

Group opposes building project

Friends of the Longkill group says site of proposed subdivision is environmentally sensitive

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CLIFTON PARK -- Residents of northern Clifton Park and Ballston around Longkill Road have joined in a new grass-roots group called "Friends of the Longkill," or FOLK, to advocate for the protection of open space in the area.

FOLK generally opposes the subdivision of forest land, wetlands and wildlife habitat and specifically opposes a proposed 18-lot subdivision for 19 wooded acres with wetlands located west of Longkill Road by applicant Kain Development Group LLC.

A public hearing on the plan is set for the Planning Board at 7:20 tonight in Clifton Park Town Hall.

"Friends of the Longkill has one basic premise: that this development proposal negatively impacts the environment, property values, public health and safety. We are asking the Planning Board to carefully scrutinize the latest plan and strongly consider issuing a positive declaration under SEQRA (State Environmental Quality Review Act) and requiring an environmental impact statement," said Gayle Wassenaar, a FOLK spokeswoman and Clifton Park resident.

The project is proposed for land abutting Hearthiside Drive and the Country Knolls-Longkill neighborhood. It is not located in the western area of Clifton Park and is eligible for the minimum 20,000-square-foot lot requirement, Planning Director Jason Kemper said.

"As proposed, the application meets the codes and requirements for the town," Kemper said. He said Kain Development owns the site's 18.7 acres, located in an area zoned residential.

But FOLK contends the property is environmentally sensitive. Removing the woods from the area would create drainage problems, threaten water retention and destroy wildlife habitat, a recent FOLK press release stated.

"Clear-cutting of these woods will also negatively affect neighbors' property values. Potential new homeowners will have perpetual drainage problems," the press release states.

Members of FOLK have been attending Planning Board meetings about the project since October 2004.