

**VILLAGE OF SOUTH BLOOMING
GROVE
PUBLIC HEARING
PROPOSED LOCAL LAW – AMENDING CHAPTER 235
HOUSE OF WORSHIP
Friday
May 21, 2021
11:00 AM**

➤ **Call to order**

- Mayor Kalaj called to order the Village Board Public Hearing at 11:08 a.m. on May 21, 2021 via Zoom Webinar #930 8343 2258 for the Village of South Blooming Grove located at 819 State Route 208, within the Village of South Blooming Grove, and having a mailing address of Monroe, New York.

➤ **Roll call**

The following persons were present:

- George Kalaj – Mayor
- Abraham Weiss – Deputy Mayor
- Yitzchok Feldman– Trustee
- Asher Guttman - Trustee
- Zalmon Rosner – Trustee
- Scott B. Ugell, Esq. – Village Attorney

➤ **Comments:**

- Attorney Ugell opened the public hearing and advised that utilizing the Zoom process complies fully for the board to proceed and go forward.

➤ **Public Comments**

- **Scott Morrice** will prior Houses of Worship be reviewed or just new ones. Engineer Fusco advised that this was a new ordinance going forward to establish a procedure. If there are ones in arrears they will have to reviewed as the board becomes aware of them.
- **Aaron Weider** commends the Mayor and Village Board for submitting this proposal and hopes it will be done expeditiously.
- **Robert S. Rosborough**, is an attorney representing the United Jewish Community Board of Blooming Grove and his clients wanted to express their great support for this law and pulling the Village of South Blooming Grove into compliance with RLUIPA and New York State Common Law which as you know requires people access to religious uses as any other use. This law will go a long way, my client’s believe, to assisting the religious exercise. The law itself establishes a uniform process for all members of the community and you should be very commended for doing so.
- **Donna Douglas** how are the pending houses of worship gong to affect the tax rolls and naturally this would increase our taxes. Would they be coming off of the tax rolls or how will the board proceed with that? How much of an increase will this cost tax payers. Attorney Ugell replied that

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this is not possible to answer; once we get through this process, we will have a better handle on what if any consequence it might have versus where we are today.

- **Dawn Salka** asked the board to please keep the public hearing open for those that are unable to attend as this meeting is during the daytime, for those that are working. The majority of homes in the Village of South Blooming Grove are 1500 to 1800 square feet and this new Zone states that homes no greater than 5000 square feet; this is greater than 3 times the existing homes with the increase in square footage and the change in 750 square feet residence which is also known as accessory apartments which is supposed to be used for immediate family members to a house of worship able to contain up to 50 people, that is obviously an increase in use of water, you are unable to accommodate water to the residents right know; there is brown water, yellow water, no water. How are you justifying an increase in population and were these proposed changes that you sent on April 12, 2021 and May 11, 2021; why were they sent to Joel Stern and Isaac Ekstein as opposed to cc'ing the elected officials, the Board of Trustees?
- **Kaitilin Kitzrow** I am confused as to whether or not we are just talking about houses of worship amendments or other amendments. I will start with the houses of worship and then maybe you can help me out the other amendments that were in that document. I am confused about the uploaded document because it doesn't follow the standards required for local laws as outlined in Article 3, Section 20 of the Municipal Home Rule and the handbook for Village Officials and so even if we are talking about the public hearing that is officially in response to a local law the document is not yet structured as a local law. I appreciate that you are having maybe this pre public hearing on the draft but this hearing itself, as far as I understand it, does not qualify. So, in response to the draft local law that was posted I am confused as to, so there was provision for churches, synagogues, mosques and other houses of worship, I just am unclear as to the purpose of breaking that down into different sizes and how that translates to other religions. The draft law as proposed or posted talks about shtiebels and schuls but what does that look like for other religions. It is not clear what the purpose is. I am trying to understand if I am not Jewish how would I even know how this applies to me if I would want to apply for a house of worship.
- **Susan Blakeney** regarding amendments to Chapter 235. Notification of this public hearing; when I first saw the 5.21.2021 Village Board Meeting and another below it, when I clicked on it at 9:54 am today to be notified they both gave me a 404 message indicating "page not found"; that is very troubling and maybe people thought the village was not having the meeting and she had to contact a friend to get the correct link. Notification and having your website as a legal understanding is really important. The full environmental assessment form amending Chapter 235 of the Zoning Code for the Village of South Blooming Grove. Question regarding C.2b adopted land use plans asking "is this site of the proposed action within any local or regional special planning district?" The application stated No but the proposed changes are to a ridgeline overlay which is a regional special planning district. She thinks that everything needs to be redone. Question C.2c "is the proposed action wholly or partially within an area listed in an endocted municipal open space plan or farming" this is also incorrect as the Town of Blooming Grove does have an open space plan and natural heritage project and the community preservation plan that incorporates all the properties also within the Village of South Blooming Grove; not just the Town of Blooming Grove but also the Village of South Blooming Grove and the Village of Washingtonville, so we need to be broader

