

**Town of Ancram  
Zoning Revisions Committee  
6 December 2010**

**Members Present:** Hugh Clark, Terry Boyles, Barry Chase, Barbara Gaba, Bonnie Hundt, Kyle Lougheed, Bob Mayhew, Jim Miller, Bob Roche, Jane Shannon, Dennis Sigler

**Members Absent:** Don MacLean

**Others Present:** Nan Stolzenburg, Donna Hoyt

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The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Members approved minutes of the November 15 meeting.

Nan Stolzenburg explained key features of draft Section E, Site Plan Review for Subdivisions. Stressing that the ZRC must ensure major subdivisions are designed to comply with the Comprehensive Plan, she noted that there is a “blurred line” between siting in subdivision review and siting in site plan review. All overlap or coincide in that site plan review for major subdivisions results in conservation subdivision and it may be best to refer applicants to a new section on conservation subdivision, or perhaps to subdivision regulations.

Nan’s draft text is based on a NYS DoS model for conservation subdivisions that has been used successfully by other communities. She explained that the conservation subdivision four-step process is a more thoughtful technique than one often finds. It starts with understanding the physical features of the parcel. Separating analysis into primary conservation areas (the “hard core” things) and secondary conservation areas (features that are “important” to the parcel), the concept identifies up front the features to conserve. Then, the technique identifies the most advantageous house sites—but not property lines. The third step is to identify the most efficient, best way to connect the house sites—the road/transportation network. The last step is to draw lot lines.

She noted that some lots may be bigger than others, and that conservation subdivision does not necessarily mean a clustered subdivision.

Citing paragraph B, she commented that Dimensional Standards are not usually part of either site plan review or subdivision law, but such standards convey the “whole” and would be part of a conservation subdivision section of the zoning law. Referring to paragraph C, Major SPR Process, she noted that there is more “up front” analysis of a parcel, but that information and analysis still are not intended to be excessive.

The sketch plan at paragraph C2 enables reviewers to get to the Site Design Criteria at page 4. Nan opined that other text could go elsewhere as stand-alone elements, but that paragraph E, Site Design Criteria, are the standards one would expect to see in Conservation Subdivision and Major Subdivision text. They are the typical things in conservation subdivision law applied to major subdivisions.

She again underscored that siting the building envelope is the chief concern. The house and driveways are more important than lot lines.

Extensive discussion brought forth questions and thoughts about roadways, the criticality of percolation tests and health, and other subjects. Responding to Mr. Chase's observation that strategy 1.4 of the Comp Plan allows for "a variety of lot sizes as small as ½ acre" whereas draft dimensional standards indicate possibilities for lots of ¼ acre, Ms. Stolzenburg suggested that maintaining the ½ acre standard may cause opportunities for good conservation development to be missed, and also suggested that zoning law could permit parcels less than ½ acre if communal water and septic are available. All agreed that review provisions must take into account a spectrum of situations ranging from a major subdivision caused by the creation of a fifth lot which ends the development potential of a parcel, to a fifth lot that may then be subdivided into many more lots, and on to a truly major subdivision comprising dozens or hundreds of lots. All also agreed with Mr. Mayhew's suggestion that "conservation development" should be changed to "open space conservation development," a "friendlier" term.

Discussion subsequently concentrated on "how to proceed," including whether to incorporate into the site plan review section material that would normally be found in subdivision regulations. The text of an email containing Don MacLean's viewpoints was available to all committee members and evoked discussion.

After deliberation, the committee decided that Ms. Stolzenburg should draft a self-contained law that would contain all features relevant to open space conservation development, which would constitute the substance of major subdivision review. Paragraph E, Site Plan Review for Subdivisions, would contain a reference pointing readers to this new law.

Ms. Stolzenburg will revise the current drafts to reflect this decision, will draft the open space conservation development law, and will draft the minor site plan review text.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.