

An Invitation to Participate in the Preservation of Barrington's Farms and Rural Character Through the Crafting of a Subdivision Law

Introduction:

The primary concern of The Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Barrington, recently approved by the Town Board, is to preserve the Town's rural character, including its farms and agriculture-based businesses, vineyards, open space, woodlands, and scenic vistas.

In order to achieve this purpose, the Plan recommends the creation and passage of a "subdivision law". The Town Board has assigned to the Planning Board the task of crafting this law and recommending it to the Town Board for approval.

What is a "Subdivision"?

New York State law defines a "subdivision" as.....[insert the definition from the law, with citation] A "subdivision" as used in the law and covered by a "subdivision law" is a[division of property)....and not a cluster of homes.

Why a "Subdivision Law?"

The State empowers towns to regulate the subdivision of property through a subdivision law (Site the law). This empowerment is based on the assumption that, over time, the subdivision of property, more than any other factor, determines the overall character of the town. Without some level of review and regulation of subdivisions of property, through a subdivision law, development takes place haphazardly. As a result, development can completely and permanently alter the town's character, destroying the town's desirability as a place to live and visit, and increase the tax burden on property owners.

What is a "Subdivision Law? "

Local subdivision laws give the towns, exercised normally through its Planning Board, the ability to review and approve divisions of property, so that, over time, the rural character of the town can be preserved. Typically, subdivision laws make a distinction between "major" and "minor" subdivisions. Divisions of property under a pre-defined threshold may require no review at all. As divisions of property increase in scale, and/or their potential for long range impact the maintenance of the town's rural character increases, the degree of regulation and the intensity of the review process also increases.

Why Do We Need a Subdivision Law?

A Subdivision Law for Barrington will:

- Encourage the subdivision of property and the growth of housing development consistent with the preservation of the town's rural character;
- Help preserve valuable farmland, including active vineyards, thereby ensuring the continued viability of the town's agriculture and agriculture-based businesses, as well as its important grape and wine industry;
- Prevent the encroachment of housing developments upon our farmland and reduce the resulting conflicts between agricultural and non agricultural residents and land uses.
- Prevent the unregulated growth of roads and infrastructure, preventing the increase in taxes that, as studies show, inevitably accompanies unregulated subdivision and development of property.'

- Preserve our woodlands and wildlife habitat, ensuring the continuation of hunting and other recreational use of these woodlands. Preservation of woodlands is also critical for the maintenance of continued quality of our lakes and the beauty of our hillsides and scenic vistas.
- Help ensure the continued desirability of our town a place to live, and preserve the quality of life, as well as the value of the property, of all residents and landowners in the town.

The purpose of Subdivision Law is not to prevent landowners from subdividing their property and profiting from the sale of their property. It is to encourage the subdivision and sale of property, and its subsequent development, in a manner that will help ensure, over the long term, the maintenance of both our town's rural character (with its farmland, open space, woodlands, wildlife, and scenic vistas) and the quality of life of all Barrington residents.

An Invitation to Participate....

As this law is developed, we want to be sure that it is written in such a way that it does not hinder the ability of farmers to subdivide their property for purposes of providing plots for family members, providing retirement income, or needed capital. When combined with concepts like "cluster development," the subdivision law can be written in such a way that landowners can sell and subdivide their land while also preserving open space, vineyards, woodlands, and scenic vistas.

So that our subdivision law is written in such a way as to take into account the concerns of all citizens and property owners in the town, we encourage all residents and property owners to share their ideas and concerns with the Planning Board. The Planning Board actively seeks the participation of all residents as it moves forward on the subdivision law. Citizens and residents who would like an opportunity to participate in this process should contact the Town Clerk at.....

The Barrington Planning Board
November, 2008