

## **Draft Scoping Document Comments regarding the proposed 507-Acre Annexation to the Village of Kiryas Joel (KJ) from the Town of Monroe Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement**

Please find below comments on the proposed Scoping Document towards ensuring all relevant issues are vetted whether a benefit or impact to the Village of KJ, the adjacent communities or the surrounding area.

Under Section I, Description of The Proposed Action, A, Project Description, 1 Background, last paragraph, the update being performed on the demographic characteristics notes that projection methodology will be done based on recently graduated females from the KJ schools. Demographic characteristic projections should also include projected migration into this expanded village from outside areas. Clear discussion on the size for the families for the group projected to inhabit this expanded village should be provided in this section.

Real population growth needs to be based on real zoning parameters projected for this expanded village to determine the density which will be permitted and built in this newly expanded village. If the zoning of these areas is not yet determined, the zoning of the adjacent lands in the current Village of KJ should be utilized.

Under Section B Project Purpose, number 2 Need and Benefits to previously annexed lands need to be included in the study which addresses trends of past annexations into KJ, this present 507 acre annexation and future annexations sought based on projected growth trends. The commenter is looking for a discussion on sustainable growth (or the complete lack thereof) of this community, and those adjacent communities who may be asked repeatedly in the coming years for further annexations. Clarify trends and impacts so the true benefits and impacts may be realized.

Under Section B Project Purpose, number 3 Benefits and impacts to the County of Orange, Town of Monroe and Monroe Woodbury School District need to be clearly demonstrated.

Under Section B Project Purpose, number 4 The preparer of the DGEIS needs to show provide studies demonstrating economic benefits of this action as it relates to infrastructure and other services. Impacts to the region based on KJ's act of installing an upsized water transmission line from 18" to 24" diameter, Impacts to the public for the terrible workmanship of KJ's contractors in restoring the pavement surface of County Highway 44 aka Ridge Road, which the public has had to endure, odor issues observed while passing the KJ sewage treatment plant in the valley adjacent to County Route 105.

Thorough review by the agencies where permits will need to be acquired subsequent to this action such as New York State Department of Transportation, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, The Army Corps of Engineers, Orange County Planning Department, Orange County Health Department, New York State Department of Health and others need to weigh in on this proposed annexation and review it thoroughly and carefully. It is expected that comments will be provided from these agencies on this action.

Section II, A,1, a: The distance or limits of 'any adjacent lands' needs to be defined.

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The fact that the Town of Monroe is even considering the loss of nearly 1 square mile of its lands is truly unbelievable. Hopefully the government will work for all the people vs favoring a special interest group with leaders that have exhibited less than upstanding actions in the past.

The acquisition of traffic study data should be performed on days when the religious beliefs of this group do not prohibit their use of automobiles. Careful analysis towards accurate data acquisition given the holiday schedule of the KJ community at large needs to be considered.

The zoning of the adjacent lands of the Town and Village of Woodbury, the Town and Village of Blooming Grove and South Blooming Grove need to be presented as they are directly adjacent and abutting the properties to be annexed. Direct comparison of the zoning districts from adjacent municipalities need to be included to clearly see the distinct changes and impacts to these areas. Normal practice in many Orange County municipalities include buffers being imposed on the higher density land where these high intensity land uses abut existing lower density uses. Having city zoning on one side of the street and more common rural residential zoning regulations on the other would be very out of character with current smart growth initiatives.

Section II,A,1,d notes ‘relevant’ provisions from the Orange County Comprehensive Plan will be summarized. The parties responsible for determining the ‘relevance’ of the particular sections to be summarized needs to be clarified and where differences occur, a means to address these differences provided, including expanding the study to accommodate the concerns of the adjacent impacted communities.

Section II,A,2 Under potential impacts with and without annexation ‘a’ historic development patterns in the Village and Town need to include the Village and Town of Woodbury, Village of South Blooming Grove and Town of Blooming Grove. Imposing limits on the villages or towns to be studied should not exclude those villages or towns that are directly abutting property supposed to be annexed.