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with looking at things. Part II in this assessment is “potential project impacts” All assessments of impacts are marked no as the proposed action may involve impacts. She believes and even things are stated in there that all changes proposed in this amendment will have impacts.

- **Eddie Johnson** there may be problems setting limits but it seems like with changes of this magnitude, it would be wise if possible to set a limit on the number of houses of worship and the size and the impact on taxes otherwise the village will not be viable for many of its residents who are already having a lot of problems keeping up with the taxes. Secondly she feels that along with open government it may not be illegal but it is inconsiderate at best, to hold one of the most important meetings of the year at 11:00 o’clock on a Friday morning when most villagers are at work. Important changes like this that impact the tax base and rural character of the Village need to be congruent with the Village’s Comprehensive Plan. Her understanding is that in order to be congruent with the Comprehensive Plan in this instance the Comprehensive Plan would have to be changed first because of all of the magnitude of the impacts on the environment; not just an amendment. Specifically, visual impact studies should be done on any buildings on or adjacent to protected overlay land. She appreciates Susan’s comments regarding being located in protected lands and as well as open space and community preservation plans and that adjacent properties and residents and especially the park land and any other environmental groups need to be notified when any of these changes are being made. She encourages the Board to keep this public hearing open.
- **Christine Castellano** item number 4 of the document provided by Cisco Engineering, as proposed would eliminate Chapter 235-14.1 section (a)2, (a)1, (a)7 which would remove protection for threatened or endangered flora and fauna, this conflicts with section 7 on page 4 of the Mayor’s forum stating that the proposed amendment would have no impact on plants or animals, this omission is not only irresponsible, it is potentially dangerous. Protected fauna populations in South Blomming Grove would include rattlesnakes at the base of the mountain including on the proposed Clovewood Development should that development ever come to fruition. I am concerned that the potential future residents would be put in danger. The proposed amendment is irresponsible and law should remain as is.
- **Tracy Schuh** wanted to focus her comments the section that does impact the ridge overlay district which seems to be beyond the goals of what was discussed as an intro to the changes happening. Why are you reducing the ridge overlay protective regulations; why is the height of the building no longer calculated from the natural ground, instead being measured from the average finished grade, because now it would be possible to build up soil to buildings and qualify them as basements. She was wondering what the rational behind increasing the height limit from 25 feet to 35 feet. The amended code would turn two story buildings into three story buildings. One story buildings could have up to 5000 square foot footprint and two stories were 2500 but now both can be 5000 square foot buildings, these are extremely large buildings that will require more services. It looks like the base lot count will increase by 1.5 times so lots themselves could be 50% more dense if they qualify. As someone previously stated there appears to be an omission for identifying critical habitats. This is very confusing because if you are not looking for and documenting these habitats in the field, how can you protect them. Based on all the above, are town wide impacts and there should be an environmental impact study to take a hard look at the consequences of these proposed amendments. These changes are clearly reducing environmental consideration and therefore I ask

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that you consider the significance of these proposed actions and take your time to review SEQRA and not procedurally, but really understand the thorough evaluation needed on what these changes mean to the community character and most importantly the natural resources available. Please take your time to see that you are moving in a sustainable direction when you make changes to your code.

