live and shop somewhere else
2 occasionally than the reverse. Those are not
3 desirable places.

4 (APPLAUSE)

5 I mean like a lot of other people
6 here I grew up in other places, I lived in
7 shopper's heaven, I grew up in New York City. I
8 have lived here for 27 years. We had all the
9 shopping in the world. You will see a lot of
10 people from those areas in Ithaca. I wonder how
11 many Ithacans move in the other direction, not as
12 many. So I would like to -- my daughter just
13 wants to say something for a short time here.

14 DAUGHTER: I think we need an a
15 amusement park because people will come from all
16 around to go to an amusement park. It will not
17 compete from downtown, but will help because
18 people shop and eat out. Thank you.

19 (APPLAUSE)

20 MAYOR COHEN: Number 52 is Rob
21 Steuteville, from the city of Ithaca.

22 ROB STEUTEVILLE: Thank you very
23 much. I am not anti-growth. I recognize that the
24 City has to grow and will grow, regardless of

1 whether this land is developed, it is going to
2 grow. I find this plan, however, to be very
3 disappointing. A couple words to describe it is
4 inelegant, crude is another word.

5 You have some waterfront there and
6 what do you have, you have the back of some office
7 buildings and a parking lot on the water. You
8 have some open space parcels that are behind
9 K-Mart and bordered by parking lots. Who is going
10 to use that open space? Maybe somebody to walk
11 their dog. The plazas are going to be dead zones
12 because they are designed poorly.

13 It doesn't, the plan to me doesn't
14 show any good connection to Route 13, doesn't show
15 any good connection to the existing development.
16 The way the streets are, the buildings are lined
17 up, I mean it doesn't seem to create any street
18 scape or any sense of place. The intersections
19 don't seem to make any sense to me.

20 Beyond that, it's, you know, it's
21 not a mixed use and it just doesn't create a
22 place. There is a renaissance out there in town
23 planning right now that is creating places that
24 are actually as good for the next millennium as

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 The Commons was for the year 1900. And this plan
2 is not part of that renaissance. Not even close.

3 So I just think that if we do go
4 forward and develop this land or part of it, that
5 Ithaca can do a lot better than this particular
6 plan. Thank you.

7 (APPLAUSE)

8 MAYOR COHEN: Number 53 our speaker
9 is Suzie Kossack, Town of Ithaca.

10 SUZIE KOSSACK: Yes, my home is in
11 the Town of Ithaca, but my place of work, my place
12 of worship, most of the other activities that I am
13 involved with are in the City of Ithaca. I have
14 been living here for nine and a half years and
15 before that I lived in Syracuse for 24 years. I
16 was in Syracuse yesterday driving along Erie
17 Boulevard East which is the expanded version of
18 what Route 13 is going to become. And earlier in
19 the late '70s, '80s, I watched that region
20 expand. And I thought it had reached its max when
21 I left. I was appalled yesterday when I was
22 there. It was unbelievable. I just couldn't
23 imagine how anything more could be built there and
24 it was. Every little strip mall was stuffed into

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 a space, every mall that was there before had more
2 buildings expanding off the side. The places that
3 had parking lots in front of them before, you
4 know, so you could park and then go to the strip
5 mall or building or whatever it was, now the
6 parking lots weren't there any more, there were
7 more strip malls in front of the malls. And it
8 was mind boggling to see this. I hadn't been
9 there in a while. I was shocked. And it was a
10 terrible thing, it was tragic. So, and I guess I
11 should point out that the company that had a lot
12 to do with that development and the company whose
13 headquarters is in the midst of that is
14 Widewaters. So that's just an interesting
15 observation.

16 But I have a three point solution
17 for the shopping needs for the people in Ithaca.

18 Point number one: Expand the
19 service league. They do wonderful work, we need
20 to support what they are doing.

21 Number two: Expand the store at the
22 Salvation Army, good prices, affordable to
23 everyone.

24 And number three: I ask the City to

1 promote and do what they can to develop increased
2 garage sales among residents. That certainly will
3 meet my shopping needs.

4 So many people have addressed this
5 earlier in terms of we are an enlightened city,
6 but there are enlightened counties more than we
7 are, Westchester, Marine, some places in Oregon
8 who are now making conscious efforts and conscious
9 legislation to cease, not restrict, but cease any
10 more malls or highways or pavement going up in
11 their area. And I think we need to do a study of
12 those areas and follow suit.

