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Mar. 15, 2016

Mr. Doug Finch  
Town of Canandaigua Development Office  
5440 Routes 5 & 20 West  
Canandaigua, NY 14424

Re: 5265 Menteth Drive  
Reiser-Hyman Residence, Area Variance Application

Dear Mr. Finch,

Please share my written comments on the Reiser-Hyman variance request with the Zoning Board of Appeals, as I will not be able to attend the meeting this evening.


I am one of a family group of owners of the property at 4760 South Menteth Drive, which abuts the Reiser-Hyman property to the south, immediately across Menteth Creek. I have been aware through the neighborhood grapevine of plans for demolition and replacement of the Reiser-Hyman house, but I have not had an opportunity to review the proposed plans until today. The plans on file at the Development Office do not include a south elevation, so it is not possible for me to comment on the effects the project might have on our view across the brook, but a quick review of the materials on file suggest a number of concerns:

1. The application argues that any resulting change in the character of the neighborhood will be desirable rather than undesirable. While I appreciate the applicants' willingness to modify their plans in response to comments by their neighbors to the north, I must respectfully disagree. The neighborhood at present is a blend of older properties developed as summer vacation homes (typically small scale single-story or story and a half cottages) and newer and much larger and more costly homes built for year-round occupancy. As a representative of the long-time owner group hoping to maintain the status quo to the extent possible, I see this incremental movement toward more upscale development as an undesirable trend.
2. The applicants argue that the variances are not substantial. I strongly disagree. While the individual area variances, other than the setback ones, may seem minor in scale, the single most salient aspect of the application is the total square footage of all new structures, at 8,880 square feet, in contrast to the current 2,961 square feet, almost triple. This is a massive building project on a lot which is not suitable for such a scale of development.

3. The applicant argues that the irregular shape of the lot makes it difficult to replace the house while complying with the zoning requirements and addressing the special circumstances of a property through which runs one of the major streams flowing into Canandaigua Lake. This is certainly true. However, this is not a rationale for the granting of numerous variances to allow for a massive expansion of building area; rather it is a rationale for undertaking a much more modest level of development which the lot can reasonably support. The applicants should have understood this when they bought the property. If the applicant wishes to replace the house, in my view the appropriate and reasonable approach would be to replace it with a house that is no larger than the existing one. Under this scenario I could understand and support the need for area variances to make the design work.
4. The applicant describes measures taken to address the flood risk. Since our adjacent property experiences the same periodic flooding, including flooding inside the structures, we are sympathetic and sensitive to this risk, which affects multiple properties on both sides of the creek. The application indicates that the proposed flood mitigation measures will redirect the flood waters reaching the property back into Menteth Creek. The effect of this may be to raise the water level in the creek in the section adjacent to our property, increasing potential flood damage to those of us to the south. While we sympathize with our neighbors' desire to minimize their flood damage, it should not be done with the side effect of raising ours. I would support a neighborhood-wide effort to address the flooding concerns along the section of Menteth Creek between West Lake Road and the lake, and urge that no variances along the lines of those requested here be granted on any affected properties unless and until such an effort is completed.
5. I note that the County Planning Board has recommended denial of the request, for some of the same reasons mentioned above.

I am sorry not to have had an opportunity to review these concerns with the applicant earlier, and I hope that the ZBA will grant some time for those affected by this request to discuss it further.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Saralinda Hooker". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the "Sincerely yours," text.

Saralinda Hooker