

Mayor's Column

April 10, 2017

In late week's column, I wrote of the Trustees' plan, in conjunction with our Planning, Zoning and Design Review Boards, to revisit the Village's Comprehensive Plan as it relates to the Business District.

On a parallel track, we will be reviewing same as it relates to the residential areas in the Village. The goal is to ensure that the Village's Plan reflects and addresses variables present in the current makeup and conditions in the Village. All will be looked at with the goal of maintaining standards that enhance the quality of the Village both in terms of home values and peace and enjoyment.

The following is a list of issues which have come to the fore. It is by no means exhaustive and at this juncture we earnestly seek your input. You as residents are the boots on the ground having experienced Village processes throughout your tenure here. We are quite aware that what looks practical on paper can often execute quite differently.

Goal: To Review all permit/home improvement regulations

- Are permits reviewed and granted in an optimal time frame?
- Would a check list of requirements for the home improvement process to be distributed at the onset of a project be helpful so no one is caught unaware or perhaps missing one critical document?
- Should neighbors doing construction be required to alert those nearby of particularly intrusive periods i.e., drilling, rock removal.
- Should every project have a point person that neighbors can call so they aren't put in the often untenable position of only having the police to call if nearby construction is not complying with regulations?
- Are permit time frames reasonable? Should renewals be allowed? What should be acceptable standards/hardships required to receive an extension/renewal? Should the effect of prolonged construction on the quality of life of nearby neighbors be a factor to be weighed in the equation?
- Should construction vehicles/workers' cars be required to park off site or at least limit the number of vehicles that can park on or near a site?
- Do we need regulations to protect mature trees from removal?

- If trees are removed, should a new planting/landscape plan be required to offset the loss?
- Should the noise ordinance be enforced even if work is conducted during permitted hours?
- Should contractors be required to pay for road and curb repairs if heavy vehicles are potentially damaging our streets?
- Is our floor area ratio i.e., structure to open space too harsh, too lenient? Are we allowing structures too large for certain lots or proper neighborhood integration of home sizes?
- Are our setback rules conducive to proper sight lines and in accordance with neighborhood character?
- Do our tear down /almost teardown rules promote proper sizing of residential homes vis a vis neighborhood character?
- Would a gardener registry be helpful as a way to monitor leaf blower use and proper disposal of leaf and grass clippings?
- In the same vein, would a landlord registry be advisable to make sure units are meeting all the health and safety codes as well as ensure that all units are legally configured?
- Do our overnight parking rules, no on street parking between 2am and 6am, meet the needs of current residents?

Some issues that must be addressed that were never contemplated by the authors of our current Village codes include:

- The design, size and location of solar equipment and panels. Since our homes are so close in proximity, one person's ecological and financial benefit could easily impact the sight lines, attractiveness of a neighboring home if rules are not properly formulated.
- How do we regulate the purchase of apartments, townhomes etc. by corporate entities who use them as short-term rental options? How does this use affect the property values in a neighborhood?
- How do we regulate the Airbnb phenomena? (it has already occurred in the Village and only stopped by an alert call from a neighbor.)

- How do we balance the parking needs of our not for profit schools, churches and hospital, given their close proximity to driveways, front walks and street spaces needed by residential dwellings?

Since our Village is so tightly developed, Planning, Zoning and Design Review rules play a critical role in balancing the needs of one homeowner with the potential detrimental effects on a nearby neighbor.

It is an intricate balancing act that has to constantly be recalibrated to maintain home values and the distinct character of our Village. It requires vision, anticipation of changes and acknowledging the realities of current taste and aesthetics. Again, your input is so valuable at this point in the process.

Share your thoughts at mayor@vobny.com