

LONG ISLAND/NASSAU By Christine Chung christine.chung@newsday.com @chrisychung
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Manorhaven sets November hearing date for proposal that would exceed height limits

Residents at standing-room-only zoning meeting worry that approving project for a 52-foot-tall building would precipitate overdevelopment in the village.



Manorhaven Village Hall on Sept. 26, 2017. The village zoning board voted to continue a hearing on Nov. 13 about a proposed building that would exceed the village's zoning code height limits. Photo Credit: Howard Schnapp

The Manorhaven Board of Zoning Appeals has adjourned a hearing for a proposed 52-foot-tall, four-story building that would exceed the village's zoning code height limits by more than double.

The board voted 4-0 Monday, with one member absent, to continue the hearing to Nov. 13, following nearly an hour of heated community opposition.

The applicant, New-Jersey based Secatoag 20-26 LLC, has proposed building two mixed-use buildings with ground-floor retail space and nine two-bedroom apartments in each building. The buildings will be bounded by Sagamore Hill Drive and Secataog Avenue.

The applicant is seeking numerous variances to allow the project to diverge from multiple village zoning code requirements governing height, front yard setback, parking and other conditions. Without the variances, the project would not be economically "viable," said the applicant's attorney, Howard Avrutine.

When asked by those in the audience, Avrutine confirmed that one of Secatoag's principals is Peter Dejana, a Port Washington-based businessman who recently sold his landscaping company, Dejana Industries. Avrutine added that Dejana would be "overseeing the project."

Dejana runs the Peter and Jeri Dejana Foundation, a nonprofit that awards charitable grants to local and regional organizations, according to the foundation's website. Jim Avena, Manorhaven's mayor, is the foundation's grants administrator. In 2016, Avena was paid \$127,500 for the position, according to the foundation's 2017 tax form.

The standing-room-only crowd included many residents who said that if approved, the project would set a dangerous precedent for overdevelopment in the village.

Resident Caroline DuBois said that the application for the height variance was an "arrogant abuse of both the letter and spirit of our village's well-established local laws."

Multiple consultants, including an economist, real estate agent and traffic engineer, appeared on behalf of the applicant to endorse the proposed development's benefits to the village.

Martin Cantor, director of the Long Island Center for Socio-economic Policy, said that the development would "bring new wealth and economic activity" to the village by creating jobs and attracting more residents to add to the tax base.

Cantor estimated that the development would generate nearly \$220,000 in property taxes for Nassau County, the village and the local school district.

Bruce Migatz, attorney for the 1 Toms Point Lane Corporation, a waterfront co-op community a block away from the proposed development, said the project was not harmonious with the neighborhood's character and would "not lead to the orderly development of Manorhaven."

Several residents expressed concerns that if the variances were approved, similar concessions would be granted to future development on the 11-acre former Thy-pin Steel property also on Sagamore Hill Drive.

Patrick Gibson, chairman of the Board of Zoning Appeals, said board members are solely considering the application before them.



By **Christine Chung**christine.chung@newsday.com [@chrisychung](https://twitter.com/chrisychung)

Christine Chung covers the Town of North Hempstead, writing about local government, development, transparency and breaking news.