



MINUTES

TOWN OF THOMPSON

ORDINANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

SPECIAL MEETING * THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 2022 @ 8:00 AM

MERRILL SENEY COMMUNITY ROOM – TOWN HALL

PRESENT: Al Landry, Dick Trudeau, Celeste Guimont, JoAnn Hall

ALSO PRESENT: Tyra Penn-Gesek, Town Planner, Paul Hopkins, Assessor, Valerie Clark, David Clark, Mary Eames, Angela Authier, Raymond Williams

- 1) Call To Order
Al Landry, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.
- 2) Accept Minutes of May 26, 2022 Meeting
Celeste Guimont noted two (2) spelling/grammar corrections.
A Motion was made by JoAnn Hall to accept the minutes with the noted corrections, seconded by Dick Trudeau. All in favor, Motion carried.
- 3) Correspondence
No new correspondence.
- 4) Set Next Meeting Date (if Necessary)
The next meeting date is scheduled for Thursday, June 9, 2022 at 8:00 AM.
- 5) Citizen's Comments (Time Limit at Discretion of Chair)
David Clark, 105 Alm Rd., stated there's been an Open Space plan in the Town of Thompson since the early 1970's that has been working without any concerns or public outcry. We shouldn't be wasting time writing an ordinance overburdened with details & procedures, keep the process simple & in place.
Valerie Clark, 105 Alm Rd., stated the ordinance should specify the parcels currently in the Open Space program should be grandfathered in & should not be burdened with the ten (10) year recurrence penalty. The properties with excess acreage that are currently in Open Space should be considered as well.
Raymond Williams, 190 Porter Plain Rd., stated he was present for most of the Agricultural Commission meetings for the Open Space discussions. Citizens with 50 to 60 acres shouldn't be denied because they have a driveway to access their property. There are several vacant parcels on his street that are currently in Open Space that all have driveways to access their property. Also, he stated the Town committees need to work together & stand up for the citizens of the Town.

6) Review Public Act 490 Open Space

Dick Trudeau asked Paul Hopkins, Thompson Assessor, to provide information on fences that the ORC requested last week. Paul Hopkins, Assessor, stated that he suggests the fence language state as dictated by the State of CT. Building Code. If the fence needs a building permit, then it doesn't qualify for Open Space, if it doesn't, as is the case in many older style fences that exist on a lot of the parcels, then that's acceptable & would qualify for Open Space. Donna Hall, Recording Secretary, stated that fences over six (6) feet in height are considered a structure & would require engineering & are also regulated by CT. State Building Code, so there's no gray area. Member discussion followed, members agree with this fence language. Members began review of Section 4 – Qualification Criteria. Tyra Penn-Gesek, Town Planner, read this section into the meeting. Dick Trudeau had emailed ORC members 5-28-22 after he reviewed this section, he suggests to eliminate subsections #A-#G in this section. Tyra Penn-Gesek read Dick's email points into the meeting. Paul Hopkins stated anything described by the ordinance should be kept in. Al Landry stated he's comfortable with the current language. Tyra Penn-Gesek stated the standards required need to be in place as a regulatory document for the Assessor. Celeste Guimont stated she feels the language needs to be specific. Dick Trudeau stated the ordinance needs to clarify if the parcel meets the Open Space criteria & guidelines. Paul Hopkins stated the parcels historically designated as Open Space, the conveyance tax will not be restarted for the ten (10) year time period. Member consensus agree with these changes, Tyra will update the working draft Open Space Ordinance for members. JoAnn Hall asked the Assessor how many current parcels are designated as Open Space. Paul Hopkins answered 784 parcels. Al Landry moved on to Article 5 – Application Process. Member discussion followed & agreed to delete all this wording & replace with verbiage to see the Town of Thompson Assessor, The ORC members asked the Assessor for guidance on Article 6-8, Paul Hopkins stated these articles are addressed in the CT. General Statutes, the language could just state such. Tyra Penn-Gesek suggests in Article 5,6, +7 can add verbiage to refer to CT. Statutes. Member consensus agreed. Paul Hopkins suggested in Article 6, which is the valuation of Open Space, the Town should set the value. The farm & forestland values are set by State, Open Space values are not, the Open Space value is set by the Assessor. Paul suggested the ordinance state a value so the Assessor has no discretion or leeway to change. Paul suggested an Open Space value of 75% of excess land. Members appreciated Paul bringing this to their attention, they agreed to the 75%, Tyra Penn-Gesek will update the working draft. Al Landry suggested the ordinance have a definition for 'Natural State'. Discussion followed, members agreed to use the definition proposed by Dick Trudeau taken from the PA-490 book. Tyra Penn-Gesek stated she believes the 'Natural State' definition may conflict in the ordinance, she read the definition of 'Natural State' and the definition of 'Development'. Member discussion followed, Dick Trudeau doesn't feel it's a conflict, & suggested Tyra update working draft for ORC members to review final draft next week.

A Motion was made by Dick Trudeau to omit Article 4, 2nd paragraph, in its entirety, seconded by JoAnn Hall. All in favor, Motion carried.

Members requested Tyra Penn-Gesek to make a final copy of the Open Space working draft to review at their next meeting 6-9-22 for a final edit.

7) Citizen's Comments

Valerie Clark, 105 Alm Rd., stated the language needs to be clear in the areas that use 'may/shall' in this ordinance. Valerie thanked Paul Hopkins for bringing to everyone's attention the Open Space value needs to be set by the Town. Valerie also thanked Tyra Penn-Gesek for all her research & help devising this ordinance. Lastly, members should be cautious prohibiting 'clearcutting' from the Open Space ordinance, as timber cuts are sometimes crucial to healthy forestlands.

David Clark, 105 Alm Rd., stated there is no definition of fields, meadows, & ponds proposed in this ordinance. Also, most need agricultural maintenance, that shouldn't prohibit the parcel from qualifying for the Open Space tax reduction.

Angela Authier, 1448 Riverside Dr., questioned what the difference is in value of the Open Space currently & the new proposed guidelines being proposed.

Raymond Williams, 190 Porter Plain Rd., stated he's a member of the Thompson Rod & Gun Club as well as Valley Springs Sportsman Club, both are businesses, both have acreage in Open Space, they shouldn't be denied qualifying for Open Space because they're businesses. The Town should be concerned about preserving their properties & saving the ruralness of our lands.

Valerie Clark, 105 Alm Rd., agreed & stated businesses shouldn't be excluded from the Open Space program, there are many businesses in Town (Sunnycroft Farms, her own personal business, etc.) that have their properties currently in the Open Space program & should be allowed to stay in the program.

Paul Hopkins, Assessor, explained commercial property values, & stated there are other ways to save money in taxes.

Tyra Penn-Gesek, Planner, asked Raymond Williams if the sportsmen clubs are non-profit?

Raymond Williams, stated he believes that they are non-profit.

8) Committee Members Comments

Al Landry stated the committee needs to be careful about defining 'clearcutting' as well as 'dams' if the Army Corps. decides to put a dam on someone's property, that shouldn't disqualify the property from the Open Space program.

9) Adjourn

A Motion was made by Dick Trudeau to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 AM, seconded by Celeste Guimont. All in favor, Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



Donna M. Hall,
Recording Secretary