



ELLEN C. JAFFEE
Assemblywoman 97th District

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

CHAIR
Committee on Children and Families
COMMITTEES
Environmental Conservation
Health
Mental Health
Steering Committee
Education

August 15, 2019

Honorable Michael Specht
Supervisor Town of Ramapo
237 Route 59
Suffern, NY 10901

Dear Supervisor Specht,

I am writing in reference to the public hearings scheduled for Thursday, August 15 and Monday, August 19 to urge you, the Town Council members and the Zoning Board Chair to adjourn these hearings until September or thereafter. For such critically important hearings to be held at this time in August when many people are away is not only exclusionary but also obstructive to engaging those who will be impacted most in the public comment and decision-making process. Adjourning these “special meetings” will allow for more public participation, more robust public comment and more time for review of the proposals.

As you know from public comments I made on August 15, 2018, I have serious concerns regarding the justification and scope of the proposed Pascack Ridge Housing Development. While some might justify the need to provide housing for families with children, this project will not achieve that goal: rather, it will create segregated housing in Hillcrest, one of the most diverse communities in Rockland County. The proposed project will have an enormous impact on the entire community while benefitting only a small segment of the population. The proposed project is not, in fact, a response to the needs of the Hillcrest community: it is a rezoning plan that will benefit two developers at the expense of families with children while setting a dangerous precedent for the entire Town of Ramapo.

Additionally, I share the concerns of Hillcrest residents, my constituents and Rockland residents about the long-term environmental impact of unbridled overdevelopment on our communities, our infrastructure, our water resources and the health and well-being of residents. This rezoning proposal would convert the 27.6 acre environmentally constrained Pascack Ridge area, currently zoned R-15, to an MR-12 zone, potentially quadrupling the density of an area that includes wetlands, waterways, steep slopes and other environmental sensitivities.

More people and more buildings will lead to more passenger vehicles, commercial truck traffic and an increased carbon footprint, all at a time when climate change and its impact on our communities must be addressed in any forward looking comprehensive plan. We as elected officials have a responsibility to this generation and generations to come to reduce our carbon footprint, protect the environment, and conserve our most precious natural resource: a safe, sustainable, water supply.

It is clear that the consequences of this proposal will negatively impact the entire community. There will undoubtedly be infrastructure consequences: more roads, sewers, water, and electricity required to sustain the new population. Additionally, there will be a need in the area for more hospitals, firehouses, first responders and private schools. Lastly, there will be new health and safety risks posed to pedestrians.

Once again I respectfully remind the Supervisor of his commitment to “undertake a full review of the Town’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Zoning Law” and to “implement a moratorium” on certain types of new development while a Comprehensive Plan that will include the diverse needs of all residents is drafted.

As a member of the NYS Assembly, I am committed to using any resources within my Assembly jurisdiction, and working with state oversight agencies, including the Department of State, the DEC, the Division of Human Rights, as well as the Attorney General and Comptroller to stand up for what is right.

In closing, I call on you and the Town Council to adjourn the August 15th and 19th hearings until September or thereafter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellen C. Jaffee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ellen C. Jaffee
97th Assembly District

Cc: Rossana Rosado
Secretary of State of New York