13 And in closing I am going to say
14 after tonight with the most members of the Common
15 Council not having been here for the majority of
16 the night, clearly this demonstrates that we must
17 have another scheduled evening forum scheduled
18 around the time when all of the Common Council
19 members can be present, and well, and the mayor,
20 you can come too. And so we can all share this so
21 everyone can hear what we have to say.

22 Thank you.

23 (APPLAUSE).

24 MAYOR COHEN: 54, our speaker is

1 Rebeka Doyle, city of Ithaca.

2 REBEKA DOYLE: Greetings, hi. I
3 want you all to think about something for a
4 second. How many of you had to put on an air
5 mask, a mask over your face before you walked out
6 the door today? And probably guarantee you that
7 none of you had to do that. I just got back a few
8 days ago from being in Ecuador where air and water
9 pollution, like many other developing countries,
10 struggling with a number of growing pains is
11 intense and when you are in the City you can't
12 breathe. And you think of all these things, just
13 the things you take advantage of.

14 When I got back to Ithaca the other
15 day I just felt so privileged and relieved of air
16 and water again. And then I found out pretty much
17 right away about what had been going down and
18 about all the development. I just became so
19 deeply saddened.

20 And I was even just so completely
21 saddened. I am a graduate student at Cornell in
22 soil and crop science. I could go on with a
23 million different reasons, hydrology, ecology, of
24 why this project and many other projects,

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 something like that would just be devastating.
2 But more than anything I will bring up what I said
3 to my housemates when I was going to this meeting,
4 I live with 12 other graduate students and we own
5 our own house, it's a cooperative. So we are
6 taxpayers to the City. They all asked why are you
7 going to this meeting? What store could they
8 possibly build, that was the question everyone
9 had, what could they possibly build, don't we have
10 a Staples and an Office Max. Wouldn't that be
11 redundancy? And they are very disciplines, it's
12 not even an ecological question to them. We are
13 just like why.

14 So no, I don't have a vested
15 long-term interest in this community, and maybe I
16 am just one of those transient people, but I feel
17 it is important to care about where you live
18 wherever you are and the time you live there. And
19 I feel very privileged to live in this town and to
20 have these resources available that we have. And
21 I just think about that and I hope that everyone
22 else is making these decisions is thinking about
23 that too. To spend a short time in some
24 developing country city, and I am so happy to be

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 in a place like Ithaca and you would think how
2 ironic we would be. Is this what we call
3 development and progress when we damage and
4 destroy a wetland or something like that?

5 Thank you.

6 (APPLAUSE)

7 MAYOR COHEN: Number 55 is Nick
8 Pafpatonis. Judging on the time we will probably
9 be able to take four to six more speakers
10 depending on the length of speaking. If you are
11 signed up to speak tonight, and we do not get to
12 your number, when we start the hearing tomorrow we
13 will start with the numbers that we have given out
14 tonight. If you are not here tomorrow, you will
15 have the ability to sign-up again to speak when
16 you do come back if you are not here at the
17 beginning of the hearings tomorrow which does
18 start at 1:00 p.m. here in this same room. So we
19 will see how many more we can get in this
20 evening.

21 By the way, the hearings tomorrow go
22 from 1:00 until 5:00. Then there is a 7:00 until
23 11:00 session as well tomorrow evening. Nick.

24 NICK PAFPATONIS: What we need to do

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 is stop this project immediately. That area is
2 meant for a park area, possibly, we don't need to
3 put any kind of like big gigantic stores in this
4 area. We have stores, we have tons of stores here
5 in Ithaca. What we need to work on first is
6 filling up all the empty holes that are on Route
7 13.

8 A couple friends of mine came down
9 to visit Ithaca for the first time a few days ago,
10 and they were just shocked at how horrible Route
11 13 looked when they had heard that Ithaca was like
12 a beautiful city. They seen, they said like why
13 are there all these empty spaces here and some
14 people's properties look like total garbage dumps
15 on Route 13?

16 We need to develop those spaces
17 first and fill them up with like smaller stores
18 that are, you know, where people can buy things
19 that are here in Ithaca. A lot of people are
20 complaining they have to go elsewhere to get
21 things. We can put smaller stores in these empty
22 storefronts and spaces on Route 13 as opposed to
23 developing a whole other area which is near, you
24 know, like what's that thing called where the

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 water is and stuff.

