

TOWN OF TAGHKANIC
ZONING COMMISSION MEETING
May 7, 2018

Members present: Joyce Thompson, Chair; Linda Swartz, Co-Chair and Secretary; Members: Elizabeth O'Donnell (via teleconference), Moisha Blechman, Donn Critchell, Al Huehnel, John Roberts, Kathy Bainer.

Excused: Donn Critchell, ZC Consultant Ted Fink

The Meeting was called to order at 5:11 by Joyce Thompson.

Approval of Minutes:

Elizabeth asked that several clarifying changes be made to the Minutes of April 30, 2018. Those changes will be made. A motion to accept the Minutes as amended was made by Moisha Blechman; seconded by Elizabeth O'Donnell.

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

Look at districts following issues raised by "readers"

Ted sent the report that his student is finishing up the work for us, which includes a proposed zoning map based on the zoning map that we are currently working on as a committee. The idea is that this map could be used for presentation purposes; it could be the official zoning map, it can be easily updated and made into a GIS file. Ted expects to have that work for our May 21 meeting.

Joyce reports that the Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC) will be able to provide us with a map of the lands in Taghkanic which are currently under conservancy, as well as some version of lands that they suggest be considered for conservation. She expects to have the information in time for the May 21 meeting. Joyce handed out copies of a table showing the mean and median household incomes and a sheet with two bar graphs showing income levels for the Town of Taghkanic and for the county as a whole for the period 2012 – 2016. These charts reveal that while Taghkanic is home to some wealthy people, the median household income in Taghkanic is \$55,625. Linda handed out a sheet of information about Taghkanic which includes its history, geography, demographics, and historical population levels.

At the April 30 meeting, we talked about Ted's working Paper on Rural Character. Joyce said that the ZC's job now is to create a definition of rural character that will serve as the basis for our final decisions on density and land use. Discussion touched on:

- Preserving land and rural density.
- Moisha suggested that we start out by describing Taghkanic as it is now and how people here live; it is not a neighbor-to-neighbor community. Rural character is geography and woods.
- Kathy pointed out that there are pockets of small, close-together groups. Pumpkin Hollow is one example; it's a community of close-together homes and people who know each other.
- Al said that many of the houses near him are weekenders.
- John said that Taghkanic was more of a community many years ago; people knew each other and went to church together. But this is a different time; people are too busy.
- Kathy said that farmers used to share equipment and work together towards the success of each farm and in support of the families. This was how they lived because this was what was needed then.
- Joyce noted that we have no grocery or churches or gathering places in town which create a "neighborhood feeling". She suggested that the ZC think a little more about what we would like to see in the MU district that will support people who live here (many stores now offer home delivery; could have a distribution center). Draft code has attempted to address the needs of residents with home-based business and options for accessory housing; need to provide conditions under which people can find opportunities.
- Balance the protection of natural resources with opportunities for new income.
- Elizabeth feels that protection of agriculture and forested areas is at odds with providing accessory housing. Code right now is out of balance, but it leans towards accessory housing.
- ZC will consider whether or not there is room for all (ag, forests, and housing).

ZC had a lengthy discussion about accessory dwellings. It is not clear where they will be permitted and how they will be regulated. Article 50, Bulk Regulations, says that in the R2 district, there can be no more than one dwelling unit on a two acre parcel; a three-acre parcel in the R3 district can have no more than one dwelling, and so on.

Building an accessory dwelling on a two or three acre parcel would increase density and could create a cluttered appearance in these small districts and could impact property values. What do we want to do?

- Kathy said that she had thought that new construction of an accessory dwelling in R2 and R3 would be okay, but now she sees the problem with that. She would be satisfied if it could be accomplished by conversion of the principal dwelling or an existing accessory building.
- Elizabeth recommends that the accessory dwelling be permitted only as conversion of the principal dwelling in the R2 and R3 districts so as not to change the appearance of the neighborhood.
- John said that the idea of the accessory dwelling is so that people who don't have enough money to buy a house can find affordable living.
- The Bulk Regs and rest of the code don't match and will need to be reworked.
- R2 and R3 in existing structures? One accessory dwelling unless the parcel is at least double the minimum lot size for that zoning district?
- Elizabeth said that people might see this as an Airbnb rule: every house could become an Airbnb. Code would need language to prohibit short-term rental unless it is registered as a Bed & Breakfast. (Will also need to define "Short-term Rental").
- Kathy noted that people who really need affordable housing are people who don't have much money. The existing principal dwelling is probably not large enough to accommodate an accessory dwelling. In this situation, they would have to get a variance or site plan or special use permit for accessory dwelling not in the principal dwelling. Kathy said that we need to remember that there are people in lower economic groups that this code needs to consider.
- What about an accessory dwelling on an undersized lot if, say it is a 5 acre parcel in an R7 district? Ask Ted.

The ZC decision pending at this time is to limit an accessory structure in R2 and R3 districts to conversion of the existing principal dwelling unit or in an existing accessory structure unless there is at least double the required minimum acreage for the zoning district. Discussion will continue.

Once we get the maps of conserved land from the CLC, what will we do to protect agricultural land? Kathy said that there are a lot of people in town who might be willing to put their property under conservation if they were approached about the program. Does CLC make this type of outreach? Could we have a presentation to the town? Moisha said that CLC does a great deal of outreach. The zoning code should not put any limit on a person's use of their land; they should do it voluntarily through conservation.

Rural Character - Discussion of Defining Factors:

- Taghkanic supports density, nature, steep slopes and a great deal of forested areas.
- Concerns with doubling density (accessory dwellings) in areas where there are already buildings close to each other (starts looking like suburbia).
- Create pockets of higher density appearance (hamlets).
- Broadband will be a force towards increased population (like electrification).
- Kathy said Taghkanic's rural character provides a sense of safety; a safe community that is commutable (TSP, Thruway, trains, Rip VanWinkle Bridge to the Catskills), with limited noise and light pollution.
- Allow greater density where there is already density. What kind of restrictions need to be applied to control it?
- Al prefers lower density and said that parcels need to be large enough to support a well and septic system. (No town sewer and water district.)
- Farming and private residences in small clusters all over town.
- Pockets of economic activity.

Comments:

From the Public: None

From the Commission: None

Next Meeting:

The next ZC meeting is scheduled for May 21 beginning at 5:00. Finalize Determining Factors of Rural Character, review Moisha's re-write of Article 10 and consider what is necessary to finalize Article 10.

Motion to adjourn: Al Huehnel

Ayes: 4 (Huehnel, Roberts, Blechman, Bainer)*

Seconded by: John Roberts

Nays: 0

Abstained: 0

Meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

**Teleconference connection with Elizabeth O'Donnell was lost prior to adjournment.*

Public Audience: None

Minutes Prepared by: Linda Swartz