

TOWN OF TAGHKANIC
ZONING COMMISSION MEETING
May 21, 2018

Members present: Joyce Thompson, Chair; Linda Swartz, Co-Chair and Secretary; Members: Elizabeth O'Donnell, Moisha Blechman, Al Huehnel, John Roberts, Kathy Bainer, Donn Critchell; ZC Consultant Ted Fink

The Meeting was called to order at 5:02 by Joyce Thompson.

Approval of Minutes:

A minor change will be made to the Minutes as requested.

A motion to accept the Minutes as modified was made by Moisha Blechman; seconded by Al Huehnel.

Ayes: 5 (*Blechman, Huehnel, O'Donnell, Bainer, Roberts*) **Nays:** 0 **Abstained:** 1 (*Critchell*)

Rural Character Discussion continues:

What are the guiding factors for rural character? Moisha feels that rural character is based on the characteristics of the land: fields, forests, lakes, ponds, streams, wildlife. Farms, silos, and churches are visual qualities of rural character. The people who live in rural areas are supplemental to the true rural character. Al pointed out that rural character is modified by people. Ted called this "cultural landscape". The Comprehensive Plan sets out certain aspects of rural character in the context of land use; that's what zoning is all about. Ted read from the Comp Plan Vision Statement which says, in part, "to maintain and enhance traditional rural character including pastoral farm fields, natural resources, and active community life, given the changing development and demographic patterns in the region." It goes on to list goals, the first of which is Rural Character, Open Space and the Environment. The Zoning Code will also aim to preserve or maintain the character of the area. Susan Raymond (public audience) said that churches are closing, farms are selling off land, silos and barns are falling down, so the concept of rural character no longer exists. We understand that the economics of the area will bring about change.

Elizabeth wonders if each use supports "rural character" and suggested that the ZC might need to reconsider some uses like conference centers and big development. She referred to a handout the ZC received from the Conservancy News that shows a map of Columbia County and says that "these areas are places where conservation is most likely to succeed over centuries." A large part of the referenced area lies within Taghkanic's borders.

So the definition of rural character can be found in the Comp Plan. The zoning code will provide guidelines for development so that when there is pressure to develop, decisions can be based on density of population and scale of operation. Jeff Tallackson (public audience) said that this discussion would be irrelevant if people weren't here. Rural character can't mean just preserving what was there 75 years ago. Joyce agreed, saying you can't freeze it in time. But we can try to maintain and enhance what is here now and that brings us to the kinds of things we have been talking about: re-purposing existing buildings. Susan Raymond asked "What is re-purposing? Could a person buy an old farm and turn it into a business?" Ted said that "re-purposing is "adaptive re-use", and that each use must comply with specific regulations in the code. Elizabeth recommends that the code clearly state that a structure must be repurposed in conformance with all other sections of the zoning code.

Nature of farms will change; farming operations may get bigger farms and we expect to see more niche farms. Farming itself is changing. The ZC needs to think about maintaining and enhancing; density and land use needs to fit into those two words. Richard told the ZC that NYS Farm Bureau is preparing the agricultural community to be growing more of our own crops due to the drought in California. Ted said that the state is divided into regions and each region has its own economic development plan, and money is doled out according to those plans. It is a complex application process, with applications for this round due in July. There is a separate grant program for farms.

Kathy referred to the material from the CLC and said that the wildlife corridor and habitat for wild animals, as well as water, must be preserved. Landscape must be the dominant feature to ensure that quality of life is preserved. Joyce said that has been addressed to some extent through conservation design. We need to ensure appropriate re-purposing of existing structures. Elizabeth said that the Zoning Code should not be Design Standards; we need to keep the basics in the forefront of our minds as we work to the end. Our goal is to create standards that will maintain and enhance dominant natural features, as well as support appropriate repurposing of existing structures.

The ZC needs to check Area and Bulk Regulations (Article 50) to be sure that the setbacks, etc. are appropriate for each use and we need to check the definitions. Apply these so that they support rural character.

Elizabeth said that she will take a couple of examples and do some density tests; draw a map and put in a house, an accessory building and see what works. She feels she will have this ready for the next ZC meeting (June 4). Can an accessory structure be on an undersized lot? John pointed out that a 6 acre lot would be undersized in a 7-acre district, but it's still a big property. Elizabeth thought there could be graduated building sizes in this situation. This goes along with what the ZC has been thinking: Increase density where there is existing density and not in the larger districts.

Joyce will ask CLC if they have an enlarged map specifically of Taghkanic showing the continuous forest area shown on a map of Columbia County in the Conservancy News handout. Kathy said that it is important for everyone to understand how much of the town is forested.

ZC members were assigned sections of Article 40 (Use Table) and asked to look for uses that might need a larger parcel size than what is required in that district. Get it done before the end of the week while it is fresh in your mind. Send your completed work to Joyce and she will send it out to everyone on the ZC, and then we can go through it together at the next meeting. Consider:

- Is a minimum parcel size needed? Is the requirement already in the regulations?
- If Site Plan Approval isn't already required, should it be?
- What is recommended?

Assignments:

- Al: Uses 1-10 (see Minutes of April 2 Meeting for Ryan's comments on Agriculture)
- John: 11-20 (see Minutes of April 2 Meeting for Ryan's comments on Agriculture)
- Donn: 21-30
- Elizabeth: 31-40
- Kathy: 41-50
- Moisha: 51-60
- Joyce: 61-72

Article 10 Zoning Scope and Purposes:

The ZC reviewed Version 7 of Article 10 and compared it to the revisions that were suggested by Moisha. Discussion resulted in the following modifications to Version 7: (Changes show in italics and underlined)

- 10-C. Purposes. Lead paragraph: *This Zoning Law is enacted pursuant to the Town Law of the State of New York, Chapter 62 of the Consolidated Laws, Section 16, and Sections 2 and 3 of the Municipal Home Rule Law, to maintain and enhance rural character, to protect and promote public health safety, comfort, convenience, economy, aesthetics and general welfare and for the following additional purposes:*
- 1. No changes
- 2. To maintain and enhance the character, beauty, and ecological sustainability of the natural resources in the Town, including air quality woodlands, water and soils.
- 3. (NEW) To recognize the role of Climate Change and its impact on Taghkanic's natural resources and infrastructure.
- 4. Will be what had been the language in #3 Version 7, Article 10
- Number 4 as it appeared in Version 7 of Article 10 is eliminated.
- 5. As it is in Version 7
- 6. As it is in Version 7
- 7. To maintain the integrity, stability and beauty of the community in order to conserve and enhance the value of property.
- 8. thru 13. As it is in Version 7. (Be sure to define "human scale" as it appears in 12.)
- 14. To promote roads that are Complete Streets to be consistent with the scenic and rural values expressed in the Town Comprehensive Plan.
- 15. As it is in Version 7.

Ted will make the recommended changes.

Comments:

From the Public: None

From the Commission: None

Next Meeting:

The next ZC meeting is scheduled for June 4 beginning at 5:00.

Motion to adjourn: Al Huehnel

Seconded by: Donn Critchell

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

* Elizabeth O'Donnell left the meeting prior to adjournment (7:10).

Public Audience: Susan Raymond, Jeff Tallackson

Minutes Prepared by: Linda Swartz