- **Sonia Ayala** commented that due to the last minute changes made to the proposed zoning laws she urge the Village Board to keep the public hearing open. This will allow residents who couldn't attend the public hearing or review the updated documents to be able to submit their comments and questions. The village board and the professionals need to answer the questions and address the comments. They also need to wait for Orange County Planning Department to send in their comments, the village needs input from the fire and police departments, Blooming Grove Ambulance Corp, we need input from our first responders. A need a list of requirements for applicants for houses of worship, how many exits will be required, how many attendees are allowed, will sprinkler systems be required, parking, distance between houses of worship and regular homes. Outline other safety requirements. Resolution to establish lead agency has to be updated with new date instead of April 12. The 235, attachment 1 Table of General Use Requirements was not included in the second package. Explain the elimination of Section (a)2, (a)1 and (a) 7 which deals with threatened or endangered flora or fauna. Explain the language of Section (a)3(a) regarding affordable housing. In your addition in Section C(3)(b), the word plat should be plan or plot has to be corrected, the changes to the height and description on how to measure the height if passed will obstruct the scenic views and negatively impact the village. Section C(b)(1)(c) regarding footprint should stay the same and not change. Regarding the EAF, the first EAF was signed by the Mayor and the new one is not, Why? Page 2b dates have to be updated, page 3c.3 the answer was yes, but explanation is not provided and answered as N/A. Questions from pages 3-13 were not answered, page 5 has questions about demand for water and wastewater not answered, page 9(e).1b under other states entire town, needs explanation, Part II of the EAF page 6 item 9, Impact on Aesthetic Resources was answered No, however item (b) should have been answered as moderate to large impact may occur, also there will be impacts on the roads, will there be a limit of how many houses of worship will be allowed. Regarding the financial impact, there are already six (6) parcels that are tax exempt totaling \$505,200.00 in the Village. There is another parcel where there was a major tax reduction of \$497,900, total assessed value off the tax roll is \$1,300,100.00 it is tentative and you can find this information in the Town of Blooming Grove Assessors Department.
- **Kristie Johnson** stated that her home is roughly 2000 square feet and the largest party she ever had was 25 people and it took up space on the street for parking, ran amuck with her water bill. She is all for worship and it doesn't matter who or what you pray to, it is good for the human spirit however, it should not be at the detriment to the rest of the community. South Blooming Grove is a rural village and it is concerning. Houses of Worship, how many, how many times a week are there going to be 50 people at any one given house, blocking traffic, blocking potentially emergency services; there is a lot to consider regarding the infrastructure of this very rural village and there is a lot to consider when talking about the quality of life, community harmony and it certainly doesn't do anything for a mutual respect. She grew up with the understanding that my rights end where another's begins and I don't see that being considered in the Village. You just passed a resolution

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that she had no idea that was even on the table, when was the meeting that this resolution to spend \$30,000 on these LED lights? When did that take place? When she looked at the agenda today under resolutions it says None. She thinks that this should be a do over because you can't just spring these things on people.

- **Jean Galli** agrees with the last comments that were made. Her overall concern is quality of life and what has been a predominately rural community and seemingly lack of transparency despite some of the raves at your inauguration although albeit short lived right now has gotten. Putting houses of worship in communities, what will that do to the community neighbors. Neighbors affect your quality of life and that is her biggest concern. That could set a precedence that could dramatically change the overall area. It is not like this precedent hasn't been set before. It has been. So with that she asks that the board be democratic, be open minded and realize that we all live in this community together.
- **Sue Anne Vogelsberg** The cover letter of both April 12 and May 11 marked “attorney client work product” from the Village Engineer Fusco to the Village Attorney Ugell include volunteers Stern and Ekstien, but not the Village Trustees. As Stern and Ekstien are not elected officials and cannot conduct business on behalf of the village could this void the resolution. If single family residences request to become a house of worship, why would the ridge overlay need to be eliminated unless future plans are to increase the size of these residences. If these single family residences will be repurposed for large groups on a routine basis, will fire exits, indoor sprinklers, dedicated parking areas, etc. be required for the health and safety of both the first responders and the participants. In reaching out to various New York State Agencies for guidelines, I was advised to contact the local building inspector, code enforcement officer as this is a local issue. I emailed our building inspector on April 29 and I am awaiting a reply. Regarding the documents, **Part I** - the project and setting, page 1 of 13 the purpose or need is not stated, page 2 of 13, the application to the Orange County Planning Department back in February of 2021 there was no report received, there was no request made to any regional agencies, such as the police department, the ambulance corp., and the fire company. The project is also within the Moodna Watershed, yet it was not listed. Pages 3 -13 are blank, including the absence of the date and the Mayor's signature. **Part II** – the full environmental assessment form, page 1-10, the report lists no impact on air animals, flooding, traffic, ground water, etc., etc. yet there is no evidence to support all of the NO's. That part ends with a quote that it is consistent with the community plans and character, yet there is no evidence to support that statement. The final report ends with “this project will result in no significant adverse impacts on the environment and therefore an environmental impact statement need not be prepared accordingly a negative declaration is issued.” Again there is no documents in this for this conclusion to be arrived at. SEQRA is about the environment, yet this code change will have a financial impact as well. As of April 30, 2021, there are seven (7) designated houses of worship in residential homes as per the 2021 Town of Blooming Grove tentative tax rolls with an increase in exemptions there will be decreased tax revenue for the Village, how will this deficit be met. Section 462 of the Real Property Tax Law authorizes an exemption from real property taxation for property owned by a religious organization while the property is actually being used by the officiating clergymen of that organization for residential purposes. Who will monitor that, will additional staff need to be hired. The exemption under Section 462 must be applied for annually, again will additional clerical staff

