



About 200 residents packed Grand Island Town Hall to hear plans for a Love's Travel Stop and Country store.

## 200 say no to a truck stop on Grand Island, without saying a word

By [Nancy A. Fischer](#) | Published 10:24 a.m. February 13, 2018 | Updated 2 hours ago

The company behind a plan to build a truck stop on Grand Island wants residents and officials to focus on the \$1.5 million in sales tax revenue and 65 full-time jobs it could generate. But the number that really stood out at a meeting Monday was 200: the number of people who turned out to silently oppose the plan. Even without saying a word, it was clear the crowd in Town Hall came to express dislike for a Love Travel Stop and Country Store on the north side of Whitehaven Road, just west of the I-190.

Planning Board Chairman David Bruno told the residents they would not be able to comment during the informal concept discussion, but residents wore their sentiments, displaying “No Love Travel Stop” buttons on their lapels or holding up handwritten signs of protest. More than 400 have signed an online petition protesting the truck stop.

David Reilly and Nicole Gerber of the Citizen Coalition for Wildlife and Environment handed out the pins as well as information sheets prior to the meeting. “We are looking for ways to expand green space in the town and this is completely inconsistent,” Reilly said. He said the coalition also was looking at a nature center in the area.

He issued a handout noting, “(Love's) is not here to help our community or to bring visitors to the Island ... in fact, Grand Island businesses will suffer because drivers will never visit the town center.”



Grand Island residents Jean and Kim James Yarwood wore buttons in protest of a Love's truck stop.

David Everett, an Albany attorney who serves as counsel for Love's, told the Planning Board that the economic impact would be \$1.3 million to \$1.5 million per year in sales tax revenue plus another \$2 million in construction materials. He said it would create 40 to 65 full-time jobs.

Rick Schuffield, Love's vice president of real estate development, came from Oklahoma City to speak to the board about the concept. He said Love's has been in operation since 1964 and has 450 locations in 41 states. He said that even though the concept is created for trucks, there usually are two to three times more cars than trucks.

Jean and Kim James Yarwood, said prior to the meeting that they were also there in opposition, noting they would be able to hear the truck traffic from their house, nearly 2 miles away. Resident Jerry Kutis said everyone will have this problem, "Even though it's called Grand Island, everything is small."

The lack of sewer lines on the property has been an issue; concerns were raised that a new state welcome center nearby at Alvin and Whitehaven roads could put in sewers that the truck stop also would be able to utilize. But Town Supervisor Nathan McMurray told the Town Board last week that is incorrect and the state plans to build septic tanks for the welcome center. He and other Town Board members have spoke out against the truck stop.

Schuffield said after the Planning Board presentation that there "may be some synergy with the state" on this project, which could mean bringing sewer lines to both properties. "The state wouldn't have to spend as much money and they would get the benefit on their end – and we would benefit as well," said Schuffield. He admitted to the board that a septic system would not be their preference, although it would be possible.

He said the impact would be minimal on area traffic because drivers would get off the Thruway and then back on again. "Truckers have to have a place to rest, stop and eat," said Schuffield. "I understand the 'Not in My City' sentiment, but it's an allowed use by zoning, located in an industrial area, and to me that makes a lot of sense." Schuffield told the Planning Board that the company believes its business will be a complement to the welcome center – which the state has announced will be completed in August.

Reilly said after the presentation that Love's is glossing over the impact to the community and its representative do not understand the character of the Island. "There's no agreement by any Town Board members to put sewers on the other side of the Thruway because what you would end up with is creep, all sorts of business in that area," said Reilly. "We have to get the board to realize that under no circumstances do we want sewers on that side."