

Grand Island Town Board bans truck stops with resident support

By [Harold McNeil](#) and [Nancy A. Fischer](#) |

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There won't be a new truck stop on Grand Island if the Town Board has anything to say about it. Town Board members Friday did an end-run around plans for such a facility even being introduced on Grand Island by amending the town's zoning code to ban them from being built anywhere on the island. The action would effectively thwart plans for a Love's Travel Stops and Convenience Store travel plaza proposed for construction just off the Whitehaven Road exit of the I-190 North. The measure was approved unanimously.

"So what we're doing is helping clarify the law, saying that type of structure is not specifically permitted or zoned for under town law," Grand Island Supervisor Nathan McMurray said after the vote during a Town Board work session Friday.

The Town Board's action will now be referred to both the town's Planning Board and Erie County. "Every time you do a new law, you've got to give it to Erie County for review, and they can give comment on it if they think the law is inappropriate or something," McMurray said, after the meeting. McMurray said he had no concern that the town might be exposing itself to potential litigation in regard to the proposed Love's. "It's not been introduced, really," he said Friday of the project.

"There's no permits. There's no groundbreaking," McMurray said. "There's nothing done. In fact, such a structure, there is no way that it could be built because there is no zoning that would allow it. So they would have to get special permits and special permissions to make it anyway."

On Monday, at a Planning Board meeting, Love's officials talked about the proposal. Some 200 people attended and wore buttons opposing the plan by Love's at the session which did not allow public comment. On Friday, there was no public comment period during the Town Board work session, either. However, about a dozen residents were present to witness the Town Board take action on banning truck stops in the town.

Andrea Mondich lives two doors away from the site of the proposed project. After the meeting, Mondich raised concerns about environmental issues that may be connected to the project. "If there were ever a fuel leak, we're one of the largest freshwater islands and it would totally pollute all water up and downstream from us," she said. "A bunch of the island residents are trying to keep the island green and keep more open green space for future generations," Mondich said.

Rose Bugman, of Whitehaven Road, also lives near the proposed site. Idling trucks would pose an immediate health risk for anybody living in the vicinity, she said. "They're idling, these trucks, spewing carcinogenic pollutants and micro particulates into the atmosphere. Although New York State law prohibits the idling of diesel trucks for more than five minutes, law enforcement is random, at best, which we all know," Bugman said. Such a project, she added, would be a threat to the way of life that residents now enjoy on Grand Island. "It's a small island and people feel we're elite here, but are actually working class people who have worked for our homes," Bugman said.

Attempts Friday evening to reach company officials from Love's Travel Stops were unsuccessful. However, Rick Shuffield, vice president of real estate development for the company, who attended the Planning Board meeting Monday, said Love's operates 450 locations, as previously reported by The Buffalo News.

"Truckers have to have a place to rest, stop and eat," Shuffield said Monday.