



## NORTH GREENBUSH NOTES

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### The Great Chip Fab. Controversy

Current newspaper headlines report the political battles over funding for computer fabrication facilities in New York. Such issues are reminiscent of the 1998-99 controversy over placement of a Chip Fab. Plant in North Greenbush.

In May 1998, newspapers featured stories concerning a Chip Fab. factory to be located on a 190 acre site at the Rensselaer Technology Park. The micro chips produced there would be used in computers, appliances, automobiles and traffic lights for example. The plant was projected to hire 1,500 workers in high paying jobs.

The Town Board prepared a generic environmental impact statement (GEIS) which they hoped would make the site "shovel ready" and thus speed up the construction project. At the same time, the Board passed a measure to increase the amount of water purchased from Troy to supply the needs of the Chip Fab. Plant and also service near by town roads including Bloomingrove Drive, Winter St. Extension and Williams Road.

Almost immediately when public hearings were held, town residents divided into “pro” and “con” groups. Many people feared that accidents at the plant might release hazardous chemicals into the air and water. It was noted that environmental mishaps could endanger students at the nearby Bell Top School. Others foresaw massive traffic jams on our roads. “Do we want a Wolf Road in North Greenbush?”

Those in favor of the project pointed to the creation of at least 1,500 jobs and significant tax revenue for the town. Also, it would bring in other business including spin-off technology firms. It was made known that county and state leaders including Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno and Rensselaer County Executive Henry Zwack strongly supported the project.

Ultimately it came down to a vote by the five member town board at the October 15 town meeting. Two members;-Town Supervisor Roy Wright and Councilman Jim Flanigan supported the project and two opposed-Al Spain and Dennis Nagengast. The deciding vote was cast by William O’Neil who, at the October 15 meeting voted no ,which effectively suspended the review process. Al Spain noted that the proposal was inconsistent with the original zoning standards for the Tech Park which called for only light industry. His biggest concern was that without a chip manufacturer and specific proposal, it was impossible to evaluate a chip fab concept.

Even with the Town Board’s negative vote, chip fab. supporters hoped the

November local election might revive the project. The results were mixed: Al Spain and Dennis Nagengast were re-elected but Jim Flanigan was elected the new supervisor. Could this suggest the Chip Fab. controversy might have a new life?

On December 12, 1999, RPI withdrew the Tech Park from being a possible site for the proposed facility. Their board said they wanted to put aside the discussion and work to advance the economic development agenda somewhere else in the region.

Looking back at the events of 25 years ago, were the correct decisions made? On the one hand, the town has incurred tremendous growth and the resultant traffic jams, new housing development and probably increased environmental problems anyway. On the other hand, the chips industry, while not coming to North Greenbush can be found in the Capital District (Nano Tech complex in Albany and Malta).

So was the Town right in "letting the chips fall where they may"?

