# Town of Constantia Zoning Commission

## Meeting Minutes – October 27, 2026

## Call to Order

Chair Peck opened the meeting at 6:00 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance

## Attendees

Voting members in attendance included:

- Chair James Peck
- Sandra Retajczyk
- Sandra Touri-Bell
- Joseph Markham
- Randall West
- Brien Connolly
- Terri John
- Brenda Mosher, Secretary

Guests in attendance included: Ron Chapman, Town Supervisor; Daniel Pone, Town Board; Thomas Moran, Town Board; Matt Johnson, Tug Hill Commission; Town Attorney; John Catania, new alternate Planning Board member; Local residents included Steve Gilbert, Roberta Armstrong, Doug Shattell, Allen Tennant, James Gilman, Michelle Mark, Kirk Phillips, Cliff Parsons, Jennifer House, as well as many other additional members of the Community that did not sign in but were present.

Members not in attendance included: Martin Godzwon

## Opening Remarks – Chair

Chair Peck welcomed attendees and noted the strong public interest following the public hearing held on the 13th. He emphasized that this is a work session of the Zoning Commission focused on addressing issues raised regarding the draft zoning law.

He directed the public to the published draft zoning law document as the authoritative source and cautioned against relying on online summaries, hearsay, or informal discussions. The Commission's charge from the Town Board is to develop a new zoning law that builds on the existing Land Development Law while remaining as least intrusive as possible. Zoning regulations were distinguished from HOA rules. What is being established are NOT HOA rules.

Resources consulted include zoning laws from neighboring communities (West Monroe, Parish, and others) and technical assistance from Matt Johnson of the Tug Hill Commission / New York State Department of State.

The Chair outlined the remaining process: continued revision of the draft, attorney review, Town Board review, SEQRA lead agency declaration by the Town Board, formal County referral, additional public hearing(s) by the Zoning Commission and/or Town Board, and final adoption steps.

## Discussion – Split Parcel and Zoning District Boundary Adjustments

Matt Johnson presented mapping suggestions aimed at reducing the number of parcels split by zoning district boundaries (particularly waterfront, commercial, and rural designations). He indicated that reasonable adjustments could eliminate roughly 80–85% of split-parcel situations while retaining some splits where they remain the more logical approach based on property size, access, or use.

Examples discussed included properties in the Hamlet of Constantia, Panther Lake, and Bernhard's Bay areas. Considerations included consistency with the comprehensive plan, protection of water resources and aesthetics, potential tax/assessment implications, and avoidance of creating new inconsistencies (e.g., waterfront zoning fronting on non-waterfront roads).

Commission members discussed the County's preference for minimizing splits, the option of taking a "common sense / compromise" approach rather than extending districts to entire parcels in every case, and the availability of the Zoning Board of Appeals variance process and future map-amendment requests as safety valves.

**MOTION Chair Peck made the motion that the Commission accept the recommendations made by Mr. Johnson of the Tug Hill Commission. Mr. Markham seconded, motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Johnson to send suggested language, the County may come back with their own suggested language in which the Commission can accept or reject.

## Discussion – Definitions and Other Draft Revisions

Chair Peck and Mr. Johnson reviewed proposed definition and language changes responding to public comments from the October 13 hearing and subsequent input. Key items discussed (no formal votes taken; for discussion and incorporation into the working draft):

- Existing nonconforming / existing uses language clarified (use runs with the land, not the owner; vacant for more than one year triggers site plan review).
- Animal shelter / kennel definition revised to apply only to commercial or public boarding of dogs or small domestic animals (explicitly excludes typical residential dog pens).
- Equipment rental definition clarified to exclude maintenance of privately owned equipment on residential properties.
- Hobby farm language and associated restrictions removed.
- Chicken-related restrictions eliminated.
- Junkyard definition updated with more precise boilerplate language.
- Small-scale mining definition clarified to exclude excavation associated with construction projects.
- Commercial vehicle storage provisions removed or clarified so that bringing work vehicles home is not restricted.
- Broken internal references and certain building-code language noted for further cleanup.

Ms. John was recognized for her ongoing work as primary keeper of the master document and proofreading. The Commission agreed that changes should be reviewed carefully before any formal posting and that a note should appear on any shared draft stating that the revisions are proposed, not yet adopted. Preference was expressed for releasing significant updated drafts (rather than every incremental change) while ensuring the public can see that major concerns raised on the 13th are being addressed. PDF versions with clear revision marking were discussed as preferable for website posting.

## Public Comment

The floor was opened for public comment (approximately three-minute guideline noted).

- **Keith Gilbert** asked whether proposed changes would be available for public review before attorney review (answer: yes, with limited exceptions for legal questions) and confirmed that existing-use protections run with the land/property rather than the individual owner.
- **Roberta Armstrong** raised questions about how split waterfront/rural parcels would be marketed and suggested that primary use/value should inform designation. She supported the revisions already made, recommended clear revision dating on documents, and noted alignment with State agricultural and DEC standards.
- **Jim Jackson** discussed his property (and neighboring parcels) relative to Route 49 and the waterfront designation, questioning the natural break of the highway versus extending waterfront protections. Commission members explained the rationale related to lake views, runoff proximity, and consistency.
- **Cliff Parsons** asked about mapping relative to Cemetery Road, streams, and sewer district considerations and whether residential designations account for wetlands constraints. The Chair noted that residential boundaries were informed by the comprehensive plan's population-density mapping and that wetlands remain subject to separate State regulation.
- **Jennifer House** suggested red-lining deleted text and highlighting new text within a single document for easier public comparison of changes.
- Additional brief comments or "no comment" indications were received from others present.

A brief clarification occurred regarding John Catania's status as Planning Board alternate and potential participation with the Zoning Commission going forward. More to follow up on.

**Notes for the record**

- This was a work session focused on map adjustments and definitional refinements in response to prior public input.
- No final draft was adopted. Further revisions, mapping updates, and matrix work are expected at subsequent sessions.
- Public is encouraged to submit written comments to the Town Clerk or Commission members for the official record.

## Adjournment

Chair Peck moved that the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Mr. Markham and Ms. Retajczyk. Members voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:05 pm.

*Brenda Mosher* 11/10/26

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