

**From:** Andrew Buck [<mailto:dabuck@mac.com>]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 09, 2015 7:18 PM  
**To:** [tmiller@timmlerassociates.com](mailto:tmiller@timmlerassociates.com)  
**Subject:** Kiryas Joel Annexation Scoping Response  
**Importance:** High

Mr. Miller, good day,

My name is Andrew Buck. My wife and I moved to the Village of Monroe in 2005, and one of the reasons for locating to Monroe specifically was the bucolic pace of life here. Monroe is a quiet, bedroom community with a low-crime rate, a very residential setting, nestled in an area of the Lower Hudson Valley that is surrounded by wildlife, trees, mountains, and other natural resources. I live in a small residence on 1/4 acre within a 10 minute walk to the Monroe Ponds and Lake Street.

I've attached to my mail the original documents sent as part of the public comment to the DEC as part of the decision process in 2014. I continue to be very concerned about the potential annexation of land into the Village of Kiryas Joel for the purpose of high-density development. I'll briefly spell out the reasons for my concern:

1. Legality of the annexation. The process itself violates both the letter and spirit of the laws governing annexation and SEQR by segmenting it. By so segmenting, the Village is first requesting annexation of 507 acres, to be followed by rezoning of that acreage once annexed. We know this because of the commitments by developers to portion this land to develop high-density residential housing with a water connection fee of \$25,000 per property to repay the debt incurred by the construction of the Catskills pipeline connection. Secondly, on Page 5 of the Scoping document, it references the religious composition of the village which clearly violates the establishment clause of the Constitution.

By creating a municipality that is entirely Satmar Hasidic, it does so in violation of fair housing regulations. Simply, as has been seen in past trending, no accommodation has been nor will be made for residents of any other ethnic or religious background to live in the community. While people have a right to live where they choose, they do not have the absolute right to violate established law for the purpose of creating a theocracy, nor can such an entity apply and receive any public funds as a religious organization as that, too, violates the terms of such publicly funded programs.

2. Environmental concerns. To be candid, Kiryas Joel has shown a rampant disregard for the environment and their neighbors, and continue to flagrantly violate several DEC mandates, including inadequate sewer treatment, dumping of raw sewage into the Ramapo estuary, and other such violations that make clear that they have no intent of being good stewards of the environment they inhabit. To expand that is simply rewarding bad behavior. Further, while Kiryas Joel's own sewage treatment plant is not compliant with DEC regulations, the nearby Harriman Treatment Plant (Orange County Sewer District #1) is at capacity. Simply, there is no more growth capacity without sending an abundance of untreated effluent into the Ramapo estuary. Said estuary becomes the source of drinking water to communities downstream, and the

decisions made here impact those of our neighbors in Orange & Rockland Counties in New York, and Bergen/Passaic Counties in New Jersey.

Mr. Miller, in my work and personal life I've traveled many times to the Far East. I encourage you to research the "Pasig River" in Manila, Philippines. It is widely known as an example of a "dead river". It has been used as a dumping ground for everything from industrial waste to sewage, and it can no longer support any life. Standing near it, the smell is pungent and unbearable, a putrid combination of effluent, sewage, petroleum and rotting organic matter. Fish who make it into the river are seen floating dead at its surface. The number of dead rivers worldwide is growing in large part due to poor stewardship and short-sighted decisions. I fear that Kiryas Joel has demonstrated a continued lack of concern for anything other than sustaining their own uncontrolled growth, and Orange County could have its own version of the Pasig River in the Ramapo estuary.

3. Tax subsidy. Orange County is suffering from a weakening credit rating and escalating costs for its social programs, and faces a deficit or major cuts to necessary programs. This proposed annexation comes at a time when 93% of Kiryas Joel residents receive some form of government aid, paid largely by the remainder of Orange County's taxpayers. These programs are provided as a safety net and come at a cost to the taxpayers of the county and state. They were not intended to be a way of life as they are being used in the Village of Kiryas Joel. Expansion of the practice is unsustainable, as are their lifestyle choices to depend on others for continued and increasing amounts of government aid.

4. Master Planning. A drive around the current-day setting of Kiryas Joel demonstrates a municipality that lacks a master plan for development. Roads and sidewalks are inadequate, oftentimes unpaid as village taxes are insufficient to provide those services, and the focus continues to be on building more housing without consideration for sizing the core supporting infrastructure. The result is more idling vehicles, more pedestrians in harm's way, and simply but, more of a ghetto look-and-feel than the surrounding municipalities.

Municipalities do not invent themselves but are organically formed around attractions, industry, or some other economic focal point. Simply put, Kiryas Joel lacks that and shows no signs of self-sustainability other than a parasitic connection to a host organism, that being the remainder of Town, County & State residents. In an organic world, a parasite cannot exist without the host organism, and should this annexation take place, the flight of tax dollars from Orange County will be insufficient to sustain a larger Kiryas Joel in the long term. That entity would cease to exist, leaving little to provide for its needs.

5. Destruction of the environment. Kiryas Joel has already been fined by the DEC for its mistreatment of protected wetlands. Realistically, an expanded Kiryas Joel would denude the surrounding area of trees and foliage, making way for nothing but blacktop, asphalt and high-rise condominium housing. The existing master plan for the community provides no parkland for children. It is unlikely that an expanded community would change that, instead putting the need for revenue recouping development ahead of concern for environmental sustainability. Kiryas Joel already has no direct access from a major state or county highway that isn't a single-lane of traffic in each direction. There appear to be no plans for expanding this to support the additional

demand for access from more residents. This is disastrous urban planning, or demonstrates a complete lack of long-range planning.

It also removes the ridge-scape that others in the region have come to enjoy, replacing it with high rise housing the doesn't belong in the environment and threatens it ecologically.

If Kiryas Joel were a better neighbor and better steward of the environment, it would be easier to consider the potential for expansion. As they stand now, they are a community that flagrantly violates DEC mandates without repercussions, violates Open Meeting Laws, fails to respond to continued FOIL requests for documentation, and acts with total neglect for their neighbors. They do as they please without regard for consequences. Imagine if 20,000 Monroe residents encroached on Kiryas Joel and did the same what sort of uprising that would create.

While we respect our neighbors, they show little regard or respect for us in return, and their request for annexation should be rescinded or denied as it does nothing to benefit Monroe, its surrounding neighbors, Orange County or the State of New York.

I appreciate your time and consideration. Please also reference the information originally provided to the DEC citing my original April 28, 2014 filing to them on the original matter.

Thank you and regards,  
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