Public Comment for Village the of Plandome Manor Zoning Board of Appeals

Regarding Legal Notice 6 – 15 – 23

From Transition Town Port Washington 501(C) (3)

June 14, 2023

Introduction: Leeds Pond, located in Plandome Manor, is the largest and most ecologically important freshwater body located on the Port Washington Peninsula. It spans 20 acres and serves as an essential habitat for diverse waterfowl. The pond plays a crucial role in the local ecosystem as the largest subwatershed draining into Manhasset Bay. Its littoral zone and surrounding vegetation are critical for wildlife, and it receives water from four significant streams. Leeds Pond is part of a larger habitat mosaic that includes upland forests, saltwater marshes, freshwater marshes, and upper beach habitats.

Leeds Pond in Plandome is a valuable ecological resource with significant biodiversity and habitat importance. However, proposed actions and human activities pose risks to its health and sustainability. To address these harms and risks, it is crucial to implement measures such as prevention of development and impervious surfaces, sediment control, tree conservation, littoral zone protection, and water quality monitoring. By enforcing our current zoning laws and by taking proactive steps to protect Leeds Pond, the Village of Plandome Manor can ensure the preservation of this vital natural asset for current and future generations.

Environmental Harm and Risks: The proposed actions and human activities around Leeds Pond pose risks and harms to its ecological health and should not be authorized. These include:

1. Tree Removal: The removal of mature trees around the pond is detrimental to wildlife. These trees provide important habitat and nesting sites for various bird species and other wildlife.
2. Littoral Zone Degradation: The removal of the littoral zone, the vegetated area around the pond, can cause harm to the wildlife and ecological communities that rely on it. The littoral zone plays a critical role in water quality maintenance and supports a range of aquatic organisms.
3. Sediment Movement and Erosion: The movement of sediment as a result of proposed actions can alter the local hydrology and flow into Leeds Pond. This will be aggravated by the aforementioned removal of trees and other vegetation. This siltation process harms the ecological communities within the pond and affects water quality.

Measures to Address Harm and Risks: To mitigate the environmental harms and risks associated with the proposed actions, the following measures are recommended:

1. Sediment Control and Management: Avoid actions that contribute to erosion. Implement erosion control measures such as sediment traps, sediment ponds, and sediment barriers to minimize sediment movement into Leeds Pond. Regular monitoring and maintenance should ensure the effectiveness of these measures.
2. Tree Conservation and Reforestation: Develop a tree conservation plan that identifies and protects mature trees around the pond. Encourage replanting efforts with native tree species to restore lost habitat and maintain biodiversity.
3. Littoral Zone Protection and Restoration: Establish buffer zones around the pond to protect the remaining littoral zone. This can be achieved through zoning regulations and land-use planning that restricts development and ensures the preservation of critical habitats. Additionally, consider implementing habitat restoration projects to enhance the littoral zone and encourage the return of native flora and fauna.
4. Water Quality Monitoring: Regularly monitor water quality parameters such as nutrient levels, turbidity, and dissolved oxygen to assess the impact of sedimentation and other factors on Leeds Pond. Develop strategies for pollution control and implement appropriate measures to maintain and improve water quality.
5. Nitrogen and phosphate pollution in bodies of freshwater, sourced from suburban lawns and golf courses, poses significant harm to both Leeds Pond and the Manhasset Bay watershed, from which Leeds pond flows into. Excessive use and improper application of nitrogen-based fertilizers lead to runoff during rainfall, causing eutrophication and oxygen depletion. Impervious surfaces, such as roads and buildings, prevent rainwater infiltration, resulting in polluted stormwater runoff that degrades water quality. Preventive measures include responsible fertilizer use, buffer zones, green infrastructure, education, and regulatory actions to mitigate these issues and protect freshwater ecosystems.