

May 8, 2006

David Miller and James Romano, Co Chairs
Open Space, Trails and Riverfront Committee
Jennifer Viggiani, Open Space Coordinator
Town of Clifton Park
One Town Hall Plaza
Clifton Park, NY 12065

RE: Longkill Road/Kain Development of New Jersey

Dear Messieurs Miller, Romano and Ms. Viggiani:

Since the summer of 2005, a group of concerned neighbors, other town residents and like-minded proponents of open space protection in the town have joined together with a shared goal of seeking protection for all, or at least a significant part of the 20-acre Longkill Woods (off Longkill Road) that is imminently threatened by a very damaging subdivision proposal by Kain Development of New Jersey. This parcel, one of the last open spaces in the northern part of the Town, has historically remained undeveloped. Adjacent to Country Knolls, Robert Van Patten stopped short of developing these woods 35-years ago because of its extensive wetland characteristics and immediate proximity to the larger R-16 DEC regulated wetland located just to the north..

Together FOLK (Friends of the Longkill) have organized to strongly urge an appropriate environmental impact statement of this developer. Mapped in the Town of Clifton Park's 2002 Open Space Plan as wetland, this parcel is a natural treasure that FOLK believes should remain undisturbed and unspoiled, and would be an ideal open space/ park setting to accompany the recreational aspects of the Longkill Park across the road. At the very least FOLK is constructively arguing for a less damaging alternative plan for this parcel that leaves all wetlands intact, and the protection of at least 50 percent of the buildable land, commonly applied standards for conservation design of sensitive land areas.

We write to you now because several members of the Planning Board have been asking some hard questions of the applicant at a two-part public hearing that concluded on April 11. These members have requested an alternative subdivision plan that would conserve open space, large trees and vernal ponds, considerations which were supported by more than 25 speakers and more than 300 petitioners in the neighborhood. At this important junction, we write to you and ask for your committee's involvement in the future protection of these woods which deserves your committee's attention.

Despite several draft plans proposed by the developer, required largely due to the wetland characteristics of this parcel, no meaningful open space or permanently protected parklands are proposed in the 18-lot subdivision now being reviewed by the planning board - this despite the presence of a high water table, on-site parcel habitat location for the NYS threatened Frosted Elfin butterfly, numerous vernal pools hosting breeding populations of wood frogs and habitat for wood duck, deer, turkey, hawks and other

wildlife, groves of large diameter oak and pine and smaller diameter black gum trees, and informal trails that connect the perimeter of the property with the interior wetlands. Broad-winged hawks and pileated woodpeckers have nested in this area for decades. As mentioned, the forest adjoins Country Knolls, whose residents have a history of very high water tables and perpetually flooded basements. They are naturally speaking out against development of woods that are highly unsuitable for it. The applicant, in spite of concerns raised by the Planning Board, Environmental Conservation Commission and neighbors, is proposing to remove more than 70 percent of the existing vegetation and import tons of fill to raise new house lots several feet in elevation above surrounding homes. The most recent design proposal has several homes and the access road positioned to destroy one of the largest wetland/vernal pond areas.

If the Planning Board follows through with its request of the applicant for an alternative plan and EIS, it leaves an opportunity for negotiation with the owner and your committee and the neighbors to work together to protect at least 50 or more percent of this parcel, and permanently create a new natural area parkland worthy of this northern Clifton Park neighborhood. Such park land would lie in close proximity and walking distance to Country Knolls and to the Longkill Park. In fact, a “Longkill Woods natural area” would perfectly complement Longkill Park’s ballfields and playgrounds and provide the community with a rare protected forest affording solitude and tranquility, natural history enjoyment and passive recreation amidst an outstanding forest environment.

We would be very pleased to tour you through these wonderful, gently undulating woods and show you this forest’s beauty- wild iris are now in leaf, and spring is showcasing the forest’s many amenities and potential as a protected park or preserve. We could then discuss the potential of cooperative action and how we might work together with the applicant and the planning board.

We would appreciate contacting you by phone in the near future to discuss how we might best work with the owner to obtain protection of these woods and perhaps to arrange for a walking tour of this parcel. Please feel free to speak to any of us in the meantime. Our phone numbers are provided.

Thank you for your attention and interest.

Sincerely,

Larry Brown-877-5758

Scott & Lisa Kenneally Dochat-877-0322

David & Susan White-877-0678

Maureen Sheridan-877-5313

Barbara Phillips-877-7903

David and Susan Gibson-877-8678

Robert & Mary Vawter-877-5338

Bill & Terri Lorenson-877-5070

Margaret Kinoshian-384-0933

William Engleman-877-5024

Friends of the Longkill (FOLK)

Cc: Phillip Barrett, Supervisor

Sandy Roth, Town Board

Frank Berlin, OSTRC

Steven Bulger, Chairman, Planning Board

Members of the Planning Board

Julie Stokes, Saratoga PLAN

Jason Kemper, Director, Planning Dept.

Mike O'Brien, Environmental Specialist

ECC

John Connell, ACOE

Kathy O'Brien, NYSDEC Endangered Species Unit

Lawrence Woolbright, PhD.

Jeffrey Baker, Esq.