

## MEMORANDUM

October 10, 2010

**TO:** Alice Roker, Town Clerk  
**FROM:** Conservation Board  
**SUBJECT:** Town Board Referral  
Parcels 48. 18-2-37 and 48. 18-2-39

Dear Alice

Members of the Conservation Board participated in a site visit to the referral properties on Sunday October 10, 2010 with members of the Advisory Committee on Open Space. As a group we walked three sites – parcels numbered 37, 38 (privately owned and undeveloped) and 39. For purposes of clarity and simplicity, our observations and remarks treat the three parcels as one ecosystem unless otherwise noted.

The parcels are designated R 140, one acre residential zoning. They all appear to be large enough not to need variances to build. All also seem to have the required amounts of road frontage. Most if not all of the sites have town water, and all rely on septic systems. No public sewers are currently available.

The surrounding area is a mature, developed residential neighborhood, with limited artificial landscaping (meaning fewer fertilizer products seeping into the watershed). The local watershed contains a wetland area upstream of these parcels, healthy wetland on the three parcels themselves and a much larger wetland downstream, all of which ultimately drain into the Croton Reservoir. The watershed serves very significant flood control functions for the entire watershed community. **This is arguably the most important and critical function of these parcels.** The value of these parcels for storm water retention cannot be overstated.

The entire area also provides opportunities for successful wildlife corridors. There is a robust, biologically diverse community in the ecosystem, ranging from several varieties of salamanders and frogs to Eastern Box Turtles (a “species of special interest” to NYS) and many varieties of birds, including warblers, robins, catbirds, woodpeckers, swamp sparrows, Cooper’s Hawks and great horned owls. Larger mammals are also well represented, including skunks, raccoons, ground hogs, possums, coyotes, foxes and deer.

Wildlife corridors in the area are enhanced significantly by the fact that these three parcels remain undeveloped. If these lots were to be developed, or even one lot was developed, the resulting fragmentation of the habitat would impact the viability within the ecosystem of some

species. The value of parcels 37 and 39 in this ecosystem depends to a very large degree on parcel 38 remaining undeveloped.

Both parcels 37 and 39 contain town designated wetlands. (As noted above, parcel 38 is also a town designated wetland.) In addition, parcel 39 contains steep slopes and an upland conifer stand. There are mature hardwoods throughout all three properties. Parcel 37 is nearly 100% covered by wetlands, parcel 38 very nearly so, and parcel 39 is approximately two thirds covered by the combination of wetlands and steep slopes. Any future development on the site would necessitate significant and wide ranging mitigation.

It is the consensus of our members that had these parcels come before the Conservation Board prior to development of the auction inventory, we would have recommended that the Town retain ownership of the properties, or at least include deed restrictions in the form of conservation easements to preserve the special function these parcels provide.

Respectfully submitted:

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script, which appears to read "Will Daniel".

...for the Conservation Board