

October 9, 2012

Riverhead Town Board
c/o Riverhead Town Clerk
Riverhead Town Hall
200 Howell Avenue
Riverhead, NY 11901

Re: Improvements to ZBA and Planning Board Appointment Process

We, the undersigned, would like to make the following recommendations in order to improve the transparency of the appointment process for and levels of competency of the board members for two boards that make critical land use decisions in the town of Riverhead: the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Planning Board.

Although both are appointed boards, the decisions they render have a significant impact on the neighborhoods, rural routes and business districts of our town. We believe that a more standardized, professional and open process will not only assist the Town Board in making the best decisions but also serve the public interest.

Please consider these suggestions:

Set Minimal Qualifications

In order to serve on either the Planning Board or ZBA, we believe an appointee should possess some very basic qualifications. At the very least, all appointees should have two years of experience dealing with land use issues from any number of a variety of perspectives including, but not limited to, as a: planner, architect, engineer, former official, civic leader, and/or environmentalist. *Please note that Town Law section 267(2) states board members are public officers and that Section 10(1)(ii)(a)(1) of the Municipal Home Rule Law provides that a county, city, town or village may, by local law, establish qualifications for its officers.*

Both boards should be comprised of members with a broad range of relevant backgrounds so that different perspectives and areas of expertise are represented. The Town Board could consider codifying that objective with the understanding that this would be a goal as opposed to a requirement.

Hold Public Interviews

We also suggest that prospective board appointees be interviewed by the Town Board in an open public meeting or work session and that resumes are available for public review when the interview is scheduled, in conformance with Section 103(e) of New York State

Open Meetings Law. These interviews should be standardized using a list of minimum interview topics such as relevant experience, standards of objectivity and understanding of ZBA roles and responsibilities.

It is important to note that other municipalities have adopted similar laws, including, for example, the nearby towns of Southampton and Brookhaven. We have a number of examples of these laws in our possession and would be happy to share them with you and to meet with the appropriate party to assist in the crafting of new legislation.

Thank you for taking the time to review our suggestions. The Riverhead Neighborhood Preservation Coalition hopes to hear from you soon about your disposition on this matter.

Sincerely,



Dominique Mendez
Riverhead Neighborhood Preservation Coalition

Sid Bail
Wading River Civic Association

Georgette Keller
Jamesport-S. Jamesport Civic Association

Reginald Farr
Greater Calverton Civic Association

Eric Biegler
Sound Park Heights, Inc

Robert S. DeLuca
Group for the East End

Bill Toedter
North Fork Environmental Council