Amherst Bee

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Iskalo Development reveals adaptive reuse plan at special meeting

BY KATE MOCKLER, REPORTER

Iskalo Development Corporation unveiled its plan for the adaptive reuse of the Williamsville Water Mill complex Monday evening, at a special meeting held at Village Hall.

Iskalo's executive vice president, David Chiazza, gave a 45-minute PowerPoint presentation, introducing the firm, explaining Iskalo's interest in the project, and describing its plan and the immediate next steps.

The goal is to create a regional destination within the village. Chiazza noted that Iskalo owns several properties along the Main Street business corridor, and it sees the mill project as something that would enhance the village and help drive traffic to its current tenants.

Its preliminary plan calls for the relocation of the white house, also known as the Zent house. Built in its place would be a two-story building roughly perpendicular to Spring Street with boutique retail spaces of about 1,000 square feet on the ground floor, and hotel space on the second floor.

A rendering of the mill complex proposed by Iskalo Development was released Monday. Plans call for the complex to be anchored by a restaurant and feature boutique retail and hospitality spaces. The rendering is designed to show the massing of buildings, and the complex may look different when constructed.

The northern end of the parcel would feature an addition that extends down the escarpment and would be accessible from Glen Park. The new addition would have an elevator to allow for handicapped access. Visitors to the complex could enter the addition from either the park, or from Spring Street. The entire plan will cost nearly $8 million to execute.

The anchor tenant of the mill would be a sit-down restaurant located in the addition. Iskalo is in talks with a locally owned restaurant that has expressed strong interest, but was unable to reveal the name of the restaurant at this stage.

"The image of their brand is very synonymous with the mill," said Chiazza.

Parking was a key topic of discussion during the 45-minute presentation. Chiazza stated that the plan would require about 200 parking spaces. They found that building a ramp would not be feasible. They are instead hoping to use existing parking along Spring, Rock and Glen streets, and also some of the lots currently used for Glen Park.

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They intend to request that the village make physical improvements to the roads to allow for more spaces, and to set time limits on the parking. Iskalo has also been in talks with neighboring businesses about shared parking arrangements.

Chiazza stressed that all of these plans are preliminary and subject to much review from the Village of Williamsville and the Town of Amherst. Plans also must be reviewed by the New York State Historic Preservation Office, which holds a covenant on the entire parcel. Iskalo also intends to work with the Amherst Industrial Development Agency and pursue various other tax credits. Chiazza expects that it will be between 12 to 18 months before things are finalized and it is ready to begin construction.

The firm took questions from the public after its presentation, some of which were requests for clarification. Doug Richardson, parking enforcement officer in the village, raised concerns about the parking scheme, pointing out that it would displace many office workers who use the 24-hour parking in the vicinity of the Mill. Several speakers were concerned about the seeming intrusion into Glen Park.

Mayor Brian Kulpa encouraged the public dialogue to continue, and requested that anyone with comments or questions direct them to him so that they may become part of the public record. Anyone wishing to do so can call Village Hall at 632-4120.

A view of the proposed Mill complex from Glen Park. The addition at the north end of the property will house the "anchor tenant," a locally owned restaurant that has not been publicly named.