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need to be hired, etc., etc., etc..... In my opinion, much more research needs to be presented to the tax payors before considering any amendment to the Village Code.

- **Naomi Fingerhut** asked that the public hearing remain open. The fact that the board had this meeting at 11 o'clock on a Friday morning, it is inconvenient for a lot of people. She had to take a day off to be on the call and requests going forward that if you have a meeting of this magnitude, that it be done after hours wherein working folk can actually attend. The attorney client work product, the draft from Fusco, Joel Stern and Isaac Ekstein were cc'd however they are not elected officials nor represent the village in any official capacity. Regarding the special permits for houses of worship, will there be a cap to the number of permits issued? I am assuming that based on the comments before there has not been any kind of an assessment on the effect of the reduction in taxation to the Village. There was mention of a code enforcement officer, is that something that exists today for this going to be a new position? The Mayor advised we do have and have had a code enforcement officer. The full environment assessment for Part II – on page 6 you answered no to question number 9, which is the impact on aesthetic resources and question number 18 on page 10 a consistency with community character you also answered no, given the proposed changes to the ridgeline overlay, how do you rationalize your answer being a NO?
- **Ryne Kitzrow** holding a public meeting like this at 11am on a Friday is ultimately reckless from a public administration perspective. It is insulting to your constituents that you are not holding this meeting when more of them are out of work. If the intent was specifically to do that, to hold this meeting when people aren't available, that is a potential ethical violation. Going forward we should not be holding public comment periods during a work day during the mid-week. Specifically going through the items because there are a lot of components to this, beginning with 235.94g, it is a very valid questions to ask what the tax impact of turning a portion of our homes in the community into houses of worship, it is very legitimate to ask how this fits into the village plan, what the expected quantity is and it is kind of an absurd answer to say that we don't know the impact until we pass a law and see who applies. We should absolutely be doing a study before and determining what the likely impact will be, because that might modify what the law should be and so that is a very legitimate concern. In 235.14-1 to eliminate section 82a1 a 7 which is being replaced by a 3a or eliminating the protection or the conservation analysis of flora and fauna, but at the same time leaving primary and secondary areas, including areas of steep slopes and stone walls and so it seems like a very specific effort to determine that you want to remove endangered flora and fauna from the analysis requirements but leaves no walls and I am very curious to understand what the rational is because it is a very odd choice to make in our overlay districts. Additionally, when discussing a3a while affordable housing can definitely be a valuable resource, when you have a community that is impacted by surface and ground water problems, creating high density affordable house is ultimately irresponsible because it ensures that people who need to be in affordable house, lower income families will be concentrated into what is effectively substandard housing with uncertain access to water and that is a serious concern for this community. I also have a major question of where the increase in terms of density from 10% increase from affordable housing as it is today to a 50% increase came from, what community planning studies is that created from and how does that align with our neighboring communities. I getting into how these proposals align with neighboring communities, specifically on the elimination and replacement of 235.14.4 c 4 a 1 2, what is the

