

'Low-key guy' shapes future of Morristown

SUNDAY
MARCH 20, 2005

Skilled attorney champions many major projects in town

BY EUGENE MULERO
DAILY RECORD

MORRISTOWN -- At the decisive hearing for the \$50 million Highlands transit village application in January, planning board members objected to the developer's parking arrangement for commuters during the construction phase.

Stephen Santola, chief attorney for Woodmont Properties of Parsippany, pleaded with the board to approve the application. Next to Santola was attorney Martin Newmark, who was hired by Woodmont for the hearings.

Newmark stood motionless and stared at the board while his colleague spoke. Wearing what has become a trademark light brown suit, Newmark adjusted his glasses, gestured to Santola to sit down and explained his client's plan to the board.

"We've rented lots across the street from the train station and spaces at nearby Headquarters Plaza," Newmark said. "And, if you need a ride to the station, give me a call."

The board voted 8-1 to



"If you need a ride to the station, give me a call," quips Martin Newmark, who pushed the transit village forward.

approve the application, which consists of a five-story complex at 10 Lafayette Ave., with 218 apartments, about 8,000-square-feet of retail space and close to 725 parking spaces.

For Newmark, the transit village was another bullet point on his resume, which includes approvals of The Plaza at Morristown on Cattano Avenue, Georgetown town homes on Community Place, and Franklin Corners on Franklin Place.

Newmark's next battle, which he also is fighting for Woodmont, is to convince town officials that approving the \$55 million Epstein's project across from the Green - Morristown's landmark in the central business district - will improve the town's economy.

SEE NEWMARK / A9

Newmark

CONTINUED FROM / A1

A consummate Morristown player, Newmark's fingers seem to touch every major project in town.

"He's a pleasure to work with," said planning board secretary Ann McKinnis, who has worked for the town for more than two decades.

"He's always well prepared, bringing good, topnotch witnesses."

Donald Cresitello, a former mayor and 3rd Ward councilman and a Democratic mayoral candidate this year, said he has known Newmark for 35 years.

"He's a quality attorney," Cresitello said. "He's a low-key kind of guy who represents clients effectively."

Newmark, who would not reveal his age when asked, began his career with Morristown's board of adjustment after being inspired to pursue law at New York University by his father, Ezra, a real estate lawyer.

His office is decorated with New York Yankees memorabilia, blueprints from previous applications, and pictures of his wife Jane, his four daughters and his three grandchildren.

Next at-bat

Newmark's next at-bat is before the town council, which is expected to discuss the Epstein's rehabilitation plan on Tuesday night at town hall. His pitch is simple: The plan will generate millions in tax revenue if approved.

The Epstein's plan, which last year was sent to the planning board for recommendations, is led again by Woodmont.

It calls for razing the now-closed department store and building seven-story structures

"People will come here to take advantage of the cultural sites, the nightlife. ... What the town is missing now is a shopping destination."

— Martin Newmark, an attorney involved with major Morristown projects

with 250 residential units, including condominiums, that would face the Green, and apartments on Market Street.

Another part calls for 10 townhouses on what now is an employee parking lot at DeHart Street and Macculloch Avenue. A park would be built adjacent to the parking lot, next to homes on Macculloch Avenue.

Plan reduced

In response to concerns from several board members regarding parking spaces, the developer announced the reduction of the originally proposed 92,000 square feet of retail space by approximately 17,000 square feet to accommodate 144 parking spaces, for a total of 944.

In a report to the council in December, the board recommended that the Epstein's plan adhere to the town's master plan and keep its buildings to five stories.

But Paul Phillips, a planner hired by the council last summer, has recommended that the council consider six or seven stories, depending on the set back of the marquee structure's top floor.

"I was surprised with the reaction in some quarters to the height issue," Newmark

said.

"I'm optimistic (that the town council) will reach a favorable compromise to what was originally proposed. I've spent my entire professional life here, and I don't see a problem with six or seven stories across from the Green."

Mayor John "Jay" DeLaney Jr., who is not seeking re-election, said he respects Newmark and called him "a real credit to the legal profession."

DeLaney said he supports the planning board's recommendation, but adds that he is "open minded to constructive changes," like what Phillips recommends.

Marquee buildings

When the council makes a decision on the proposed height of Epstein's marquee buildings, the application will head back to the planning board, where board members will determine the outcome of the application.

Newmark again will be the quarterback for the Epstein's team. His role will be to present one expert-witness after another and remind board members of the application's economic impact.

Several key merchants and politicians have said the Epstein's plan will reenergize business in town.

"People will come here to take advantage of the cultural sites, the nightlife," Newmark said. "What the town is missing now is a shopping destination."

Town officials have not declared an exact timetable for the Epstein's project. Some say it will take weeks, while others say it will take months before the council moves forward with the application.

Meanwhile, the key issue is determining what to cut from DeLaney's proposed \$33 million budget while finding ways to generate revenue for the town.

At his law firm, Broderick, Newmark & Grather on South

S:
g:
aj
de
tr
tc

Street, Newmark adjusted his homeowner."

glasses and said: "(Epstein's approval and development, done carefully, will generate a tremendous amount of revenue to lighten the burden for the

And as for his promise to drive commuters to the train station during construction of the transit village, he later explained that he'd be happy to

do it for his regular fee of \$300 an hour.

Eugene Mulero can be reached at (973) 267-9038 or emulero@gannett.com.
