

‘Exceptional character’

Woodstock considers designating Zena area Critical to the environment

by Nick Henderson

THE WOODSTOCK TOWN Board will consider classifying a significant portion of its Zena hamlet as a Critical Environmental Area (CEA) to help protect natural resources.

In a presentation to the board on November 9, Gretchen Stevens of Hudsonia, a nonprofit environmental research institute, defined a CEA: “A Critical En-

vironmental Area is defined in the law as a geographic area with exceptional character with respect to one or more of the following: A benefit or a threat to human health on natural settings such as fish and wildlife habitat, such as open space or areas with special scenic quality areas, with special agricultural or historic or recreational or educational values and others such values; or an area with inherent ecological or geological or hydrological sensitivity that may be adversely affected by any change in land uses.”

A working group with members of the Environmental Commission, the Planning Board, Town Board and Woodstock Land Conservancy, with assistance from Hudsonia, has come up with the Zena Woods CEA, which encompasses the Thorn Preserve, parts of the Bluestone Wild Forest and other environmentally sensitive areas. “The purpose of a CEA is simply to array to raise awareness about exceptional areas, and ensure that the features of concern are considered in the course of environmental reviews, adoption of new legislation or other actions that might affect the CEA.”

It carries no land use restrictions,

but does require features of concern to be considered as part of environmental reviews or adoption of new legislation.

“If the town board, for example, is adopting new legislation that might adversely affect or in any way affect the special features of the CEA, the board must then explain in writing how those

how to foster smart development.

“If you were proposing a new development, whether it’s a single house or a cluster of houses or a new subdivision, the best way to preserve the features of the large forest would be to design the new development so that the new features are at the edge of the forest instead of deep in the interior,” Stevens said. “There are lots of plants and animals that require these special conditions that you find in the deep forest interior.”

The CEA designation “hopefully will inspire the professional community that advises the many folks who want to pursue development in town,” said Woodstock Land Conservancy President Maxanne Resnick.

“It really continues what Woodstock has been doing for decades. I think we’ve been at the forefront,” said Supervisor Bill McKenna. “One of the reasons, for better or worse,

that we’re so popular that people want to come here is because we’ve done such a great job at maintaining such a wonderful community environment, and that’s what draws people here.”

McKenna said there will be more opportunity for future input if changes involve zoning and subdivision amendments. The CEA itself will also require a public hearing.

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— Gretchen Stevens, Hudsonia

effects were considered and how the decisions about the new legislation were made,” Stevens said. “If the Planning Board is reviewing a land development project within or adjacent to the CEA, they must explain in writing the features of concern in the CEA and how they might be affected by the Planning Board’s decision.”

But there are recommendations for

The Woodstock Town Board will accept letters of interest from Woodstock Residents to serve on the following volunteer Boards, Committees and Commissions:

Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Woodstock Environmental Commission, Commission for Civic Design, Housing Committee, Human Rights Commission, Zoning Revision Committee, Tree committee, Cemetery Committee, Ethics Board, Complete Streets, Comeau Stewardship Advisory Committee, Climate Smart Committee

If interested, please contact the Supervisor’s Office at 679-2113 x 17 or email: supervisor@woodstockny.org