The potential impact section seems to clearly omit the discussion on the impacts to the Monroe Woodbury school district. Issues should include how this annexation may cause issues such as those in Ramapo as cited in NY Magazine, April 21, 2013: “Up in Ramapo, the immigrant community and the growing population of Hasidim had eyed each other with increasing wariness. Then the Orthodox took over the public schools and proceeded to gut them.” The commenter is hoping this process will not open the door for history to repeat itself given this annexation proposal. If the Village of KJ can exclude itself from the MW School district voting and be excluded from MW school board membership this annexation would be easier to accept. We can’t allow a community to direct a school board where the community does not send its own children. If KJ’s choice is to segregate itself from the surrounding communities, this act should exclude you from participation where my children are educated.

Similar recent annexations of large tracts of property such as this throughout New York State should be presented and discussed to see trends. The GEIS should also include studies of the

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successes and or failures, benefits and impacts of similar sized annexations by other communities including but not exclusive to ultra-religious cults such as this.

Demographics and fiscal resources needs to clearly present how many persons of the total current population and percent of the current population are on public assistance granted by the state, county and federal government. This needs to be directly compared with municipalities adjacent to KJ and statewide to clarify trends of this village as compared to its neighbors. Such fiscal impacts need to be quantified.

Study the impacts to Gonzaga Park, the Heritage Trail and Crane Park due to the increased population of KJ to offset the density of the population projected to use the parks. Most municipalities require parkland fees be paid to the municipality where population growth will impact the parks.

Study the impacts to the new private KJ park on Larkin Drive – will similar sex-segregated parks be built on the annexed or current KJ lands to accommodate current and projected population increases and if so will these sex-segregated parks receive public funding in the face of laws prohibiting these practices of funding segregated facilities?

All studies should concentrate on the size of the families in KJ.

Study water impacts, sewer impacts and discharge of treated sewage to the Ramapo River Basin.

Discuss how recent KJ projects which have impacted adjacent communities will be corrected before any annexation granting growth is approved. One such example has to include the awful condition that Ridge Road (County highway 44) has been left after the installation of the KJ 24” transmission water main. This road is traversed by many in the region and the surface has been destroyed leaving a network of asphalt patchwork. Again the region is suffering from the shoddy work of a KJ contractor.

The scoping document should clearly require a demonstration of zoning proposed for these annexed areas. It is obvious that the zoning will be for multifamily housing similar to the rest of the KJ village and the impacts of the zoning on the adjacent towns and the services with in the Town of Monroe and the Monroe Woodbury school district.

This expanded village of KJ should be completely removed and outside of the boundaries of the Monroe Woodbury school district as these residents of KJ do not attend these public schools and have no intention of attending these public schools.

The document needs to clearly show that our government is of the people and for the people all of the people not just any select group. History cannot continue to repeat itself where impacts adversely affect the larger population, all to the advantage of one group. For instance the Ramapo School District so adversely affected with board members whose children do not attend the Ramapo public schools. The scoping document needs to make sure it includes adverse effects to the surrounding populations, school districts, municipalities, road systems, utility

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systems: all of the things we put in place for the greater good of the entire civilization not just for a select group.

The scoping document needs to include sections on Smart Growth and all of the current best practices that are being instituted and applied successfully throughout New York State. This proposal seems to be the antithesis of these types of smart growth ideals. This is clearly taking green space and converting it into high density city type living. This is not redevelopment where existing buildings and high density capable utilities currently exist. This is in contrast to smart development, given the housing needs and the lifestyles of this particular community it would certainly appear that an underpopulated inner city area already complete with the necessary utilities, housing density and transportation availability would certainly have been a much better fit than the rolling hills and wooded areas pristine parklands and rural character of the towns in this region. Discuss the Smart Growth and Sustainability initiatives of this annexation and the projected population growth, given the existing density and trends of this (KJ) community.

