

Town of Constantia Zoning Commission

Public Hearing October 13, 2026

Location: AA Cole Elementary

Subject: Zoning Commission Draft Zoning Law Public Hearing

Meeting Minutes – October 13, 2026

Call to Order

1. Call to Order and Opening

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance. Supervisor Ron Chapman welcomed attendees, introduced members of the Town Board and Zoning Commission (volunteers, unpaid), and noted the high turnout. He explained that a land-development law already covers roughly two-thirds of the content of the draft zoning document and that existing uses are generally protected (“grandfathered” / continued as existing non-conforming uses) unless a substantial change of use occurs.

Chapman stated the draft is intended to prepare for anticipated growth (Micron-related development, data centers, large-scale solar, population increase over the next 5–10 years) and to reduce future litigation risk. He emphasized that the document is still in draft form, that public input is welcomed, and that changes will be made. Sewer infrastructure is expected in roughly four to five years through cooperation with Oswego County and New York State.

2. Presentation by Zoning Commission Chair Jim Peck

Jim Peck provided an overview of the process and the draft:

- The Zoning Commission was established by Town Board resolution in 2023 and has held more than 40 meetings to date.
- Professional assistance was obtained from the New York State Department of State and other resources; the Town of West Monroe’s recent zoning work was reviewed as a model.
- Current regulations are essentially “one size fits all” (residential or business). The draft creates four districts: Rural ($\approx 90\%$ of the town, lower density), Waterfront, Residential (higher density), and Commercial/Industrial.
- Some lot requirements in the draft compared to the existing Land Development Law have been relaxed by Zoning district (e.g., creating conditionally-reduced front-yard

setbacks in already denser waterfront and residential areas, smaller permissible lot sizes in some areas where public water is available, road frontages).

- Mapping of districts was guided by the 2022 Comprehensive Plan and population-density data as well as area knowledge of the Commission members. Preliminary Oswego County Planning and Community Development feedback has suggested that instead of smoothing zoning district boundaries, which in some instances results in parts of a parcel being in different districts (a concept known as “Split-zoning”), the entirety of each parcel should be in one district. This can lead to an irregularly shaped District boundary but might be more easily enforceable, according to the County. (Formal submission for review has not happened and will not until much later on the legal process).
- The draft is intended to protect the community while allowing orderly growth. Existing uses continue.
- Process remaining (not in order, in large part required by State process): Continued Commission work incorporating community feedback, Town Board review, and adopting a resolution in accordance with SEQRA (State Environmental Quality Review Act) declaring the Town as lead agency by the Town Board, at a minimum one more formal public hearing, referral to and receipt of feedback from formal review by Oswego County Planning and Community Development and, near the end of the process, advising multiple agencies and neighboring municipalities of the pending adoption, possible final revisions, and adoption by the Town Board

Peck stressed that the document is a living draft, that mistakes will be corrected, and that public comments will be considered. He invited continued input via the Town Clerk, Supervisor, or Commission members.

3. Public Comments

Numerous residents spoke. Comments were limited to statements (no formal Q&A during the open period, though some questions were noted for later response). Major themes and representative remarks:

Concerns about rural lifestyle, hobby farming, animals, and property rights

- Andrea Hogan / Andrew Holmes: Opposed any prohibition on hobby farms or backyard chickens; supported reasonable regulations on noise/sanitation but not bans. Emphasized food security, education of children, and rural character.
- Courtney Youman (agricultural advocate): Questioned definitions of “primary” vs. “secondary” income for hobby farms; urged consultation with NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, county farm bureau, and agricultural specialists. Cautioned that change-of-use rules and permitting requirements could hinder legitimate farm activities, including within agricultural districts.

- Multiple speakers (Jennifer House, Cassie Tuff, Starlene Collins, others): Objected to restrictions or permits on chickens, gardens, work trucks parked at home, fences, RVs/campers, tree cutting, and similar everyday rural activities. Argued these are core to the reason people live in Constantia and should not require extensive permitting or engineering drawings.