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rational for changing height restrictions in the overlay district, what other communities and environmental planners have engaged and signed off on this change. If you look around for other neighboring communities, you have ridgeline protection districts in the Town of Blooming Grove, Warwick, the height for both of those areas is set at 25 feet, so we would be deviating from what other communities in this area have. And that is similar as well for section c 4 b 1. What is the rational for changing the overall footprint because when you look at comparable communities in this area who have these restrictions in their code none of them have footprints outside of 2500 square feet, so we would be double what is provided in comparable communities. Ultimately when we get into the environmental impact assessment form all of what is said above is that there is impact on land, surface water, ground water, animals aesthetic resources, critical environment areas, noise, odor and light, consistency with community plans and last one in particular, he doesn't understand how we can say there is consistency with these changes in terms of the existing community plan when the details of this including increasing the height of homes in the ridgeline overlay district by 40%, doubling the footprint of homes in the overlay district by 2500 square feet. The Mayor advised that he has extended his three minute comment time. Mr. Kitzrow replied that this is actually exactly why we should be leaving this public comment period open and exactly why this law should really be broken apart because there are so many components of this and he can't get through it in three (3) minutes and we really need a broader period.

- **Avrohom Flohr** congratulated Mayor and Trustees on what a beautiful site to see a beautiful village board that was voted in recently and the reason why this board was voted in is just exactly for this meeting to take place, to show that we are still in the United States and we have our constitution and everybody knows that the constitution 1st amendment is that everybody has the right to freedom of speech, freedom of religion. I am the chief paramedic of the Village of Kiryas Joel as well as an investigator for the County for the Medical Examiners Office and no more than ever we saw going through the year that we had how important prayers are. Whenever we went to places, and religious people pray they are have a place to be comfortable. Everybody has a right to pray or not to pray but we have a specific constitution, a specific 1st amendment that says that you have the right to assemble and the right to do that. Many, many lawsuits and many, many court cases went through this and always came back to the same thing, so to see this beautiful board sitting together in peace everybody saying there comment and everybody's comment is very important, again when you do this, it has to be done right and I am assured that it will be done right. Just in itself that you will be able to open up schuls all over and not only schuls, house of worship that's what we are talking about we are not talking about schuls, it any house of worship. I am very happy and again wants to congratulate the trustees and the mayor for doing this.
- **Bonnie Rum** – reiterated much of what has been said. The freedom to pray is of course in the constitution, freedom of religion, all religion by the way and nowhere does it say the number of places of worship, if you can step outside God is all around you and God hears your voice, no matter who you are and that is what I believe anyway and no one is restricting that and no one is going to come down on you for praying. However, you live in a community and a community has to prosper hopefully and operate and the fact that you need funds to so is a fact of life. Of course these people who are requesting homes to be turned into houses of worship, if they choose to try for tax exemption I am sure that the IRS would very interested in their request and I am sure they are

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well prepared in providing the information that would be required. The fact that in item 4 you are eliminating 235-14.1 you don't explain what they are you just name them and say you are eliminating, but you are adding something else, you are not explaining sufficiently what you are doing and that is not correct. You do mention in item 4 about an increase of 10% or in effect, 150% of the base count when with base lots, I don't know what you are talking about here. People who want to develop a property can say on the one hand this is what I am developing but change it later? You are not being very specific about that. I cannot believe that the County would view this local law and say that it is proper and acceptable. You do realize of course that it has to be sent to the County.

