

Panel votes easing of zoning rules

Changes designed for more flexibility in Highland Lake District

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WINSTED — Less-restrictive zoning regulations for the building of decks, balconies, patios and terraces in the Highland Lake District were approved by the planning and zoning commission Monday night.

The approval came on a 4-1 vote. Commission member Richard Nalette opposed the changes.

Commission Chairman Thomas Carey said the changes are designed to make the rules more flexible.

The restrictive Highland Lake Zoning District was adopted by the commission in 1989.

The regulation adopted Monday night requires minimum side yards of 9 feet for the construction of a deck, balcony, patio or terrace at Highland Lake.

It also requires that a landscape buffer be planted in the side yard to create a screening between residential lots. Also, the structures cannot be built within 20 feet of the lake shore, retaining wall or high water level of the lake.

Charlene LaVoie, the town's community lawyer, said the Highland Lake zoning regulations "are very restrictive where decks, balconies, terraces are concerned."

LaVoie was hired as Winsted's community lawyer by the Shateek Nader Trust to protect the public interest in matters concerning town government.

She said the new regulation adopted by the commission after a public hearing Monday night "eases the restrictions quite a bit, but still, in effect, penalizes Highland Lake residents for lot and structure sizes which many had no control over."

LaVoie said at the hearing that the new regulations "are still rather restrictive."

Nalette said the intent was to be less restrictive than the Highland Lake Zone.

John Gauthier, chairman of the town's zoning board of appeals, spoke in favor of the new regulation at the public hearing.

In other action, the commission approved issuing a notice suggested by Maureen E. Donahue of Winsted, a lawyer representing the association of owners at River Walk condominiums on Route 20 near the town's two industrial parks.

The order says no future certificates of occupancy will be issued for River Walk until the developer complies with certain items called for in plans for the condominiums such as asphalt shingles instead of fiberglass.