

**Town of Ancram  
Zoning Revisions Committee  
18 March 2013**

Members Present: Hugh Clark, Barry Chase, Donna Hoyt, Bonnie Hundt, Don MacLean,  
Jim Miller, Bob Roche, Jane Shannon, Dennis Sigler  
Members Absent: Terry Boyles, Barbara Gaba, Kyle Lougheed, Bob Mayhew  
Others Present: Drew Hingson, Don Hoysradt, Ron Steed

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The committee convened at 7:04 p.m. and approved minutes of the 11 March 2013 meeting.

The Chair summarized three ridgeline protection issues to be resolved at this meeting:

- First, how far from the ridgeline does the ridgeline protection overlay zone extend?
- Second, where to allow the roof/structure?
- Third, how to handle major and minor subdivisions?

Ms. Hundt requested that she be allowed to make a statement for the record. In summary, she commented: Having read all laws from surrounding towns, ridgelines are important features of the landscape and character of rural towns such as Ancram and need to be protected. While Town Board members may decide differently, the ZRC should provide the community and TB its best judgment about the best measures to protect designated ridgelines.

Discussion about the first issue initially centered on questions about whether ridgeline designations are sufficiently precise; whether surveying is necessary to establish the ridgelines; and, if so, whether the Town should pay for surveying. As deliberation turned to whether the RPOD should extend 200', or 250', or 300' from the designated ridgeline, opinions were evenly split among the three options. As most members noted that a decision about subsection 3e (requiring a roof to be at least 5' below the ridgeline, not above the ridgeline, or not above unless fully screened, etc) would influence their opinion about 200', 250', or 300', deliberation shifted to consideration of options 1, 2, 3 and 4, 5, 6.

Ultimately, seven members opted for Option 3, with one member preferring Option 1 and one member preferring Option 2. Option 3 states that "the top of the structure's roof shall not be higher than the designated ridgeline unless the structure is fully screened by existing vegetation when viewed from a publicly accessible location and conditions are placed on the lot to ensure that said vegetation is not removed."

Members commented that key factors in choosing Option 3 are the screening and blending requirements that it contains. As long as such requirements are in place, as they are in 3a-d, the ridgeline would be protected and it would not matter significantly whether the structure was below, not above, or astride the ridgeline. With good screening and blending, regardless of the site, the structure would not stand out against the ridgeline landscape or skyline. Mr. MacLean also pointed out that Option 3 keeps all structures—whether part of a major

subdivision, minor subdivision, or single family house not part of a subdivision—following the same rules. Hence, this is option is the simplest, most consistent, and fairest to all while achieving the protection objective. Mr. Steed also noted that Option 3 helps in situations where putting in driveways and septic systems would be problematic on a steep slope.

Given the decision for Option 3, the committee returned to the extent of the RPOD. After deliberation, ZRC members unanimously decided that “each designated ridgeline plus 300 feet on each side of the ridgeline shall constitute a Ridgeline Protection Overlay District (RPOD).”

Based on these two decisions, the ZRC examined whether the draft incentive for minor subdivisions at subsection 4 is still necessary. Members concluded that, by enabling all structures to be astride the ridgeline if properly screened and blended, the same rules apply to all structures, minor subdivisions are not disadvantaged, the intent of the Comp Plan has been attained, and no incentive for minor subdivisions is necessary. Accordingly, draft subsection 4 could be deleted.

During previous discussion, Mrs. Hoyt and Mr. Hingson noted that “year-round” in subsection 3a may be problematic because deciduous woodlands differ from coniferous, snow differs from greenery, and questioned whether “year-round” is necessary. There was no objection to deletion. Enforcement of screening requirements was another subject of discussion, especially what to do if an individual built an approved structure and then slashed away the vegetation that was key to screening the structure. The Chair will seek advice from Nan.

The final topic for discussion was draft subsection 3h, providing guidance if a designated ridgeline were not forested, but instead consists of open fields or scrub growth. Members approved the first sentence calling for all intents and standards cited in subsections 1 and 3 to be applied to the maximum extent and approved the closing part of the second sentence calling for subsection 3d about blending to be applied, but requested additional options about siting the structure so that it nestles within the lot’s topography as unobtrusively as possible when viewed from publicly accessible locations. Although members expressed some preference for siting structures at or below the ridgeline in these circumstances, it was deemed prudent to consider other measures, including whether to limit the height of a structure above the ridgeline. Mr. Hingson also suggested that cupolas be allowed above the roofline if they maintained a reasonable proportion, such as one-third or less of the structure’s roofline. The Chair will seek optional verbiage from Nan.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.