- **Simon Gelb** the proposed local law, I don't want 2 and 3 in regards to the house of worship, the attachment basically you are adding on the house of worship under the general use requirements, which the village has right now and the difference between now and after the village passes this new local law, it is basically staying the same criteria that it needs a village board special permit, right now if someone is proposing a place of worship, they would be under the unlisted use which is a village board special permit, when and if the local law is being passed, the change that you are proposing now is classified as the VB special permit. So basically, it stays in the same criteria, I would ask the board to consider that maybe it should be on the site plan for a principal permitted use and its allowable use without going through the entire process of the village board to review and then going to the planning board and then to the building department. If it is just as proposed, it is basically the same as it is before and this local law is not actually giving more freedom and releasing restrictions and limitations to a house of worship at all.
- **Lydia Terwilliger** is in awe of how informed the people that have responded to this new resolution that we want to make or change the Chapter 235 and she is a little bit sad, the fact that we have this meeting, the third of which in the past 6 weeks she thinks that 3 meetings were changed to 11 am in the morning, she wasn't able to make the other two meetings because she had to go to work, today she is able to. Are you truly reaching as many people and we can by doing this? It might be a certain strategy, she doesn't know, but these are things we need to consider when we are passing such laws for resolutions or amendments that we need to make sure that we reach as many people as we can. She assumes that all comments are entered into the recording, this is the first time she is actually hearing people say that they want it entered. She is thinking that they always have to be recorded and when they are documented in our minutes, that they should be accurate, and representing what people say in an accurate way too. Since people have been making so many comments, I think that we need further information and I would like to request that another session be held to explain to all the people of this community, our tax payers, our neighbors exactly what is really going on and address each of these comments that were so eloquently presented to the board. They are so important and I know that we haven't really gotten answers. This is an important thing to do publicly and hopefully at some point we will be able to get together to address each of these concerns which are significant to as many people as that we can. I agree that there is going to be an impact and perhaps just a certain percentage of people who want to request these permits, maybe we need to set a cap or percentage, but either way, there are so many little parts of this that need to be explained further to everyone. She is requesting to have another session and that the board give

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answers and explanations to everything that has been reported and that will be documented in the minutes. Thank you for the opportunity to address the board and my neighbors.

Attorney Ugell advised that every comment is recorded and every comment is part of the record. No one should ever think for one second that its not. Everything is part of the record, everyone should know that. Several of the speakers have made certain concerns raised and its okay to do so, but from a house of worship legislative point of view, you can't cap the number of people who can apply, I am quite certain that would not be legal. There are certain legitimate regulations but we need to make that very clear that would a violation of the constitution.

- **Johanna Kiernan** thanked the board for having this hearing, secondly her predecessors did an excellent job of reviewing the comments, they covered 98% of the issues I was concerned about. She has one underlying concern, she would like to have a better understanding of why in a village of 4 square miles, private homes are needed and building codes need to be changed when one local temple would suffice and she thinks would be better for the community on a whole. If you can explain to her why this is needed rather than have one place of worship, I would greatly appreciate it.
- **Attorney Ugell** advised that he thinks the answer is the same. There is not such thing as those types of limitations. It would be violative of the constitution.
- **Kieran Conroy** he is a resident of Woodbury and lives on the other side Schunemunk and he is deeply connected to this land and for him many of these outdoor places are places of worship. He wants to second and strengthen the comments of many who have spoken out about significant concerns about lack of environmental justifications and explanations, removal of endangered species, removal of ridgeline protections, his family was actually involved in writing the ridgeline protections for his town as well as our wetland protections. There is a ...Mitakuye Oyasin – we are all connected, our water sheds of this mountain interflow with each other, what we do on one side is deeply going to impact our neighbors and the quality of life of both our human relatives and also our non-human, the animals and plants and beautiful wildlife that so many of us love here. I am also involved in some protection of sacred sites and again places of worship, graves with our local native American community. He wants to be clear that he is not speaking for them formally today, but has been working for several years at the Ramapo Lenape Nation and have been documenting and trying to protect rock shelters, graves and place of ongoing worship and prayer that have been here for thousands of years. He is very concerned about things he is hearing about the lack of a rigorous archaeological assessment. Mt Schunemunk is a Lenape word and we believe it means the place of sour grapes and is connected to a sacred coplex of historic village that are documented between Washingtonville, Blooming Grove and into Woodbury. There are acutally historical markers for Miringumus (sp) which is one of the chiefs that basically lives in Washingtonville Blooming Grove across the area there and we do know that Mt. Schunemunk was very significant to their community. He is very concerned that if we are discussing building places of worship we are not destroying other people's heritage or other people's graves, the ancestors, I believe as a Christian, as a person of faith that our Abrahamic tradition that there are consequences when we show disrespect for the ancestors and place of worship of those who have come before us. I am very involved in the Schunemunk Park, the Legacy Ridge Park we have seen impacts from unplanned water growth unfortunately from some of the new wells that have been drilled in

