

**VILLAGE OF SOUTH BLOOMING  
GROVE  
PUBLIC HEARING  
PROPOSED LOCAL LAW  
AMENDING CHAPTER 235  
THURSDAY  
July 29, 2021  
8:01 PM**

➤ **Call to order**

- Mayor Kalaj called to order the Village Board Public Hearing at 8:02 p.m. on July 29, 2021 at 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
- Alfred Fusco – Village Engineer
- Joel Stern – Confidential Assistant to the Mayor
- Isaac Ekstein – Legislative Aid

➤ **Comments:**

- The Mayor asked that the public keep comments to three (3) minutes. The Clerk read the Public Notice.

➤ **Public Comments**

- **Ryne Kitzrow** See attached comments.
- **Kaitilin Kitzrow** The special permit for houses of worship was updated to explicitly include that all applications must meet fire and building codes, which exist to protect the safety of residents, worshippers, and emergency personnel. The other proposed edits to the local law also exist to ensure the safety of residents, such as the protection for endangered or threatened flora and fauna. I urged the Board to separate the special permit for houses of worship and pass only that measure at the meeting. See additional attached comments.
- **Arron Wieder** introduced himself as a Rockland County Legislator. “I have spent a few weekends over the years at a friends house right here in South Blooming Grove and have gotten to know the heart and soul of South Blooming Grove and he must say she is beautiful. This is a document written by the Village Engineer addressed to the Orange County Planning Department. In it Mr. Fusco starts out the letter “Dear Mrs. Schmidt, we have enclosed a 239 GML form regarding local law changes” he continues “Amend Chapter 235 to allow house of worship...” The letter is dated

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June 25, 2021. It is a sad state of affairs that in the United State of America, in 2021 there is still a need to have amendments done to local laws to allow houses of worships, synagogues, churches, mosques. The great Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” if God loving Americans in South Blooming Grove Village has difficulties building houses of worship right here it is a threat not only here but also in Rockland County, in fact it is a threat everywhere. Therefore, board members and Honorable Mayor, what you will decide tonight will not only effect South Blooming Grove Village, you will indeed remove the threat of injustice everywhere.”

- **Shragi Greenbaum** “I represent Agudath Israel of America and am Director of Rockland Regional Office covering the lower Hudson Valley. Agudath is a national advocacy organization serving the Orthodox Jewish Committee for over 100 years. Headquarters are in New York, we have eight regional offices across the country. I am here to speak in support of the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment to the definition to the house of worship. New York State defines the purpose of zoning is to promote the public health, safety and welfare. Therefore, such institutions of worship from a residential district serve as no end that is usably related to the morals, health, welfare and safety of the community. I encourage the Board and Honorable Mayor to adopt the proposed amendments.”
- **Simon Gelb** Announced he was here tonight to share his support for the changes, the Village of South Blooming Grove is proposing to make to its Zoning Code. See Attached Comments.
- **Rabbi David Niederman** “I am the head of the United Jewish Organizations of Williamsburg and North Brooklyn. The question, what am I doing here? The answer for that is that I have family over here, living over here and plus I am involved in stopping the hatred against communities. Bringing communities together, I am not ashamed of my record to bring together Latino, African Americans, Jewish working together for a community that encompasses the lives and privileges that everybody should enjoy. It is appalling to me and I am a child of Holocaust Survivors. I myself have lost three (3) siblings during the Holocaust, my parents came here because running away from persecution, running away from trying to hide and for years to pray in basements and garages because there was fear of fatalities. Came over here because this our founding fathers understood what freedom of religion means, what freedom of assembly is and the freedom for everybody to enjoy his life. I have family here, I visit here and I came here to express dismay, how was it possible that an elected body can basically curve out an area and take away the rights of houses of worship to anybody, Jew, Muslim, Christian, whoever. I applaud you for taking the appropriate action to bring justice to a place where justice does not exist. I thank you all and urge you please show an example what we are, what our government stands for and that is freedom for everybody to exercise his religion and his rights.
- **Sonia Ayala** strongly recommended that the Village Board keep the public hearing open until all documentation is received from Orange County Planning as well as comments from the Blooming Grove Ambulance, Police Department, Fire Department as well as Building Inspector. Keeping the public hearing open will allow the board to review and discuss all the information provided in order to make the right decision. The Board may want to change, tweak or propose some changes due to information that you didn’t have before as necessary.
- **Sue Anne Vogelsberg** “since September 2020, our Village Government seems to me to be operating with a sense of urgency vs. action with forthwith and planning. This proposed code

