

Main Motion Art. 34

"I move to amend article 6, Dimensional Regulations, of the Zoning Bylaw, for properties in the R-O (Outlying Residence) zoning district that are above 425 feet in elevation above mean sea level (NAVD88) and are not connected to town sewer and water, that these properties shall comply with the dimensional requirements of the R-LD (Residential Low density) zoning district."

I would like to request an additional 3 minutes. (I hope to have the time to show maps.)

I agreed with this change of wording of my Article suggested by our building commissioner. Its a compromise that is apparently less problematic, and has precedent in other communities. It does not change the official zoning map, and would allow zoning to automatically revert back to R-O dimensional requirements if/when town water and sewer is provided in the affected area.

I am here hoping to help our Town plan better for an impending problem. Without any action, we risk losing, little by little, the character of the rural northeast corner of Amherst, and in conjunction with this, we risk needing to provide water and sewer to this area sooner rather than later.

The problems we face in these regards are different than in other areas of town. This is because of two very important facts:

1. Town Sewer should not be provided without Town water. This is because a sewer with existing private wells would draw water away from the area, affecting the recharging and the natural water cycles potentially affecting aquifers. This is one reason that subdivisions now are required to provide

both water and sewer, not just one.

2. Water cannot be provided by gravity in the areas above 425' because our current water tower is only that high.

These two facts combined, complicate our ability to serve this part of Amherst, and make the prospect very expensive.

Our Planning Board Chair has stated that Town sewer and water are outdated technologies, and that we should be using cisterns "etc" for drinking water. Maybe he can explain the "etc" because I don't believe cisterns are a viable alternative for the hundreds of people who live in this area.

Other relevant concerns:

1. Well data is woefully inadequate, due in part to the fact that prior to ^{Oct 30} 2008, no well drilling permits or water testing was required by the town for private wells. My research has shown evidence of well problems in this area.

2. Our Town's Sewer Extension Master Plan Evaluation Matrix puts this area as a high priority relative to other non sewerred areas in town.

3. A smaller lot size increases the chances of septic failure. This is stated on the aforementioned Town Sewer Matrix, and it is ^a reason why other communities such as Belchertown, Brattleboro, VT and Winchester, NH require larger lot size if Town Water and Sewer is not available.

4. The law of averages means that even if all else were equal, denser development creates more chance of well and septic failure.

5. Cost estimates for sewerage for this area are in the multi million dollar range, with the factor of bedrock difficulties likely. Costs of building a new water tower or system of pumping stations are unknown, but other communities' experiences shows multi million dollar cost likely for this as well.

The character of the area is also of imminent concern. This area has had a history of larger lots with numerous small farms and nine pre 1855 homesteads. The density allowed in R-O zoning seems inappropriate. I will show a relevant map about this if there is time.

The Planning Bd. adopted the Master Plan with great fanfare in 2010, yet 8 years later, our viewscapes, farmland, neighborhood character are still at significant risk in this corner of Amherst. The Plan clearly states the goal of directing denser development to village centers and downtown. R-LD zoning exists in many other outlying areas of town and it seems sensible as a transition from Shutesbury's 3 acre townwide minimum lot size to R-LD, to R-O below 425', then to denser R-N zoning in Cushman center.

Please support this zoning bylaw change and help at least create this "placeholder" while we figure out the well issues that are coming to light, and plan better how to preserve the character of this part of town, while potentially saving the town significant money.

MAPS show:

1. Above 425'
2. Townwide R-O zoning in yellow
3. Close up Northeast corner affected
4. Zoning Map showing R-LD
5. Direct Quotes from Master Plan

6. R-O and R-LD dimensional regulations

- Presenter: Van Kayman