

Town of Ancram  
Zoning Revisions Committee  
9 December 2013

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

---

The committee convened at 7:00 p.m. and approved minutes of the 8 April 2013 meeting.

Noting that the Town Board had referred to the ZRC Supplemental Regulation H, Ridgeline/ Steep Slope Protection, the Chair summarized key features of that document's history.

Among those features are the 14 Apr 13 proposal (Draft 9 with map 4-15-2013), which had been emailed to the ZRC on 4/14/13 and again on 12/7/13, and the 17 Oct 13 proposal (Draft 14 with map 10-7-2013), which had been emailed to the ZRC on 10/15/13 and again on 12/7/13.

Noting that a public hearing about the 14 April proposal had been held on 16 May, 20 June, and 18 July, the Chair summarized prevalent themes of the public comments about that proposal. Similarly, he also summarized prevalent themes about the October proposal from the 21 November public hearing.

Highly condensed, comments about the April proposal contended that it designated too many ridgelines for protection, that many of those ridgelines were not actually visible from publicly accessible locations, that selection had been too subjective, and that minor developments and 1/2 family residences should be encouraged, but not required, to apply protective standards.

At the opposite extreme, comments about the October proposal contended that it designated too few ridgelines and steep slopes for protection, that selection was too objective, and that requiring standards to be applied only within major subdivisions is a faulty concept because most construction in Ancram has been and is likely to be in minor subdivisions and 1/2 family residences. The October proposal also prompted comments that it doesn't protect the view-shed of residences on high terrain.

The Chair also reminded committee members about guidance on scenic view, ridgeline, and steep slope protection in the Comprehensive Plan Vision, Goals 1 and 2, and Detailed Strategies 2.10 and 2.11.

Given the extensive variance between reaction to the April and October proposals, the Town Board has asked the ZRC to apply its best judgment and accomplish these tasks:

- \*Determine which (if any) ridgelines/steep slopes merit protection.
- \*Determine how to honor Comp Plan guidance that requirements will be mandatory for major subdivisions and encouraged/voluntary for minor subdivisions.

When referring these tasks to the ZRC, the Town Board also gave several points of guidance:

\*The guidelines in Subsections H2 (Application) and in H3 (Development Standards) about "how to" protect are OK.

\*The debate is about which ridgelines/steep slope/parcels the guidelines should apply to and whether the designated ridgelines/steep slope/parcels actually are visible.

\*Find common ground.

- \*Minimize the tendency to rely on previously established (entrenched) positions.
- \*Consider all options, including no designated ridgelines/steep slope map or parcels so the Planning Board focuses on highly visible sites as they are presented for approval.
- \*Get the Planning Board involved.

A flurry of ZRC member commentary about the background, charge, and guidance from the Town Board included these themes:

“What’s the use” of the ZRC devoting time and thought to these issues? The Town Board already rejected the time, study, and recommendations that the diverse ZRC has already provided; the Town Board is itself unwilling to flex about the key issue of mandatory for majors and voluntary for minors and 1/2 family homes?

The ZRC should get the Town Board to provide or approve criteria against which any recommendation will be judged.

Turning to the focus of this meeting, members discussed how to organize and approach the tasks given by the Town Board: Potential approaches included: (1) ZRC and PB meet separately; deliberate separately; reach conclusions separately; and resolve discrepancies in joint session, or ZRC resolves; (2) Break ZRC into 3-4 work groups; each group discusses, reaches conclusions, and presents to full ZRC, which accepts points of commonality, and debates and decides among points of difference; (3) Break ZRC into 3-4 work groups, each with 1-2 PB members; proceed as above; and other options.

Following extensive discussion, the ZRC unanimously opted to meet, as it normally does, as a single committee, to provide minutes of all meetings to the PB for their consideration and suggestions, to provide its draft recommendations to the PB for review and comment, and to continue conducting open meetings, as it always has, where PB members or others may offer comment when appropriate.

Ensuing brief discussion included the point that the PB’s principal interest is “how it works,” i.e. ensuring that the supplemental regulation clearly indicates what’s designated for protection, or the criteria for designating, and what protective requirements are to be applied or not applied. Discussion also touched upon the value of the ZRC determining the criteria that its recommendations ought to meet, such as reflecting the intent of the Comp Plan, and/or visibility from publicly accessible locations. As “homework,” members agreed to think about what such criteria ought to be.

Members understand the need to reach recommendations expeditiously (target: late January). To build and maintain momentum while also accommodating a schedule conflict, the ZRC will next meet on Tuesday, 17 December. (Note: this Tuesday meeting is an aberration; meetings normally will continue to be on Monday evening.)

Following an orientation on maps and info available, the meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.