

11/28/16

WESTON PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

DISCUSSION OF OPEN-SPACE CLUSTER HOUSING

In furtherance of our 2010 Plan of Conservation and Development and in order to promote a discussion of open-space cluster housing mentioned in the Plan, the Commission has set forth below a framework of a potential amendment to our current Zoning Regulations. The amendment would permit such development in Weston, limited by parameters listed below. We must emphasize that the Commission has not adopted any such amendment, and the framework we present is solely for the purpose of eliciting public comment. We also believe that in order to have an informed discussion we must first describe what we mean by open-space cluster housing, and why we would consider such development.

What is Open-Space Cluster Housing?

Connecticut Law (Sec. 8-18) defines “cluster development” as a type of property development that dedicates at least one-third of the developed property to open space for recreational, conservation and agricultural purposes. As applied to Weston, it means that rather than requiring that each house be located on a lot of at least two acres, houses can be clustered together in a smaller area, so long as no less than one-third of the overall development is reserved for open space. (One further note: the Commission has no jurisdiction over public (i.e. Town-owned) property, therefore any Regulation amendment would only apply to privately-owned land.)

To illustrate, if there is a ten-acre undeveloped parcel that contains significant topographical features or wetlands that preclude or substantially hamper development of a portion of the property, such features could be left as open space and the houses built on the remaining portion of the parcel.

Why Would We Consider Open-Space Cluster Housing?

The Commission is considering open-space cluster housing for the following reasons:

- To permanently set aside land as open space for use as parks or other passive recreational areas;
- To permit economically-feasible development of areas that would otherwise be difficult to develop;
- To permit flexibility of design so that development may be conducted in harmony with and preserve natural site features;
- To promote diversity of Weston’s housing stock;
- To protect natural streams and our water supply generally;
- To conserve forest, wildlife and other natural resources;

- To contribute to the goal of avoiding municipal sewers by allowing more control over development activities that could affect the water supply.

Potential Features of a Cluster-Housing Amendment

For discussion purposes, the Commission has developed the following framework:

- This type of housing could only be developed on existing parcels of no less than 10 acres in size as of December 31, 2016.
- At least one-half of the parcel would be dedicated to contiguous undeveloped open space. Any trees on the undeveloped open space could not be removed without the prior permission of the Commission.
- Development would be limited to single-family residences.
- Only one residence would be permitted per acre contained in the parcel.
- Adequate buffering (including larger setbacks and plantings, if necessary) would be required so that the development was not generally visible from the road on which the development is located, or from adjoining properties.
- The developer would have to demonstrate adequate provision for septic and water facilities.
- The developer would have to demonstrate no stormwater impact on surrounding properties.
- The Planning & Zoning Commission would retain authority to regulate architectural features of proposed housing.
- Cluster housing would be subject to additional limitations designed to limit the footprint and size of these homes.
- No commercial activity (other than home occupation with no additional employees) would be permitted in the development.
- The Town's current Subdivision Regulations would apply to any roadways, utilities, fire prevention and similar features.
- Applicants would be required to submit a traffic study to the Commission.