

Subject: New zoning proposal and current site plan applications

28 May 2020

Dear Dryden Planning Board Members,

I have been following your efforts at revising the Varna zoning law to bring it into compliance with the Varna Plan/ Dryden Comprehensive Plan. This is a logical undertaking as well as a legally necessary one. Thank you for doing this work so deliberately and carefully. I am glad that it is finally coming to fruition and would like to see both the Planning Board and Town Board pass the new law as soon as possible.

Of course, like other Dryden residents, I would have liked to see the new law passed a while ago--before the Trinitas and Maifly projects came before the Planning Board. It would have given much clearer guidance to these developers. But I do not see why the consensus of the PB should not govern any decisions on site plans and permits starting from now, this May 28 meeting. If passing the new zoning has been held up for technicalities and wording, that should not change the principle according to which present zoning decisions are made. I urge you to abide by the density and housing type specifications put forth in the new law in any consideration you give to pending site plans. Better yet, take up the remaining zoning law issues to ready it for Town Board approval while putting off any consideration of projects whose outcome is made ambiguous by the future of the zoning law. Holding off seems sensible to me; passing on any plans that would soon stand in violation of the zoning law and the Comp Plan would be counter to the whole purpose of the law, the Plan, and all the work that you have done to bring about a rational and consistent set of documents.

In general, I am in favor of concentrating housing in village and hamlet centers for the benefits of transport hubs and preservation of green space. The Town and County do need appropriate and affordable housing for people who work in the area. I favor also the principle of cluster zoning to create livable community groupings with surrounding green space. But it seems to me that these principles, although embodied in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, have not been achievable through zoning. Thus, absent some way of incentivizing or enforcing the kind of grouped housing for working people and families that Varna has said it would like to have, it seems that zoning by density of housing type and numbers of beds is the only way to discourage massive developments of rental units designed mostly for Cornell students. The huge numbers of student rental units proposed by Trinitas and Maifly would overwhelm the balanced residential character of Varna, exactly what the Varna Plan and the new zoning law are designed to prevent. Passing on either of these two projects would sadly, and permanently, undermine all the efforts to preserve the character of Varna and to build within appropriate constraints.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Judy Pierpont