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**To Whom It May Concern:**

On March 3, 2015, I was unable to attend the public hearing on the Kiryas Joel annexation scoping meeting due to extremely adverse weather conditions. I am enraged and appalled that such an important meeting with major ramifications to the character and charm of the rural environment I chose to live in some 20+ years ago was held in that weather, but not surprised. You see, over 20 years, this is what we've come to expect from our not-so-friendly neighbors. What's theirs is theirs; what's not, will soon be.

I grew up in somewhat urban environment in Yonkers, NY, and in 1994, decided to relocate to Monroe. What drew me to this area when I was looking to raise my family were several things. One was the excellent public school system. Another was the wide open spaces. Yet a third was lack of congestion – on the roads, at the stores, and at recreational areas. Finally, we all know too well the tax burdens associated with living in Yonkers or New York City. Changing the zoning on 507 acres from rural to dense housing with very little green space will adversely affect all of these characteristics – not only of Monroe, but of all of Southern Orange County.

Removing 507 acres from the MWCS D tax rolls, with no viable way of returning that income will cause the school to make further cuts to what it can offer, in the face of NY State Tax limits. Already, the number of modified sports teams is drastically reduced. Many course offerings, including Latin and the Expand program in the High School, have gone away. While the school maintains fiscal adherence and continues its mantra of the pursuit of excellence, removing significant acreage from the tax rolls is worrisome. If the 507 acres remains in the district, that would represent a more drastic hardship to the budget. Many, many more school age children that would need busing, books, etc. would now inhabit that space. Our gem of a school system is in great peril if this annexation goes through, which will send shockwaves into Woodbury as well. One doesn't have to look any further than East Ramapo in Rockland County to understand what can happen. We can't let that happen here to our children.

As the Regional Commissioner of the Monroe Woodbury United Soccer Club, it has become an embarrassment for us to play against area soccer clubs – some from the densest areas of New Jersey – that have access to more space and better facilities than we do. It's not for lack of our own monetary

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resources. We have been actively pursuing open land to build a better complex, but have always been outbid – and it's always from this petitioning community. They are buying large tracks of land into surrounding towns and neighborhoods with the intention of building high density housing, yeshivas, mikvahs, and other religious buildings that will be exempt from state and local taxes, while at the same time, filling up the open spaces in the beautiful, highland mountainous landscape we currently enjoy. On any given day, you can venture into the Village of Monroe – where there are beautiful ponds with a walkway around them – or to Round Lake – and you'll notice that even the residents of the current Village of Kiryas Joel also enjoy these open spaces. We must preserve what little open space is left. For ALL to enjoy. We are perilously close to turning away children who want to play sports in our towns because there just aren't enough fields for them to play on. And yet, we are considering a plan that would effectively pave over more open space.

As it stands, roadways that serve Kiryas Joel are nearing capacity – especially at rush hour. Exit off the NYS Thruway at exit 16 during rush hour and watch the jockeying for position that happens to traverse the traffic light at the top of the ramp by the intersection of Route 17, Route 32, and Nininger Road. On a daily basis, you will witness illegal maneuvers from frustrated drivers who do not want to wait for several cycles of the traffic light and instead continue straight through the intersection from the right turn only lane. Oddly enough, most of these drivers are headed to Kiryas Joel. Adding thousands more high density housing units will make this unbearable. This dangerous intersection is adjacent to the Monroe Woodbury High School, Middle School, and Central Valley Elementary school. How many of our young drivers or our students will be put in peril by this ill-advised expansion?

Finally, taxes. When my home is paid off, I will still be paying more per month in taxes than I was paying in rent for a 3 bedroom apartment in Yonkers. It's insane. Why are my taxes so high? I live on a modest 0.3 acre lot. School taxes are a big part of it, yes. But what about the county's burden for those receiving some sort of government assistance? Do we think expanding this community will REDUCE the number of folks receiving aid from the 93% we're at now? I can't afford any more taxes. And yes, I, too, want to look forward to the day when my children would be able to settle nearby and worship at the same church I do, but I'm not asking for unnatural acts to make that happen.

I sympathize with the families in Kiryas Joel who would love nothing more than for their children to be able to live near them. Nothing is preventing that. However, think of my children – who deserve the best schooling, best recreational opportunities, and the continued suburban/rural lifestyle that I bought and paid for. Owners of the land tracts that are up for annexation knew what they were buying – zoned rural. Why can't they abide by those rules that were clearly in place? Why must they impose on my family and our way of life?

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Sincerely Yours,

***Richard A. Molino***

Richard Molino  
Village of Monroe Resident since 1994

3/4/2015