Enforcement, costs, bureaucracy, and fixed-income residents

- Melissa Rowe: Lives across from a large commercial operation (Kleis Equipment). Cited noise, dust, traffic, and insufficient setbacks (15 ft inadequate for large equipment). Questioned capacity of the single code-enforcement officer and whether budget supports additional enforcement.
- Roberta Armstrong: Submitted written corrections, questions, and concerns about financial burden on elderly, retirees, disabled, and fixed-income households; duplication of DEC oversight; potential liability; restrictions on ordinary rural activities; and transparency (map labeled “confidential”). Suggested size-based allowances for hobby farming. Also interested in becoming a Zoning Commission member.
- Frank (Doris Park): Characterized the draft as a “huge land grab.” Raised concerns about dilapidated barns, storage containers, junk vehicles, and the ability of the Town (or inter-municipal agreements) to enforce removal with fines (\$200/day) or jail time, especially for long-time or elderly owners who cannot afford abatement. Called for a public vote.
- Allen Tennant and others: Highlighted costs of engineering drawings, permits, and fees for young families for small improvements; argued existing state exemptions for smaller residential work should not be overridden.

Transparency, process, and democratic input

- Several speakers stated the process felt rushed or top-down, that notification was inadequate, and that residents should have a direct vote.
- Sandy Holt and others asked for clear public notice of any “final draft” before it advances.
- Officials repeatedly clarified that multiple public-comment opportunities remain and that the Town Board ultimately decides; the Commission is advisory.

Support for orderly growth / existing businesses / living document

- Dan Retaczjyk (Zoning Board of Appeals Chair): Noted that many changes relax prior uniform setbacks and reflect past variance grants. Described the document as a living document that will continue to be revised; encouraged ongoing participation and volunteer service on boards.
- Joe Abbas and Starlene Collins (small-business owners): Emphasized the importance of allowing existing and small local businesses (including home-based/mobile) to

operate and expand without new barriers that could force them out. Collins described a mobile service business based at home that serves local residents at lower cost.

- Rick Hamilton: Raised specific agricultural-assessment / classification issues affecting his operation and urged attention to state agricultural law.

Other specific issues

- Noise, lighting, RV limits, political signs, wind-turbine setbacks, solar-panel placement, and data-center/solar-farm regulation were mentioned.
- Speakers repeatedly asked that the Town first address existing quality-of-life problems before adding new regulations.
- Several residents expressed fear that the rules would drive long-time families and young people out of town.

4. Board / Commission Responses During and After Public Comment

- Officials reiterated that the document is a draft, that hobby-farm / chicken language is already under active revision, that existing uses continue, and that no final decisions have been made.
- Supervisor Chapman stated it has never been the Town's intention to make life more difficult or expensive and that the Board and Commission will step back, review all input, and continue dialogue.
- Peck and others confirmed remaining procedural steps include further public hearings and opportunities for comment.
- The Supervisor offered to send monthly meeting reminders to anyone who requests them and directed comments/questions to the Town Clerk or his email (available on the Town website).
- Facebook was discussed as a communication channel; officials noted reliance should be on the website, Town calendar and official postings.

5. Closing

The meeting concluded after all registered speakers had the opportunity to address the board. An opportunity was given for anyone else who had not signed up to comment to do so. Officials thanked attendees for their engagement, urged continued participation through emails, office visits, and future meetings, and affirmed that public input will be considered before any adoption. No formal votes or final actions on the zoning draft were taken nor, as was stressed, could they be yet.

Next steps noted in the record

- Compilation and review of all written and oral comments.
- Further revisions by the Zoning Commission.
- Town Board review, SEQRA, formal public hearings, agency referrals, and eventual decision by the Town Board.
- Continued public access to the draft and map via the Town website.

Attendees / Speakers of record

Officials: Ron Chapman (Supervisor), Jim Pack (Zoning Commission / Planning Board Chair), other Town Board and Commission members present at meeting.

Public speakers included: Melissa Rowe, Andrea Hogan / Andrew Holmes, Roger Paradiso, Michael Visconti, Roberta Armstrong, Courtney Youman, Dan Retaczjyk, [John/Kathy] Catania, Tony Butterra, Jennifer House, Frank, Sandy Holt, Steve Boyden, Joe Abbas.

Adjournment

Meeting concluded at 8:00 PM with many people staying to continue to have smaller conversations with other members of the public. Mr. Chapman and Mr. Peck were available for additional questions and spoke with members of the public during this time.

Brenda Mosher

Brenda Mosher
Secretary
Town of Constantia Planning Board, Zoning
Board, and Appeals Board