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April 12, 2019

Ms. Amy M. Parker
Senior Planner
York County Planning Division

Via email – aparker@yorkcounty.gov

Re: No. UP-924-19

Dear Ms. Parker,

I am a partner in James York Self Storage, LLC. We built and own American Classic Storage, 723 Merrimac Trail, Williamsburg, VA.

We opened our business in 2001 and did a small expansion which opened in 2014. I give these dates to show that we have been in this particular self storage market for quite some time. I feel qualified to give you some information and data on the market, our customers and our current occupancy that I hope you will find relevant and important in the planning division, planning department and board of supervisors evaluation of the merits of this proposed use permit.

Our current facility has a total of 64,700 sq ft of leasable space. This is a combination of both climate controlled and non-climate controlled space. Just as a point of reference the proposed Use Permit referenced intends to add approximately 97,000 sq ft to the existing market. There are currently 2 other self storage operators, AAAA and Jack Rabbit, serving this market area. The AAAA is the most recent addition to operators in the market.

Our facility is comprised of 477 units. Currently 80.7% of those units are occupied. Vacancies exist in both climate controlled and non-climate controlled

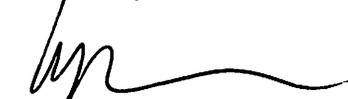
space. At one time during our operation we were close to 90% occupied. The addition of the AAAA property to the market took our market share down to as low as the mid 70%. We have slowly recovered to our current level.

These numbers are important in that they indicate a market need that is already being met or arguably oversupplied by the current operators. The applicant may well have a market feasibility study that shows a more robust market able to absorb the proposed space? We are in the market and can say definitively a need for more space does not exist. If there were an unmet need we would all three be 90%+ occupied. There is no proposed growth for this corridor/market that would indicate an increased need for more storage space now or in the future. Another operator, with that much space, is just going to take market share from current providers weakening the viability of all.

It is unfortunate that the applicant has not reached out to our operation as the nearest competitor to gather "real market data". I feel certain the other two operators would also have been willing to share their occupancy information too.

I hope this information is helpful in your evaluation of this use permit application.

Sincerely,



W. Craig Allen

Merrimac.York.County.UP.924.19

York County Planning Commission
Attn: Amy Parker – Senior Planner
301 Main Street
Yorktown, VA 23690

Re: Trail Plaza Shopping Center Conversion

Dear Planning Commissioners,

As York County property owners and businessmen, we do not support this, the second application, to change the Trail Plaza Shopping Center from (majority) retail to a self-storage facility for the following reasons.

1. Market demand –

- a. We are county tax payers and would-be competitors. The first application cited a market shortage of +/-85,000 square feet (sf) of self-storage. However, we believe our 60,000 sf facility was not considered in their study because it was under construction. If they missed it, this proposed project would significantly OVERSUPPLY the market:

85,000 sf of shortage claimed by applicant
-60,000 sf existing storage not considered by the study
25,000 sf actual shortage

+86,200 sf proposed new storage
61,200 FUTURE OVERSUPPLY

In fact, we believe the current market is actually oversupplied right now because our facility is only 60% occupied. I suspect other competitors may have weak occupancy as well. If the demand was stronger, our facility would be more stable.

- b. In addition, about 3.5 miles away (5 miles by vehicle), there is a multi-story self-storage facility close to breaking ground at 4091 Ironbound Road in James City County. This project will add at least another 75,000 sf of supply to the area very soon.

2. Corridor revitalization efforts –

- a. As long-time residents, we have watched revitalization of restaurants, retail, and entertainment in this area become a reality. It is a great success story. So, why on the heels of such success, would the county support a warehouse use here, especially one behind a +100 foot long solid brick wall along Merrimac Trail? As Mr. Myer describes during the previous application, self-storage is, "...the least-worst use of the property". Although some may consider revitalization to be converting retail into warehousing, we disagree. We feel it is inconsistent with the revitalization efforts that have shown great promise so far.

3. Shopping center traffic –

- a. Shopping centers need peak-hour traffic to thrive. We can attest to the applicant's statement that self-storage will "...produce very low vehicle trips and typically only at off-peak hours". This being true, how can the county expect the applicant to create an environment for "...small shop retailer tenants and create a new energy for the center", as they claim? On the contrary, it is likely

that the remaining retail spaces will increasingly struggle without traffic, including the proposed new retail outparcel, if it ever gets built.

4. Economic impact comparison –

- a. In referencing Neil Morgan’s letter to the Board of Supervisors on November 21, 2017 during the developer’s first application he notes that revenues generated by a self-storage facility would be less than even a medium level retailer could generate. Realizing an ideal grocery store tenant has not happened yet, shouldn’t the county at least hold out for a medium level retail user? Wouldn’t the higher revenue be worth it? A good example of the positive impact a medium level retailer can have on a shopping center can be found at the Ukrops Center on Mooretown Road. Without Ukrops, the center appears to struggle for years, however, since Big Lots has moved in, it appears the shopping center has significantly more tenants and is now becoming vibrant with traffic and activity.

To conclude, we cannot agree more with Chairman Jons, who stated during the first application, “[he] does not see that a storage facility would have any positive impact on surrounding businesses and could lead to additional vacancies in the future...does not feel mini-storage is the highest and best use of the property given the short time it has been vacant and...is struggling with the idea.”

We urge the Planning Commission NOT to support this Special Use Application.

Sincerely,

Bruce Robertson –



Jon Liebler –



The local owners of QP Storage, LLC – Managed by AAAA Self Storage and Moving

AAAA Self Storage and Moving
Attn: Merrimac Trail Location
819 W. Little Creek Road
Norfolk, VA 23505