

Town of Amenia  
Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee  
April 25, 2005

Present: Harry Clark, Chairman, Mark Doyle, Bill Flood, Dolores Holland, Tony Robustelli.  
George Fenn, Chairman, Planning Board.

The meeting continued the discussion of Joel Russell's draft of the Zoning Laws.

M. Doyle reported on a meeting conducted by Michael Klemens, Director of the Metropolitan Conservation Association, for the purpose of smart planning and getting "all the players, Towns, Developers, etc. into the tent". He stresses biodiversity, which he believes to be of vital importance as 75% of all plant and animal species are declining in numbers. The key objective, when planning land-use and subdivisions, is not to fragment critical habitat areas.

M. Doyle then presented M. Klemens's definition of Overlay Districts, which the Committee found needs simplifying.

Square footage vs. Acre nomenclature was discussed next. H. Clark believes that 'acre' is easier for people to understand but says there should be a sentence or two defining exactly what an acre is. The general consensus seems to be that 40,000 sq.ft represent one acre. B. Flood pointed out that, if someone owns 80,000 sq. ft. and wants to subdivide, this would cause non-conformance and require a variance, if the minimum lot size becomes 1 acre. M Doyle said that all tax maps are figured in acres.

J. Russell had answered these questions earlier by saying that, for the purposes of determining conformity, 40,000 sq ft shall be deemed one acre, 80,000 sq ft two acres. etc.

Question for J. Russell: how can this be presented so that it is easy to understand and causes a minimum of controversy?

Question for J. Russell: why the difference in front yard setback between town and county/state roads ?

H. Clark also questioned not retaining the 'minimum lot width and depth' regulations . M. Doyle said that the minimum is established by the dimensions of the front, rear and side setbacks.

Question for J. Russell: page 15, maximum footprint. why is there a n/a in the SR district?

Re: footnote 12 - M. Doyle stated that the phrasing from "... or other use..." is too vague and could lead to misinterpretation and argument.

H. Clark added that a clearer definition is needed, including the mention of 'impact' (traffic, parking, noise, etc.). - square footage is not the issue, impact is.

Section 121-11 D3: Question for J. Russell: the current minimum lot size is 5,000 sq ft - why was it reduced to 4,000 sq ft ( which deemed too restrictive)?

Section 121-12 B

3: M. Doyle is designing a grid for this section which he will present to J. Russell next week.

4: H. Clark feels that the restriction of residential floor space should be on a sliding scale with a cap rather than a definite 20%.

Article IV

H. Clark reiterated that a clear definition of 'Overlay Districts' is needed here.

As to the language of this chapter, the committee decided that, as it would be understood by those professionals (i.e. engineers, hydrologists) most likely to be concerned, no changes would be attempted at this time.

M. Doyle said that any special ecological issues should be included at this point.

H. Clark agreed with the need for a discussion but advised caution as 'biodiversity' is a most contentious subject and should be treated with great care.

Section 121-16

H. Clark requested the addition of a glossary of all acronyms.

'Empire Zones' were discussed briefly: M. Doyle pointed out that they are valid for 20 years (expiring in 2012) or earlier, depending on what the N.Y. State decides. H. Clark said that it might be a good idea, in case the state decides to develop these lands, to express the wishes of the town, even though it does not have the power to enforce those wishes.

Question for J. Russell: What is the meaning of the word 'effect' in the phrase 'effect of district'? Is there a specific reason for using a word that very few people, if any, will understand?

Also, why is there mention of zoning amendments in paragraph 2?

Section 121-17(SMO) A: from ...as the Town of Amenia develops... why

is this mentioned in the Zoning Laws - should it not be in the Comprehensive Plan instead? H. Clark says these sentences deviate in tone and content significantly from the rest of the document.

21-17 C: H. Clark believes that the only way to present the mining overlay without causing controversy, is to assure residents that no housing developments will appear on the sites after gravel has been removed. It has to be determined in advance to which use the land will be put (i.e conservation, recreation, etc.). B. Flood added that all the possible mining areas lend themselves to 'smart growth' - housing with limited density should be permitted.

H. Clark suggested that discussion groups and field trips be arranged in which mining engineers educate the public.

M. Doyle wants to make a clear distinction between lands which are appropriate for conservation and lands which are appropriate for growth/housing.

H. Clark suggested a clause in that paragraph stating that it should be lot by lot decisions, "dependent upon on the nature of the site in question".

Section 121-18 (RDO) B: M. Doyle says that the criteria in the last sentence have to be much tighter - there are many 200-acre parcels in the area and impact (possible detracting of land values) on neighbors has to be considered.

C.4 : a golf course will count as part of the 80% conservation easement.

Article V.

121.19 A: . H. Clark feels this paragraph is not clear and needs a re-write. M Doyle likes the section beginning with "accordingly, any applicant.... as each applicant knows immediately exactly what he has to do. G. Fenn found there to be inconsistencies in 121-20A " the Planning Board may waive some of these requirements". and A4: "the Board may waive any requirements". For J. Russell: Please go over these sections again and make them more consistent.

There should be a separate paragraph headed "Conventional Subdivisions" beginning with "conventional subdivisions" to "natural resources".

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 2 at 7:00 PM

Submitted by Monique Montaigne  
April 28, 2005