2 Another thing, too, we have about 14
3 or 15 empty store fronts in The Commons. The City
4 should take millions of dollars and invest into
5 small businesses. We need to take people who are
6 disabled, people who are on welfare, people who
7 don't have money to start a business, and we need
8 to start up, like small projects and business
9 development where these empty storefronts can be
10 filled.

11 I even had an idea I wanted to start
12 a business up in Collegetown doing like a used
13 record and CD store or something, in an empty
14 storefront up there. But I have gotten turned
15 away from all the banks because I don't have
16 credit. So, therefore, my ideas and plans could
17 never happen which I have to continue to live on
18 welfare. And that's your tax dollars that are
19 paying, you know, me to live because I am
20 disabled. Where I would like to be working. But
21 there is no opportunities here in Ithaca. We need
22 to fill up all the storefronts in The Commons.

23 You guys should realize that your
24 mainstay here in the City of Ithaca are college

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 students. We can't like develop stores that
2 people aren't going to buy anything from. We need
3 to cater to the majority of the population in this
4 county.

5 Getting on a few other issues, the
6 City and County need to share tax revenue
7 together. There is no point in building a big
8 mall in the Southwest Park and trying to compete
9 with the Pyramid Mall when the County and the City
10 and all the other cities and towns around us, if
11 everybody shared their revenues and all the money
12 was shared like on a County-wide project paying
13 for fire service, sewer, city works, then things
14 you wouldn't have to compete. You wouldn't have
15 to be building this. Then the money would be all
16 distributed equal. Does that make sense, Alan?
17 What's your opinion on that? You have no
18 opinion?

19 Okay. We need to start small, we
20 need to put small businesses into business. So
21 the City needs to spend money on starting small
22 business programs, to find people who want to
23 start, there is tons of people in this town that
24 would love to start a small business but nobody

1 has money to do it. I saw an article in the paper
2 the other day that some business development was
3 asking the City for \$100,000 loan to have
4 something to do with this project or something.
5 If you took that \$100,000, you could probably put
6 20 different small businesses in The Commons and
7 fill them up.

8 Thank you.

9 (APPLAUSE)

10 MAYOR COHEN: Number 56 is Sara
11 Regenspan from the Town of Ithaca.

12 SARA REGENSPAN: Hi. As he said, I
13 am Sara Regenspan. I know like I might not sound
14 very important because I am only 12, I am not like
15 voting age or, but I am really concerned about
16 this, not only because of the small businesses and
17 downtown, but also I go to ACS and that's up on
18 West Hill right next to the octopus. And I am
19 concerned about the number of kids in my school
20 that walk to school up that hill. And if traffic
21 is increased by what they say, 25 percent, the
22 kind of hazards that it is going to bring to all
23 the kids that walk to school.

24 And I also agree, about downtown

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 So we really, we have to buy what's
2 here. I mean, you know, we have a mall and we
3 have downtown. And I think that should be
4 enough.

5 Thank you.

6 (APPLAUSE)

7 MAYOR COHEN: Sara, I would like to
8 give you a special thank you for coming this
9 evening.

10 Number 57 is Joan Tregaskis from the
11 City of Ithaca.

12 JOAN TREGASKIS: I will speak to
13 these folks because I don't have anything that is
14 probably really considered pure GEIS facts and
15 figures. Although since I do live in the City, I
16 own two properties there, I am a critical care
17 nurse at the hospital, this weekend is 18 years in
18 this town, this hospital, etcetera.

19 Obviously enough people have heard
20 we don't believe much of what we have been told by
21 our city officials, they don't come, they don't
22 rearrange meetings, poor attendance by them
23 tonight, I was shocked by that. When I a student
24 here a few years ago about Wal-Mart I talked about

1 the impact.

2 I can't mention, I am not a
3 developer or a lawyer or whatever to go over these
4 figures, but I know the hospital puts its own
5 propaganda in the paper about how we are able to
6 handle the increased new cases, etcetera. We
7 don't need to call people in. I am called to come
8 into work almost every day I am off. When I am
9 not it's only because they know I will say no
10 anyway. There is not enough critical care nurses
11 to staff our unit on a regular basis. I don't
12 think people here would want to be cared for by
13 float nurses, but that's what happens.

14 You all want to increase
15 development, traffic, that certainly is going to
16 have an impact on fire, police safety, etcetera.
17 You know, again I just question can we really
18 handle all of this when information given to the
19 public via The Journal is not always accurate.