Any fiscal study should certainly include those benefits recognized by this village and what the projected benefits will need to be to serve this community. Benefits such as food stamps, grants written and awarded should be presented to demonstrate the propensity of the state of New York and other government agencies towards providing more assistance to one community as opposed to the community standing on its own and contributing back to the greater development and needs of the County, Region and the State of New York. Will this annexation drain services available to all in the State to only serve a few?

One needs to wonder with the migration out of New York State of many of the middle-class working families, who will be left to support those communities that so over utilize public assistance services? Who will possibly fund these public assistance services if all the middle-class, taxpaying groups leave this region?

Demographic studies should show a comparison between this expanded village with its neighboring villages and towns Woodbury, Blooming Grove South Blooming Grove, Monroe etc. The public needs to see the trends to understand the impacts of such a large expansion of one village where the customs dictate these large families and dense population centers.

The draft scoping notes demographics done for a pipeline project where the village of KJ illegally upsized the water main pipe – another example of the fraudulent and deceptive acts by this village of KJ.

We need assurances from the State that the East Ramapo School District woes will not be repeated in the Monroe Woodbury School District. See N.Y. Times, April 7 2014 story entitled ‘A School Board That Overlooks Its Obligation to Students’.

Section II,A,2,c: Include the Town of Blooming Grove and the Village of South Blooming Grove which are adjacent to Annexation Area VIII (B).

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Section II,A,2: Study the comprehensive effects of removing approximately 507 acres of land from the Town of Monroe.

Under Section II,B,1, The GEIS should discuss the effect expanding this Village will have on the State, County and surrounding area. Two alarming facts from the 2010 update to the Orange County Comprehensive Plan: ‘Kiryas Joel has been one of the fastest growing villages east of the Mississippi River’ and that among ‘The least affluent villages were Kiryas Joel...’ According to the NY Times April 20, 2011, in speaking on KJ’s residents: ‘About half of the residents receive food stamps, and one-third receive Medicaid benefits and rely on federal vouchers to help pay their housing costs.’

Under Section II,B,2,a: What is KJ’s plan towards becoming an economic engine or at least viable for its residents and for the County? When will KJ employ economic development principles into its community and residents to improve their own self-created and perpetuated poverty? Why in the world would the Town of Monroe seek to expand this community which can find every reason to not become a viable, sustainable economy for their residents the County and the State as a whole? What is the game plan for KJ economically? What can this community do towards sustaining its cultural practices like large families and low incomes?

Section C,2,c. Analyze impacts to County facilities, infrastructure and services, including: 1) Social services (Welfare). Provide data on the number of welfare recipients in the Village currently vs the projected number of welfare recipients after Annexation.

Who is preparing this document? Section D,1,e suggests discussing ‘Saturday traffic.’ By a hassidic community? What Saturday traffic? Foot (pedestrian) traffic? Please explain what this discussion hopes to provide or compare in reviewing environmental impacts or benefits.

Improvements to roadways, intersections, signalization, turn lanes, road widening and impacts caused by this widening of the roadway such as drainage impacts, wetland impacts, environmental impacts to threatened-endangered species all need to be studied whether or not there is a site plan or subdivision plan demonstrating the density. Density of the existing village will be commensurate with the density being sought by this annexation and the subsequent need for improved roadways.

Section D,3, Discuss impacts to and improvements required to the intersections noted below due to the increased population due to this proposed annexation. The traffic study needs to be prepared by an experienced, qualified, engineer licensed in the State of New York, not by some unlicensed individual sitting in a planner’s office. Study traffic for the anticipated population growth based on current zoning of the Village of KJ where the annexed properties will be included, at these particular intersections at a minimum:

Ninninger Road and Route 105,

Bakertown Road and Route 105,

Ninninger Road and Route 32,

Study the need for an exit off of Route 17 (aka I-86) to Route 105?

