

Lorensen Closing Comments, April 11, 2006

Mr. Chairman, I have a few closing comments.

For the past past 6 months I have presented objective arguments against the proposed 18 lot subdivision by the New Jersey based Kain Development. Here I'll present emotional and subjective arguments.

It all started on October 4, 2004. I was out of town in Ann Arbor, Michigan on company business. My wife, Terri, was attending the Planning Board meeting to witness Exxon Mobil's futile attempt to place a gas station at Exit 10 on Ushers Road. Kain Development of New Jersey, presented a conceptual review for an 18 lot subdivision in the Longkill Forest that borders our home of 35 years. I remember Terri calling me to say that the developer showed a sewer line passing through our property. Kain had never approached us regarding this easement. I won't recount the suggestions by the Planning Board and its engineer because, throughout the last 18 months, Kain has all but ignored the Planning Board recommendations.

We started watching the Planning Board agendas for Kain presentations on the proposed subdivision. We learned about FOIL, SEQRA, neg decs, the ACOE, unregulated wetlands and the ECC. We monitored cliftonpark.org for meeting notices and minutes. We became "experts" on GIS, Google Earth and USGS. We attended ECC meetings. We met other neighbors that were concerned about the development of the forest that we have enjoyed for 35 years. We knew the land had water challenges and to be honest, none of us imagined that this land was suitable for development. We approached the New Jersey based Kain's local representative. The neighbors held a meeting with Kain. The outcome was negative. There was a general feeling that Kain's local representative was not presenting an open and honest plan. In fact, shortly after the meeting, many neighbors received a threatening letter from the Kain representative. Of course, this encounter destroyed any hope that we could negotiate with the out of state developer.

We formed a group, Friends of the Longkill, FOLK. This grass roots group brought together a diverse group of residents with a common goal to protect important open spaces in Northern Clifton Park. Some members were concerned with privacy, some with wildlife, vernal pools and other members with selfish concerns about the impact of water on their individual homes. FOLK hired attorney Jeff Baker to review and advise legal aspects of the project. FOLK wrote numerous letters to the Planning Board and the Army Corps of Engineers. We created a website. In fact, if you Google for "Kain Development" and "Clifton Park", all of the resulting hits are either the FOLK website or the Planning Board Meeting minutes.

We learned over the last 18 months that the planning process in Clifton Park limits citizen interaction with the builder and Town. We write letters, attend meetings, but until there is a public hearing, we cannot present our case. 28 neighbors attended the December Planning Board meeting, just to listen. 20 neighbors spoke at the February Public Hearing. In one week, we gathered over 350 signatures opposing the proposed subdivision.

There are positive outcomes to the last 18 months. Our neighborhood has become closer and it has expanded. The older residents have met the recent arrivals. We all share a passion for our lifestyles. As you have heard through their personal statements and letters, the newcomers were attracted to our neighborhood because of the quality of life the old timers have enjoyed (and taken for granted) for decades. We are all more aware of the negative impact that development is having in Clifton Park. I expect that regardless of the outcome of this project, FOLK will remain an active participant in future proposals in Clifton Park and

neighboring towns.

In the future, the Town should encourage early discussion between residents and developers. In my experience, by the time the planning process reaches a public hearing, the battle lines between residents and developers are already drawn. The Town should facilitate and moderate discussions between the two parties early in the planning process.

Thank you.