

05.09.2024 NEWS

# Environmental impact concerns raised on Strong's expansion bid

By Nicholas Grasso

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Chris Francescani/Sunset Beach Films photo

On Monday, the Southold Town Planning Board formally accepted its commissioned review of potential environmental impacts from the proposed Strong's Yacht Center expansion, which raises significant concerns about the project's feasibility. The Final Environmental Impact Statement from New York City-based consultant Hardesty & Hanover LLP described many of the findings and methodologies used in the original draft review as "deficient," "insufficient" and "flawed."

Strong's submitted a proposal in 2018 to construct two heated buildings for indoor boat storage — 52,000 square feet and 49,000 square feet — at its facility on Mill Road in Mattituck, a 32.96-acre parcel zoned Marine II and R-80, zones that permit marine uses and low-density residential development.

Strong's retained Bohemia-based P.W. Grosser Inc. and an array of technical consultants to complete a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposal, which, among other things, outlined construction plans and addressed environmental and quality of life concerns. That report was initially submitted in December 2021, then revised and resubmitted in November 2022.

The proposed new buildings could house more than 80 yachts averaging 60 feet in length, with some stretching to 86 feet. Jeff Strong, proprietor of the family-owned business, said the expansion will satisfy demand among large craft owners in need of a climate-controlled space to store boats and protect their electrical systems.

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environmental impacts related to the Strongs proposal. It also addresses more than 1,800 comments the board received from the public regarding the initial environmental review, including those made at a [series of hearings held](#) in May and June 2023 and others submitted in writing.

The 58-page FEIS, along with a pair of appendices that Hardesty & Hanover submitted to the town, are available for public review on the [Southold Town website](#).

“There appear to be several major deficiencies in the methodology presented for the ecological impacts analysis conducted in the [draft review] that would suggest that the impacts associated with the project would be more significant than they are presented,” the FEIS states. Among numerous concerns, the report notes that the DEIS does not address potential impacts to the bald eagle population, which New York State categorizes as threatened, or to a slew of other “special concern” birds, including the peregrine falcon, the nighthawk, the common loon, the horned lark and the osprey. Among other species the FEIS deemed as “not sufficiently included” in the original analysis are the piping plover, the eastern box turtle and the northern long-eared bat, which the United States Fish and Wildlife Service classified as endangered November 2022.

In addition, the FEIS notes that “there is no substantial discussion of how the noise levels would impact local wildlife.”

The proposed excavation and removal of 135,000 cubic yards of debris — predominantly sand — from the project site has also raised significant concerns among residents and officials in both Southold and [Riverhead](#), as the hauling trucks would traverse Sound Avenue, Northville Turnpike and County Road 58, and the FEIS also calls these impacts into question. “There are inherent flaws in the way the number of construction trips have been estimated and disclosed,” the document states, adding that the heavy truck traffic could negatively affect “the structure of the local roadways and bridges, safety for other vehicles on the road, traffic congestion, noise and vibrations, pollution levels and quality of life of the community.”

The Planning Board was not required to hold any public hearing before accepting the final report Monday evening. Just before the members cast their votes, however, Charles Cuddy, the attorney representing Strong’s Yacht Center, approached a podium in the Town Hall meeting room and asked if he “may have at least a

“It is not appropriate to make these comments at this time,” Mr. Squicciarini said.

“All you’re doing is looking at the DEIS,” Mr. Cuddy interjected. “The applicant has never had a chance to comment on the public comments.”

Mr. Cuddy’s remarks were not officially recognized. “I’ve been advised that we have followed procedure correctly,” Planning Board chair James Rich III said.

The Planning Board must now submit the FEIS to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Suffolk County Planning Commission, and the latter will vote to approve or deny Strong’s proposal. Regardless of how the commission votes, the five-member Planning Board has the authority to overrule the its decision with a majority-plus-one vote. The commission’s next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 5; there is currently no agenda available for that meeting.

The Planning Board is not required to hold a public hearing on the FEIS but comments may be submitted in writing.

Following the county’s decision, the Planning Board will issue its final findings statement and make a final decision on the Strong’s site plan application.

“We expect this all to be completed in the next couple of months,” Mr. Rich said.

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Nicholas Grasso joined Times Review Media Group in January 2023 as a staff reporter who covers local entertainment, government and businesses. He graduated Stony Brook University School of Communication and Journalism in 2021. 

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#### TAGS

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