20 My needs for clothing, I can relate
21 again to what many people have said, you know, if
22 you listen to 89.7 Geneva about third-world
23 countries and many of these stores, these people
24 can't even afford to care for their families on

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 the wages they are given, etcetera. I don't need
2 to shop in shoes stores.

3 I'm no longer proud to invite people
4 to come to this community, I have relatives that
5 live here because they came to school here, they
6 liked it, I can't do that any more. I will begin
7 to look myself for where I will live. I am just a
8 drop in a bucket, it won't be noticed anyway. But
9 I just need to say that for myself. One day I
10 will go. I can't believe what you have done
11 across from Buttermilk, I just can't believe it.
12 I will just leave it at that. I just need to
13 share my emotions.

14 (APPLAUSE)

15 MAYOR COHEN: Our last speaker for
16 the evening will be Mahal, is 58 here? I think
17 that's our last number for this evening. Oh, 59.
18 Is 59 here? This will be our last speaker. This
19 is Kurt Seitz from Newfield.

20 KURT SEITZ: I just want to say
21 starting out that I used to live in the City of
22 Ithaca. I work in Ithaca and I shop in Ithaca.
23 And when the people ask where I am from I usually
24 say Ithaca. I can't understand how anyone can

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 think that the proposed retail development in the
2 existing Southwest Park would be good for the
3 people of the City of Ithaca or the people of
4 Tompkins County.

5 How can you prefer to bring in
6 retail development to open space on the outer
7 fringes of the City, instead of putting your
8 energy into promoting growth downtown?

9 How can you prefer a clear cut and
10 paved natural areas in one of the most scenic
11 places of the City instead of reserving that place
12 for scenic enjoyment and recreation?

13 This proposed retail development
14 certainly wouldn't benefit the workers of Ithaca
15 as the unemployment rate is currently about as low
16 as it gets. And the kind of development you are
17 proposing probably wouldn't bring wages up to a
18 more livable level either. Instead of relieving
19 the already difficult traffic situation in the
20 City, it would make it much worse. It may
21 increase the tax base in the City temporarily, but
22 it seems obvious that it would result in higher
23 taxes for city residents in the long run.

24 Are you just looking for short term

1 gains as you push the problems that are created
2 onto a future mayor and a future Common Council?
3 Retail space is absolutely the last thing that
4 should be considered for the Southwest area.
5 There is already much empty retail space in the
6 City and encouraging retail development in
7 Southwest could kill an already troubled
8 downtown. Encouraging development that could
9 result in a phenomenal increase in traffic on
10 streets that are already too congested to allow
11 kids to safely ride bicycles on them is an attack
12 on the quality of life of the City's residents.

13 So if you are still insistent on
14 making use of the Southwest area, what should be
15 done? If this area is developed, it should only
16 be used for low and middle income housing along
17 with offices, light industry and parkland. This
18 way people can live near where they work and can
19 afford to live in a pleasant, scenic environment
20 with open space filled with many recreational
21 possibilities, including bicycle and pedestrian
22 trails.

23 Let's bring back the days of open
24 space. Residents of Ithaca and Tompkins County

JANUARY 24, 2000

1 could enjoy the meadows and fairgrounds of the
2 Southwest. Let's bring back some affordable
3 housing to make up the more than 30 houses
4 demolished and 185 parcels of land taken to make
5 way for the flood control channel. Old trees
6 should be saved, wetlands and wildlife should be
7 preserved. Inevitable flooding should be
8 accommodated, not pushed onto other businesses and
9 neighborhoods.

10 And finally what should be done with
11 the waste water site? If removing the newly
12 placed fill is impractical, then let's use this
13 site for ballfields in the new Southwest Park.
14 Kids and adults can safely ride their bikes on the
15 new scenic Black Diamond Trail to Buttermilk Falls
16 and to the new Widewaters ballpark and
17 playground.

18 Thank you.

19 (APPLAUSE)

20 MAYOR COHEN: Okay. With that we
21 are concluded for this evening. We will recess
22 until 1:00 tomorrow afternoon.

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JANUARY 24, 2000

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I hereby certify that the proceedings
and testimony are contained fully and accurately
in the notes taken by me on the above cause and
that this is a correct transcript of the same to
the best of my ability.

ELIZABETH R. BRUCIE, RPR

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