

Town of Liberty Informational Meeting on Proposed Zoning Changes
October 4th, 2016
Liberty High School Auditorium
125 Buckley St.
Liberty, N.Y. 12754
6:30 P.M.

What is zoning and why are we proposing changes?

Zoning determines what you can (and cannot) do with your property. If you bought a house or business and never made any changes to it you probably have never been affected by zoning. Most small changes only require a visit to the Code Enforcement officer to obtain a building permit. Sometimes what you or your neighbor want to do is beyond what the Code Enforcement officer can approve and that is where a visit to the planning board or zoning board comes in.

In 2011 changes were made to our zoning. While some people were happy with the changes others were not. The town board began a process to improve it.

Now we all want our town to keep the natural beauty we are known for; our breathtaking views, spectacular fall colors, clean water, safe neighborhoods and outdoor recreation opportunities. We all want to support our 21st century small farmers producing organic healthy food here in our backyard. Sustainability is the word. How do we create a sustainable community?

Sustainability is not just about farming and fresh air. It is about government finances too. How do we sustain our governments to provide us with the services we want and need and have taxes we can afford to pay? How can we pay for our roads, our parks, street lights, schools, libraries, fire departments and other services our government provides?

A word about Liberty's tax base. The tax base is the number we get when we add up the tax assessment on every single property in the town. Of course we have to deduct the tax exempt properties (that is another story). Which way have your taxes been going? They are going up not only because everything costs more, but because we have a tax base that doesn't grow as fast as the cost of government services. That is not sustainable.

Why are the taxes in the Town of Thompson lower than ours? They have a tax base more than twice the size of Liberty's. Walmart, Home Depot, half million dollar homes at Emerald Green. TWICE.

HOW DO WE FIX IT? We have to grow our tax base or we are out of business. No one will choose to live here because the taxes would be too high. Much of the blame for this falls on New York State. Our State government chooses to fund services like schools and other government functions, to a large part, with property taxes. This system penalizes poor municipalities that don't have large commercial taxable properties.

Until NY State comes to its senses and shifts the cost of government away from property taxes (as many other states have done) we must either grow our tax base or reduce government services. No one wants to see a reduction in services. In order to grow our tax base we need to encourage commercial development. Not only does commercial development increase our tax base, but it creates jobs, which is another thing we need to do to sustain our community. We believe the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning changes we are proposing will encourage economic growth while preserving our natural beauty and agricultural heritage. It doesn't fix everything, but it fixes some things. It is a living document and we should all work together to make sure that it continues to change to meet our needs, the primary of which is sustainability. Our proposed plan is not too permissive, not too restrictive, we think Goldilocks would like it.

I suppose I shouldn't be talking about our taxes here, especially for you folks reading this and thinking about investing in our town. You should know that Liberty has a town government committed to sustainability and we will do whatever it takes to grow this community that we love.

Details of the Draft Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Changes are available on the web at www.townofliberty.org

Charlie Barbuti
Supervisor, Town of Liberty