



Town Of Amenia

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PLANNING BOARD SPECIAL
PUBLIC HEARING
THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2009
AMENIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PRESENT: Chairman William Flood
Nina Peek
Peter Clair
Norm Fontaine
George Fenn
Michael Hayes, Attorney

ABSENT: Tony Robustelli
James Walsh

Chairman Flood opened the meeting at 7:00 P.M. The Public Hearing notice was read by the secretary.

MOTION TO OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR DEPOT HILL FARM was made by William Flood, seconded by Peter Clair

Michael Hayes, Attorney for the Planning Board presented a review of the history of the project.

Mr. Jeffrey Stark, the applicant, stated he had the principal responsibility for the preparation of the DEIS for the project. He then shared his vision of Depot Hill Farm and what it will bring to this community. An attorney by trade he and his wife reside in Pine Plains. After seeing many farms eaten up by small developments, he decided there must be a way to preserve the farming community. Many have contributed development rights to conservations organizations as he and his wife have done. His vision was to demonstrate that a community formed on conservation principles could be developed whose purpose was to preserve existing agricultural uses rather than to destroy them. Families in such a community would value the countryside, would wish to raise their children in a working farm community and would share a commitment to protecting open space and the environment. If such a model community was shown to be economically viable both for the developer and for the agricultural enterprise, then it could perhaps be a model for the development of other communities wishing to preserve their agricultural heritage. In 2005 an opportunity arose when I found a farm that needed saving and which could be successfully developed while preserving its agricultural uses. We then purchased it. We also purchased neighboring fields. Mr. Stark then hired the architect David Salmela and landscape architect Shane Coen, who is the designer of the AIA award winning Jackson Meadows community outside Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Mr. Stark continued that he hoped everyone looked at the renderings of a typical proposed house; the site plan shows 137 homes and new equestrian facility clustered on 60 of the farm's 481

acres, less than 13% of the farm's acreage. The homes are clustered in four neighborhoods along hedgerows and at the farm entrance in order to reduce the visual impact and preserve hay fields, pastures, paddocks and woodlands. They are designed from the 19th century Shaker farm community in Hancock, Massachusetts.

Depot Hill Farm will have central water and sewer systems and will use geothermal energy for heat and air conditioning. All utilities will be underground and nighttime illumination will be at a safe minimum. Each home will have optimum insulation and window glazing. Community and equestrian buildings will utilize solar energy wherever possible.

Keane Stud will continue but will be integrated with other farming operations. Horse manure and bedding will be transformed into rich organic compost which will be spread on the farm's hay fields, gardens and pastures with surplus sold to neighboring farms. Keane Stud will provide hay to feed the community's horses. Families will have their own organic garden inspired by Thomas Jefferson's "kitchen garden" and large enough to support the entire community.

There will be a first class equestrian program and will include indoor and outdoor arenas, associated barns, and a cross country course. There will be riding/hiking trails throughout the property available to Depot Hill Farm and the public. There will be no gates.

We have considered many competing interests in laying out the community. First is the preservation of Keane Stud. This necessitated focusing development on the Syms parcel and away from the barns, fields and paddocks of Keane Stud. The Syms parcel contains various streams and important wetland which could be habitat for the endangered bog turtle as well as other species. A second consideration is that development not degrade these streams and wetland and that it not shut off the corridors which bring wildlife from Rattlesnake Mountain down to an important water source.

A third is preserving the view shed, particularly from DeLavernne Hill. When the architects came from Minnesota, they went to the turnout and I asked them to look long and hard across the valley. This development had to be designed with the greatest possible care in preserving that view.

How should this land, zoned residential development, be developed? The site plan we proposed is the best solution. It preserves Keane Stud as agricultural use while permitting concentrated development on peripheral areas of the Keane Stud parcel. It protects the streams and wetlands as well as wildlife corridors, by concentrating development along existing hedgerows. It proposes to strengthen those hedgerows through substantial new plantings, which will help soften the impact of development on the view shed.

Any structure added to the 480 acre property could be seen from DeLavernne Hill. Unfortunately, if we are to preserve the Keane Stud farm, our buildable land, like Silo Ridge, is almost entirely within the SPO. Since the citizens of Amenia have embraced Silo Ridge, knowing that it impacts the view shed but believing it will strengthen the economy and bring benefits to Amenia, I hope you and the Planning Board will render the same judgment for Depot Hill Farm.

Chairman Flood then opened the floor for public comment.

Public Comments - See attached.

MOTION TO ADJOURN THE PUBLIC HEARING was made by Chairman Flood, seconded by Norm Fontaine

VOTE TAKEN/MOTION CARRIED 5/0

MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 5, 2009; FEBRUARY 26, 2009; MARCH 26, 2009 AND APRIL 2, 2009 was made by George Fenn seconded by Peter Clair

VOTE TAKEN/MOTION CARRIED 5/0

Chairman Flood asked if all had received the email regarding the meeting Tuesday at 9:30 A.M. with Silo Ridge. Three Board members can attend this meeting.

MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:50 P.M. was made by Peter Clair, seconded by George Fenn.

MOTION CARRIED 5/0

Respectfully submitted,



Susan M. Metcalfe
Planning Board Secretary

The foregoing represents unapproved minutes of the Town of Amenia Planning Board from a meeting held on May 7, 2009 and are not to be construed as the final official minutes until so approved.

_____ Approved as read

_____ Approved with: deletions, corrections, and additions