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Cornwall and how it effects the Woodbury Creek which is an endangered brook trout breeding area and he is very concerned that rushing forward in this way could have significant impacts both to our communities, our futures and our children’s future frankly. The constitution is a complex set of rights for helping us live together E pluribus unum and “Out of Many, one” which is the original motto of the United States and we can’t turn religious freedom into an argument that violates other people’s rights to their religion to their graves, to enjoy the common heritage and national world that we live in. He would like to encourage people to think about these things and he also second the concerns about he early time of this meeting, that is very unusual, his family has been involved with plenty of boards for years and he is also concerned about the complete change of a planning board in a number of months, that is also an unusual step for continuity and doesn’t look good. He would encourage people to rethink these things carefully and why does a place of worship need a ridgeline protection exemption for having multiple places of worship what is the need for them to be so tall if these are worships at home , it seems strange that we are building mega temples.

- **Minky Kleinman** moved up here because she did want rural lifestyle for her family and she appreciates that. She still strongly believes in religious freedom, she appreciates the civic process in our country and as a very proud American, she know that our foundations were set on it and she appreciates that the law being considered will give her family the ability to practice her religion freely and with no discrimination and to explain to some people who don’t understand there are certain times of the year and certain times in my faith where I cannot travel a distance to practice my faith in my house of worship and its important to be able to have all kinds of faiths and she says that wholeheartedly all house of worship should be able to be accessible to the people of their faith. She know that even in the times of prohibition era, exemptions were made for religious practices. We need to be able to practice our religion freely and with no discrimination. I appreciate the opportunity that the public servants that were voted into this office give to the residents of this village and are willing to listen to our needs so that we can accessible houses of worship within our community in a way that doesn’t make it difficult for me and my family to practice my religion freely. I do also want to comment that the 11 am meeting for me as a mom of children is very helpful cause as much as I love to be part of the civic process, I can’t do 6:30-7:00 pm because that is bedtime for her kids. There are two sides, an evening meeting is good for people that work but it is not helpful for parents raising children in this rural community.
- **Suzy Klein** thanked the Mayor and his administration for working towards the betterment of our community and the beautiful Village of South Blooming Grove. She loves living here, it is beautiful. We are blessed to be living in the great United States of America, with that said we all have a right to religious freedom which includes houses of worship and she thanks the current administration for working to end all discrimination. It is a basic human right that all residents of this village deserve no matter what their faith and thank you for taking the time to listen to her and all the residents of the village. She appreciates this fear and equal opportunity. God Bless America.
- **Moshe Halpern** he has lived here for 8 years and we never had such a great day in this village since he has lived here. Talking about houses of worship, everyone has issues with it, people who do not live here and don’t understand what means worship and don’t understand religion are coming up here and explaining to us what religion is all about. It is heartbreaking because I live here eight years and we didn’t have a normal place where they could go and worship and we felt like living in

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Russia or in Poland under the Nazis. We felt so squished and I don't know how to say it even that finally after eight years living here, thank God we could have a normal place of worship and we live in America and the constitution is on our side and I don't understand the back and forth. Let me explain for the people that ask such interesting questions what they don't have normally, only when it comes to religious stuff. I didn't check the laws exactly, we have a great Mayor and we have a great board. What they are taking care of all the bits and pieces what we need to take care about. Laws and making sure it is done proper but on the other side, when you do any construction, when you do building, when you build anything, it needs to go by law and it needs to go, we have a county and a state of what we need to follow. Then when someone is asking what is going to happen if it's a three (3) story, I don't understand where he thinks he is. We are in America, we have rules to follow and we have State Laws, what comes into place even though we are in a Village, we still need to follow the state rules, then I don't know, like suddenly they have issues with all those kinds of things. Talking about the overlay district, lets jump into it, about ten years ago when the Town of Blooming Grove or other people were involved or what helped out with ideas what were on the board, what I happened to find out they were busy with doing the overlay district to take away the privilege of America and to make sure that in the laws we don't have any houses of worship, what is a normal other Village's and Counties all over the place you have such a law in place. Over here for some reason they didn't have it. Interesting enough. Thank God we are putting it now in. But the question would have been the other way around, why wasn't there a law like that, when we did the Village and that's besides the point. The actual overlay districts that we shouldn't be able to have a normal dining room and dinette for bigger families. Why should you be squished, why shouldn't you be able to live like a normal person. We are paying taxes and everyone is paying taxes and why shouldn't they have America's privilege. He doesn't understand all those people are scared of all the other stuff with the natural stuff with the snakes and everything, they don't care about families with children, what we need to take care of. Yes we should live like people, we are paying taxes, actually in Woodbury I was quite shocked, over there you build massive houses and nobody has an issue as long as you pay the taxes and I don't understand all those issues what they brought up. People have a problem with taxes being raised and I have multiple houses in the area and I have quite a few tenants and I know what taxes are and I never complained on the school taxes even though it doesn't make sense. Let me give you numbers. The Mayor asked him to wrap it up because he is on a 3 minute limit. In KJ School District we have 15,000 kids, the cost for this project for holding it open for a year is \$40 million dollars. In the school of Washingtonville, imagine that nobody is looking at that, we are up to \$109 million dollars for less than 4000 kids and the numbers go down every year. Imagine that, everyone is busy with the houses of worship but I don't know if somebody is going to pay \$10 difference on a tax bill and they have an issue with houses of worship when they should take out the big elephant from the room what everyone is paying \$8,000 to \$9,000 of there taxes is going to schools where they don't even have the kids for it. Sorry to say, check your numbers. Thank you and Mayor you are doing an amazing job keeping up with all the nonsense from people who are just trying to destroy America Freedom. God Bless America.

