

TOWN OF TAGHKANIC
ZONING COMMISSION MEETING
April 6, 2015

Meeting called to order at 6:35 by Joyce Thompson.

Members present: Co-Chairs Joyce Thompson and Linda Swartz; Members Kathy Bainer, Al Huehnel, Moisha Blechman, Donn Critchell and John Roberts

Excused: Dennis Callahan, Elizabeth O'Donnell

Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve Minutes of March 28, 2015 made by Kathy Bainer and seconded by Moisha Blechman
Ayes: 4 (Bainer, Blechman, Huehnel, Critchell) Nays: 0 Abstained: 1 (John Roberts)
- Motion to approve Minutes of March 16, 2015 made by Kathy Bainer and seconded by Al Huehnel
Ayes: 4 (Bainer, Huehnel, Blechman, Roberts) Nays: 0 Abstained: 1 (Donn Critchell)

Training for 2015:

No update. Joyce will contact Patrice Perry at the County.

REVIEW OF ARTICLE 60, SUPPLEMENTARY REGULATIONS:

Section D. Sign Regulations:

Linda feels that some of the sign definitions are regulatory in nature (setback, sign area, sign height) and might be placed into a chart instead.

Section F. Conservation Subdivisions:

General Overview:

The purpose of this section is to identify the benefits of conservation subdivisions. Ted mentioned a "cost of community services" study that found that it is often more cost-effective for a municipality to purchase development rights rather than to provide services (road maintenance, fire protection, etc.). Joyce noted some redundancies throughout the regulations that should be addressed to shorten the document.

Al feels that these regulations make it too costly for anyone to pursue a major subdivision approval. Ted pointed out that conservation subdivisions are less expensive overall for developers (clustering homes requires less engineering, less grading, less site work, and less road building) but they boost real estate values. Ted explained that the cost and tax burden of the undeveloped land (greenspace) that goes with the conservation subdivision can be divided among the property owners by deed or as a single large parcel for which each property owner pays a portion and shares essentially as private parkland. Al wondered if people want larger, more private lots or do they want to be clustered and under the control of homeowners association?

Kathy said that a man recently came before the PB for approval of a minor subdivision for four parcels, but the property doesn't have enough frontage. The Planning Board might advise him that a conservation subdivision could allow for five parcels and would resolve the issue of frontage. NYS Town Law sets the maximum number of houses in any given zoning district to the number that could legally be built without clustering; for instance a 100-acre parcel in a 5-acre zoning district cannot have more than 20 homes whether those 20 houses are built on 5-acre parcels utilizing the entire 100 acres or they are built on 3-acre lots with the remaining 40 acres being greenspace. Clustering does not necessarily mean the lots are tiny and the houses are built close together. So as not to create this image in people's minds, we need to always call these "conservation subdivisions".

It is recognized that growth and development is on its way to Columbia County. Taghkanic is a town that has a certain character to it, and we need to set up regulations that allows for that eventuality while limiting the impacts and conserving our natural resources. There is value to protecting the eco-systems. Conservation easements are better than deed restrictions for the purpose of protecting land.

Al feels that this regulation as written puts too much decision-making power in the hands of the Planning Board. Landowners should not be forced into developing their property as a conservation subdivision if there is no demand for that type of development; property owners must be allowed to have the option of developing their property to its highest and best use. Both John and Donn agree with Al and feel that the Planning Board should encourage conservation subdivision, but it should not be mandated.

Line-by-line Discussion:

1. **Intent and Purposes:** the Intent needs to be clear to protect town in the event of litigation. The Purpose is to provide an approach to subdivision design that is beneficial to the town and people who purchase homes in the subdivision as well as to provide guidance to the Planning Board.
2. **Authorization:** Okay as is.
3. **Pre-Application Procedure:** Remove language about land trusts. Change last sentence of lead paragraph to read (in part) as follows: "The Planning Board may recommend a conservation subdivision where it finds any one of the following elements present . . ." Ted suggested that we consider setting threshold or a maximum number of houses before conservation subdivision is a requirement (10 or more?). Kathy pointed out the importance of the Planning Board having more control when dealing with a big developer. This is an opportunity to explore the options and put everyone on the same page about what is important to the town and things that need to be considered by the developer.

A motion was made by Kathy that 10 or more lots be set as the threshold for requiring a conservation subdivision. The motion was seconded by Moisha.

Ayes: 5 (Bainer, Blechman, Critchell, Huehnel, Roberts) **Nays:** 0 **Abstained:** 0

Ted will re-write this section to include the threshold as approved.

NOTE: As we finish our review of each section, we will send it along to the Planning Board for their review and comment.

New Business:

From the Commission:

- ✓ Linda noted a recent article by Peter Paden in the Register Star about culverts and the recent public presentation at the Taghkanic Fire House.
- ✓ As a follow-up to our discussion at the last ZC Meeting regarding Off-Street Parking, Donn had a few photos of local homes with garages.

From the Public: None

Next Meeting:

Monday, April 20, 2015 beginning at 6:30 at the Town Hall. Ted will walk us through the Pre-Application Process.

Assignment: Read through Article 60 again, paying attention to redundancies which can be eliminated and think of ways to trim this document.

Motion to adjourn: Donn Critchell

Seconded by: Moisha Blechman

Ayes: 5 (Critchell, Blechman, Bainer, Huehnel, Roberts) **Nays:** 0 **Abstained:** 0

Meeting adjourned 8:43 p.m.

Public in attendance: None

Prepared by: Linda Swartz