

June 20, 2007

Dear Editor,

In the June 20 edition of the Villadom an article on the Deep Voll Ravine subdivision application states that the site was once zoned for affordable housing and that the “developer has met all criteria except the slope.”

On affordable housing: One of the three lots that make up the subdivision was zoned for high-density affordable housing. Moreover, the implication in bringing up the question of affordable housing is that we should all be satisfied now that “only” market-rate housing is proposed. The fact that part of the ravine tract was once zoned for affordable housing does not mean it is now an appropriate site for market-rate housing. The ravine is an historic, aesthetic and environmental gem, and it should be recognized as such by the Township of Wyckoff.

On steep slopes: Mr. Robert Milanese of Barrister Home Construction needs variances to encroach on steep slopes to put his proposed road into the tract. What we don’t know at this point is how many other variances he or future lot owners will need to fully develop the ravine site. That’s because the Wyckoff Planning Board has granted waivers from its stated requirement for submitting detailed drawings of both the proposed houses and intended location of each house to be constructed. In future, Mr. Milanese or future owners will likely need other variances for steep slope encroachments (including on the ravine itself), retaining walls, and placement of driveways, to name a few. (Scott Fisher, Wyckoff’s Public Works Manager, addressed this point in his review of the subdivision when he wrote, “Lots 8.01 and 8.02 appear extremely close to the Ravine. My concern is that future homeowners who may desire to install pools, additions, sheds, and retaining walls would need to encroach that much closer to the Ravine.”) The point is, given the “free pass” Mr. Milanese has been granted, we don’t know the full impact of the subdivision on the site.

The Planning Board should not make any decision without addressing *now* the actual effect (as opposed to estimated effect) of the development of each lot. By granting Mr. Milanese a waiver to postpone judgment of the actual impact of the development until the individual plot plans are presented, the Planning Board is ignoring the basic question of whether the property is fundamentally suitable for development. Is that good planning?

The next hearing on the ravine is scheduled for Wednesday, July 11, at 7:30 p.m. in Wyckoff Town Hall. If you are interested in providing background at the end of future articles, why not mention that last December we presented the Wyckoff Township Committee with a petition signed by more than 1,000 residents asking that our zoning rules be followed, that the variances be denied, and that the ravine be preserved as open space using county and state funds? Why not mention that the Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders last month adopted a resolution in support of the preservation of the ravine? Why not mention that rarely if ever has a development proposal in Wyckoff generated such intense and sustained citizen opposition?

Sincerely yours,

Brian D. Scanlan
Wyckoff