

PUBLIC HEARING

Town of Ulysses

August 12, 2014

Audio of the minutes are available on the website at ulysses.ny.us.

The hearing was held at the Ulysses Town Hall at 10 Elm Street, Trumansburg.

PRESENT:

Supervisor- Liz Thomas

Board members- Rich Goldman, John Hertzler, Nancy Zahler, David Kerness

Clerk- Carissa Parlato

Environmental Planner- Darby Kiley

OTHERS PRESENT:

John Wertis, Bob Klohmann, Ellen Klohmann, Dan Clement, Chad Hoover, John Driscoll, Jr., John Driscoll, Sr., Mary Shelley, Barbara Anger

Ms. Zahler made a motion to open the public hearing at 6:30 p.m., seconded by Mr. Hertzler; passed unanimously.

Ms. Thomas noted the following:

The subject of the hearing is a proposed local law to amend the town's zoning law, specifically to:

- Change in the number of Planning Board members from 7 to 5
- Clarify the definition of group campground and Mean High Water Elevation (MHWE)
- Clarify Article XVIII of the zoning law (Parks and Recreation)

The hearing date was set by town board resolution on Tuesday, June 25, 2014.

The legal notice of the hearing was printed in the Ithaca Journal on Friday, July 25, 2014 and was also posted on the town's website and clerk's board.

A notice was mailed to the following neighboring municipalities on July 23, 2014: the counties of Seneca, Tompkins and Schuyler; the Village of Trumansburg; and the towns of Enfield, Covert, Hector, Ithaca and Lansing; and the New York State Parks- Finger Lakes Region.

The purpose of the public hearing is to afford the general public an opportunity to make statements and comments regarding the proposed amendments to the Town of Ulysses' zoning law. The hearing remains open until all those present are given an opportunity to make comments. A public hearing is not a question and answer session; the town board is primarily there to listen rather than to debate or comment on the subject.

Ms. Kiley provided a brief overview of the changes:

Only a portion of the zoning law is proposed to be amended.

The rationale for the Planning Board reduction is that it has become difficult to fill vacancies on the board, and recent resignations have provided an opportunity to reduce the size.

The definition of group campground in the current law was unclear and the revision is meant to clarify it.

The MHWE is being added as it is not included in the current law.

Article XVIII is being re-ordered. Communication towers are being removed as a permitted use based on comments received during the marina district rezoning process.

Lot area and yard size requirements will be increased to better reflect the allowable uses.

Standards for group campgrounds will be added.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

John Wertis spoke as a citizen and longtime member of the Planning Board. He read the following statement:

“I simply want to restate for the record my opposition to the proposed numerical composition of the Planning Board...from seven members to only five members. For as long as I can remember, a seven member board has been functional in the Town of Ulysses. I can recall meetings cancelled because there was no business to attend to or because the chair or vice chair were both unavailable; but we didn't have trouble regularly achieving a quorum when required. It has been my personal experience with municipal committees that it has been easier to achieve a quorum for action with larger rather than smaller numbers. It has been unusual to have the number of resignations that we have had in the last year. I am not really clear on the “recruitment process” the town uses to fill board posts. I came lately to this situation, approached and left applications with five parties. My focus was on people with roots in the community... the younger the better. Two of the five got back to me with “too busy/too many other responsibilities/bad time in my life” responses. Given the formal proposal to reduce the board numbers, I put no pressure on the remaining contacts. I have been busy on other personal projects for the past several weeks and not out politicking on this issue; but I have been surprised at the number of people who have stopped me during this time period and thanked me for opposing the reduction. As near as I can figure out, they see the reduction as a move away from inclusivity and a limitation on the diverse voices seeking expression in the town.”

Chad Hoover owns a summer home on Taughannock Boulevard. He suggested that the campground definitions also be applied to the conservation zone.

A few residents asked questions to help clarify the proposed amendments.

Mr. Wertis suggested that in the future a public information night be held prior to a public hearing so that people can have their questions answered on the issue.

John Driscoll, Jr. stated that he would like the area to remain a natural area. He disagrees that golf course is listed as one of the permitted uses.

Mary Shelley, whose property is adjacent to the girl scout camp, desires to have open space on the lake preserved.

Barbara Enger (same location) echoed Ms. Shelley's comment and added that the area hosts rare wildlife, and protects the water quality.

Dan Klement, of Taughannock Boulevard, agreed with the prior comments.

With no further comments, Ms. Zahler made a motion to close the hearing at 7:05pm, seconded by Mr. Hertzler.

Respectfully submitted
by Carissa Parlato, 8/14/14