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change is yet another example of making a change and then dealing or not with consequences after. With an already fragile water and sewer infrastructure, I am baffled as to why our Village Government would even consider this code change which looks to put additional stress on this already stressed system by increasing house size and the inevitable increased house occupancy, a byproduct of eliminating the scenic overlay included in this code change. I believe it would be more prudent and fiscally responsible if our Village Government addressed our infrastructure first, prioritizing what must be done and then doing it to keep our community viable. If the village does proceed and passes this code change, what are the plans for paying for our infrastructure updates and repairs, etc. with this inevitable decreased tax revenue. As of July 1, 2021, the Village has 4 tax exempt properties. By July 1, 2022 there will surely be more. The various proposed commercial properties in the Village will not be built and occupied in time to generate tax revenue to offset those loses. At the first public hearing on May 21 of this year regarding this code change, I had questions and concerns including whether the Police, Fire, Emergency Responders, Building Inspector had been included in any planning you did for this code change. As none of these have yet to be answered by the Mayor in response to my May 23, 2021 follow-up email, I have attached a copy for your convenience which I emailed this morning. The SEQRA application appears to have many deficiencies, have they been addressed and corrected? Has the Orange County Planning Department been notified. The April 12, 2021 and May 11, 2021 cover letter marked attorney client work product from Village Engineer Fusco to Village Attorney Ugell, includes in addition to the Mayor, Village Volunteers Joel Stern and Isaac Ekstein, conspicuously absent are the Village Trustees who previously voted on this resolution. As Stern and Ekstein are not elected officials and cannot conduct business on behalf of the Village could their involvement void the entire resolution. It is my opinion that there are too many unanswered questions and not enough information as to how this code change will improve live here in South Blooming Grove. I request this Board put this proposal on pause, gather the much needed information from interested parties as required by the SEQRA process and keep the public hearing open for additional written comments from the public before taking any further action.”

- **Gloria Gellivitch** said that following I have no problem with the House of Worship, I do have a problem with the fact that other Zoning Codes were omitted or attached, obviously not fully advertised. I was surprised with the House of Worship and how it was presented to the public without the overlay district and the ridgeline, why weren't they separated. Her feeling is it was done to hide it. It should be done separately. The floral and fauna and the areas for them were deleted, they were here before you, they are going to be here long after you and if you pave and damage this beautiful area, this is why she moved up here, she wanted to enjoy it. She has been here 45 years, however she feels it is being destroyed, your taking away the trees. She believes there should be a solution for everything. She feels there is a way of doing it. She is dismayed at the fact that she is looking at proposed resolution to adopt the changes tonight. You are not giving the ten day window for board to read comments which means to her that you have already decided what you are going to do which is very dismissing and upsetting. You are not listening, she feels dismissed.
- **Julie Southwick** has been on water restrictions for 42 years. She asked where is the water going to come from?

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- **Yoel Wagschall** he wanted to set the record straight. “I think that any historian that wants to write the history about our village should come to talk to me for five days in a row and I will give that if somebody wants to do this. It just doing a bad service to history. I have been here from the very first day when this village...and I have seen everything. I am actually the first Hasidic Family that decided to come live here. There is a false narrative out there. I feel so bad for this lady that just cried and I feel for her. She was filled with disinformation. They have tried every tactic in the book including taking vulnerable people and telling them the lies and frighten them that by a certain group of people having the same right as every human being in America is getting, that means you are going to lose your trees, your going to lose your houses, your going to lose your oxygen and what not. This is all part of a big lie, it is not true. They are just shutting down the information, the flow of information. Everything is being done by social media now. The way it works is what they are pushing that must be the true narrative, because you are not going to hear another narrative, which means by default there is only one narrative and that’s the true narrative. That’s also a lie. They are shutting down the other narrative, I myself don’t like social media, I don’t have time for it but I was ready to go beneath what I want to do with my life and go on social media to try to communicate another side to the narrative. I was shut down, I was blocked out by every social group that was created around these issues, whether Rockland County or Orange County. I did not use foul language, like we heard in this room two weeks ago, I did not offend anyone. Everything has a paper trail, but I was blocked out. So there is another side to the narrative, but I don’t have time to do this, so my point is that whoever doesn’t like what they see happening to this village we didn’t do it, you did it. It was done because of hate, bigotry and by Semitism, discrimination, having laws like this. I came to live here 15 years ago, I am not a popular guy, I am not a movement. To tell me that I came here because I don’t like trees before you know my name, that is insulting. This is racism, to tell me that I don’t like trees, why because I look like a narrative. Lady I like trees, I live on 14 acres, I love trees. This kind of behavior is what made this happen and there were plenty of opportunities to fix it.
- **Samuel Cohen** He has lived here for 4.5 years. Today is the best day ever. He bought a house here, he paid top price. Every single house has a violation, till the day that Hasidic people moved in here, nobody cared, what you built, how you built. The day we moved in a lot of things started coming up, moratorium not to build, could not build an extension, house of worship, why not. We are all paying taxes here, we all know that we pay more taxes, every single house bought by a Hasidic in the last 5 years, the taxes have increased 30%. We all pay taxes, school taxes in addition to private school. The old administration only focused to get rid of these people, from garbage containers, transportations, extensions, house of worship. The Honorable Mayor and the Board are here to represent everybody.

➤ **Adjournment**

- Motion to close the public hearing at 8:38 p.m. by Mayor Kalaj, seconded by Trustee Feldman. 5 Ayes, Mayor Kalaj, Deputy Mayor Weiss, Trustee Feldman, Trustee Guttman and Trustee Rosner.

Minutes respectfully submitted by  
Kerry Dougherty, Village Clerk