Route 17 and Route 208,

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**Andrew Fetherston, P.E., CPESC, CPSWQ, CFM**

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Route 208 and Museum Village Road,  
Route 17m and Museum Village Road,  
Route 44 and 208,  
Ridge Road and Route 32,  
Route 105 and Route 32,  
Nininger and Dunderberg Roads,  
Route 105 and Route 40,  
Route 40 and Route 17M,  
Route 105 and Larkin Drive,  
Larkin Drive and Route 17,  
Route 6 and 17,  
Route 208 and 17M,  
North Main Street and Schunnemunk Road.

The traffic study should consider the KJ village's needs for a separate off ramp from Route 17 a.k.a. I86 directly to this population center (easily what will be the largest population center of the County of Orange should this annexation go through).

The quantity of busses currently and projected to be used by residents of KJ, increased impacts to traffic in the area, air pollution, water pollution due to expanded outdoor storage of these busses – mitigation of this 'stormwater hotspot' as defined by NYSDEC.

Section E,1,h: Why is it that anything which will or could limit or place a constraint on potential housing density (like septic systems or public water supply wells to serve areas of the annexation expanded Village) are spoke of negatively in the scoping document:

'd. Discuss limitations to establishing private wells in annexation area. '

'h. Discuss limitations to establishing private septic in annexation lands.'

The preparer of this document should know better than to skew the public reading this document into believing these practices are not viable solutions for his annexation and subsequent growth.

Septic systems take up land, especially so if the sewage comes from multiple dwelling unit buildings, common to KJ. Public water supply wells have limitations and protected areas surrounding these wells to prevent contamination - these limitations preclude development adjacent to these wells thereby limiting the density of people per acre – which is what this is all about.

The scoping document requires study of the "Potential effect" on the Ramapo River. Potential effect – Really? What is exactly the effect of diverting millions of gallons of catskill aqueduct water daily from the Hudson River basin into treated effluent discharged in the Ramapo River Basin?

Section G,2,c should discuss the impact on the Village of Monroe Park: Crane Park, where many KJ Village residents enjoy passive recreation on the walking paths. Does the required density of the development in KJ preclude having any aesthetically pleasing Village Park? Is any parkland proposed given the estimated population increases?

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Section III (1) Does this section mean no SEQR review is required for any of the projected subdivisions or site plans assumed to be proposed and assumed to be reviewed in the Village of KJ for the future development?

In Section V. ALTERNATIVES, discuss re-populating an area where public transportation, utilities, and under-utilized urban land housing exists or can be redeveloped (Like those areas in the City of Newburgh) thereby maintaining the current housing density and zoning of the rural sections of Monroe.

Discuss decentralized sewer. See The EPA Decentralized Wastewater Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and discuss the possible benefits to the watershed of multiple discharges as opposed to a central point discharge of treated effluent. For many communities, decentralized treatment can be:

- Cost-effective and economical
- Avoiding large capital costs
- Reducing operation and maintenance costs
- Promoting business and job opportunities
- Green and sustainable
- Benefiting water quality and availability
- Using energy and land wisely
- Responding to growth while preserving green space

Discuss these benefits vs impacts in comparing a central sewer plant with a decentralized system.

Address the sustainability of exponential growth of the community. It is noted in the Orange County, New York Final Draft Water Master Plan, Proposed Orange County Comprehensive Plan Amendment, August 2010 that the Village of Kiryas Joel water demand will exceed its supply in 2018.

**INTERESTED AGENCIES:** The NYSDOT should be included as an interested agency as many State Highway intersections and roadways should be investigated for traffic impacts and possible mitigation which would be directly reviewed and permitted by the NYSDOT. Similarly many County Highways and intersections may be impacted requiring County DPW review and permitting to facilitate this growth.

The department of health (County and State) should be included in the review of the documents as the health of a large, rapidly expanding population is being considered.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this document.