- **Simon Schwartz** thanked the Mayor and Village Board for even bringing this up. He has lived here for 4 years and there was never even talk of allowing houses of worship even though it is not a

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secret that so many of us are worshipping regularly and during the week we have to do it outside of the Village and even on weekends we are very limited. He thanks the Mayor and the board for bringing this up for a vote and he hopes this will pass. He believes this will be a benefit for the entire Village no matter of the race or religion. In the US we stress a lot, freedom of religion. This is what freedom of religion is all about and we should be allowed to have houses of worship in our great village.

- **Gloria Gelletich** she wanted to address the way the citizens of South Blooming Grove have been notified about the public meetings and about the amendment to the zoning code. On April 12, 2021 the Village Board passed a resolution with the house of worship special permit, the date and time were set for May 10, 2021 at 7:01 pm in the evening. Nothing happened, we weren't notified of the change, there was no notice, there was nothing online, no notice to the community. Again on May 10, 2021, apparently there was a public notice put in the newspaper for the public meeting on today. Her problem was that it wasn't on the house of worship special permit, it was part of it but it was the changes in the zoning codes. You have a resolution for the house of worship special permit but where are the resolutions for the all the other zoning changes that you have attached to this and I do not see the connection of house of worship special permit with zoning changes or omission to different parts of the law. The last part is you put the public notice in the newspaper and a change was made to the proposal the following day and in the public notice, the Chapter 235- 14.1 – rural residential regulation was not even worded in the public notice, so that should even be excluded from this meeting because it wasn't put out there and it wasn't in the public notice at all and these changes that are made to the amendment after we've gotten the first amendment, I think is making it more difficult for the citizens to understand what is going on, there is very little explanation and I think we are owed that as a citizen, since I have been a resident for 45 years and I think you owe me an explanation as to why these changes are being made, what are they, not just a statement or that we are omitting this, we are getting rid of this, we are changing this and there is not explanation to that. She will submit this in writing and she would like an answer to her questions.
- **Chester Mertz** thanked the board, the trustees and the Mayor for doing a great job. Everyone in the community and the neighborhood sees that on a daily basis. In the winter and the summer, we know that the Mayor is working very hard with all of the neighbors, making sure that the neighbors are safe, and everyone should be happy. He thinks the board is doing the right things, previous administration wasn't here to do anything to satisfy none of the residents and he strongly believes that all work that was done with the new board was to everyone's satisfaction. The mayor and the board are doing the right things and that's what the community wants.

➤ **Adjournment**

- Motion to close the public hearing at 12:31 p.m. by Mayor Kalaj, seconded by Trustee Guttman. 5 Ayes, Mayor Kalaj, Deputy Mayor Weiss, Trustee Feldman, Trustee Guttman and Trustee Rosner.

Minutes respectfully submitted by
Kerry Dougherty, Village Clerk