

Bill and Terri Lorensen
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October 3, 2005

Steven Bulger, Chairman
Clifton Park Town Planning Board
One Town Hall Plaza
Clifton Park, NY 12065

Dear Mr. Bulger:

**Subject: Kain Development Group, LLC – Proposed (18) lot subdivision,
Longkill Road, Town of Clifton Park**

We have resided at 14 Hearthiside Drive since November 1970. We are the original owners of our four-bedroom ranch (**Figure 1**) and over the years have made substantial improvements to our home. Our backyard borders the proposed 18 lot subdivision by Kain Development. We are concerned that the proposed subdivision will have a negative impact on our lifestyle, home and neighborhood. Although we have enjoyed privacy in our backyard for the past 35 years, we realize that the owners of the land have the right to develop their property. However, we have several concerns about the proposed subdivision.

- **High Water Table** – When Robert VanPatten built our homes 35 years ago, he was forced to build the foundations of many of the homes on Hearthiside Drive above ground because of the high water table. After construction of the foundations, VanPatten backfilled around the foundations. This backfilling resulted in slopes from the foundation to the street. At the rear of the house, our foundation is exposed to ½ of its height and backfilled (**Figure 2, Figure 3**). This is also true for several of our neighbors' homes bordering the proposed subdivision (**Figure 4**). In spite of this, we still run two sump pumps to keep the water under control in our basement. In our backyard, digging a hole 2 feet deep hits water. In the spring, the rear parts of our yard are typically submerged. We are concerned that additional building in the proposed subdivision will affect the topography of the land bordering our backyard and will cause further flooding of our backyard and possibly our basement. Because of the high water table and wetlands, in all likelihood, the new builder will not be able to excavate for some of the foundations. In fact, he is encountering this already in his Longkill subdivision in the Town of Ballston. The house that is currently under construction is built partially above ground and backfilled (**Figure 15**). In the new subdivision, he will also need to backfill, creating sloping ground towards Hearthiside Drive backyards. If the proposed subdivision is approved **we seek written assurance** from the Town and the Builder that any modification to the current water situation in our neighborhood will be corrected immediately at the expense of the Town and/or Builder.

- **Privacy** – The proposed subdivision, with its present layout, does not respect our privacy, nor does it respect the privacy of potential homeowners. In the October 26, 2004 minutes, Mr. Grasso commented, *“A number of lots have short rear yards that back up to other lots. This typically results in poor lot arrangements that compromise privacy.”* Mr. Grasso also emphasized *“the importance of revising the proposed lay-out to make the project more appealing to potential property owners.”* Further, at the same meeting, Mr. O’Brien stated, *“Extensive buffering should be retained along existing property lines to reduce potential impacts to surrounding residents.”* Finally, Mr. Bulger asked that *“no-cut buffers and clearing-limit lines be established to provide screening and privacy for future homeowners.”* We attended the Planning Board Meeting in September and **none of these comments were addressed.**
- **Subdivision layout** – The current proposed layout poses numerous problems for longtime Hearthside residents and future homeowners in the new subdivision. In addition to the privacy issues already presented, the board members suggested a cluster layout. At the October 2004 meeting, Mr. Bulger said, *“The applicant should consider a cluster subdivision layout since it appears that the conventional layout is proposing a number of residences with small rear yards that immediately abut other homes.”* Mr. Grasso stated, *“a cluster layout should be considered. A number of lots have short rear yards that back up to other lots”.* Finally, Mr. Bulger *“found the project lay-out undesirable and asked the applicant to consider clustering or an alternative lay-out.”* The developer also seems insensitive to the future homeowners of his subdivision. Some of the sites are on or very close to the wetlands in the subdivision. Although these wetlands are listed as disturbable, future homeowners will be at risk given the historical water problems in the Hearthside/Longkill area. Even Mr. Grasso *“expressed concern for the close proximity of the proposed house sites to the wetlands on Lots #12, 13, and 16. Reduction in the proposed density appears warranted.”* Mr. Grasso emphasized *“the importance of revising the proposed lay-out to make the project more appealing to potential property owners.”* Once again, **none of these Board concerns were addressed** by the developer at the September 2005 Planning Board Meeting.
- **Impact on Nature** – We do not consider ourselves conservationists. We do however enjoy the natural beauty and wildlife in our neighborhood. Our backyard receives frequent visits from woodpeckers (**Figure 7**), deer (**Figure 9**) and wild turkeys (**Figure 11**). Robert VanPatten was able to avoid the destruction of hundreds of trees in his developments, allowing the homeowner to make the decision about what trees to save. The trees in our backyard not only provide privacy (**Figure 5**), but also a refuge for wildlife (**Figure 10**). Looking at recent subdivisions near our home, developed by the same group, show a disrespect for the forests in our neighborhood. His Longkill subdivision that is in the Town of Ballston has been clear-cut. This property is close to the proposed subdivision and shows what is left as far as forest goes for the future homeowners (**Figure 15, Figure 16, Figure 17, Figure**

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18). Contrast these lost woodlands with the images from the forest that exists within the proposed subdivision (**Figure 13, Figure 14**). At the October 2004 meeting, Mr. O'Brien reported that "*The ECC notes that the project may have significant environmental impacts.*"

In summary, we oppose the proposed 18 lot subdivision by Kain Development because of water table, privacy, layout and nature concerns. We feel that the developer has not listened to the Board and shows a lack of consideration for the residents of the Hearthside/Longkill section of Country Knolls. In addition, the builder does not appreciate the value of the current forest and nature setting in the northern end of Clifton Park and adjoining Town of Ballston. This builder jeopardizes future owners of his homes with a lack of attention to the serious water problem in this area. We ask the Town to deny the application by the developer unless he can address the all of the concerns of long time and new residents of this neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Bill and Terri Lorensen

Cc: Planning Board Members

Jason Kemper, Town Planner

Mike O'Brien, Environmental Specialist

Environmental Conservation Committee

Phil Barrett, Town Supervisor



Figure 1. Front view of 14 Hearthside Drive.



Figure 2. Our backyard showing raised basement. The basement was built above ground and backfilled.



Figure 3. Our backyard showing raised deck.



Figure 4. Neighbor's raised deck. The slope to the left of the picture is all fill.



Figure 5. Backyard view of woods. Except for the blue spruces, all tree are native.



Figure 6. Backyard view showing the dense woods in fall.



Figure 7. Pileated woodpecker in our backyard. These trees are 5 feet from our back porch.



Figure 8. Pileated woodpecker on our back porch. This is one of two babies that recently visited.



Figure 9. Doe in our backyard.



Figure 10. Deer at the edge of the forest of the proposed development.



Figure 11. Wild turkeys in our backyard.



Figure 12. Wild turkeys in our backyard. Proposed development woods in the background.



Figure 13. A recent photo in the forest of the proposed subdivision.



Figure 14. Another photo in the proposed subdivision.



Figure 15. The Builder's Longkill subdivision in the Town of Ballston. New home with backfill.



Figure 16. Clear-cutting of forests on Longkill for the Builder's Longkill subdivision.



Figure 17. More clear-cutting.



Figure 18. The remains of the forest.