

for the Ithaca Journal opinion
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Support Responsible Zoning in Caroline

Adoption of zoning in Caroline is a source of controversy. Opposition has been vocal and signs abound. Those of us who favor adoption of responsible zoning have been relatively quiet as the Zoning Commission does its work.

Those opposed to zoning say “we like Caroline as it is and want to keep things as they are.” Exactly! Zoning is the only way to exercise local control of our Town. Without zoning, the highest bidders will decide how our Town develops.

As the Caroline Town Board considers zoning, listening to current residents is important, but the Board’s responsibility includes consideration of generations to come. This is all the land we will ever have and once developed, its potential for farming, for wildlife habitat and for providing clean air and water is gone forever. That is a heavy responsibility.

Why zoning? Without zoning, any use can go anywhere. Most of us do not want a noisy or smelly use next door. I do not want a go-kart track, a gas station, factory or big store as my neighbor. Only through zoning can we direct such uses to specific sections in the Town.

Yes, zoning has been misused to segregate people. The current draft avoids that. Mobile homes, multi-family homes, “granny flats,” home occupations and small residential lots would be allowed throughout the Town.

Agriculturally related business would be allowed anywhere. To prevent sprawl along Route 79 as well as to avoid paving over of some of the better agricultural soils, large businesses would be limited to a few stretches along 79. Smaller scale commercial development would be allowed in all the hamlets.

Residents want to preserve the environmental quality that is a key to Caroline's character. The current zoning draft proposes measures to protect our streams and wildlife habitat that are not protected under current federal, state or local laws.

With climate change, our region will face increasing pressure for development. As droughts plague areas like California and Arizona, our agricultural lands will be in demand. The proposed zoning ordinance includes measures to try and retain land that is suitable for farming.

Misinformation about what is being proposed is widely quoted by those opposed to zoning. The draft does not encourage sprawl, but provides for dense housing options. The draft does not outlaw commercial development or home businesses. The draft does not prevent subdivision of property or the selling of small lots.

The process has been very transparent and public participation has been encouraged. Detailed answers to the many questions citizens have posed are posted on the Town website.

According to state law, the zoning adoption process does not allow for a town referendum so it is up to the Town Board to hold a public hearing and then approve, modify or reject the proposal sent to them by the Zoning Commission.

Now is the time. Let the Caroline Town Board know that you favor responsible zoning.