

# Oneida County conservation committee blinks; postpones “ballot” discussion

## Ballot offered suggested positions on county’s proposed shoreland ordinance amendments

By Richard Moore  
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

Yielding to advice from the Oneida County corporation counsel — who himself changed his recommendation — the county’s conservation committee postponed Monday a discussion it intended to have about proposed revisions to the county’s shoreland ordinance after *The Lakeland Times* objected that the discussion did not appear on the committee’s meeting agenda.

Specifically, the contested items were two documents submitted for discussion by supervisor Bob Thome, a member of the county’s Conservation and UW-Extension Committee, and included in the meeting’s information packets emailed to committee members.

One of the documents was a “public hearing ballot” for the county’s scheduled March 29 public hearing on the proposed shoreland amendments, which individuals

could sign and submit. The ballot contained a list of various changes the draft ordinance would make to the current ordinance and allowed the ballot signer to indicate support or opposition to the change.

It also included a suggested recommendation about how the individual casting the ballot should vote, many of which opposed the changes the county’s zoning committee has approved.

The *Times* objected to the discussion because the meeting agenda did not indicate that any discussion about a “ballot” for the public hearing would take place. Instead, the agenda indicated that county zoning director Karl Jennrich would present about the proposed recommendations: “Shoreland Protection Ordinance Amendment # 13-2022. Amendments to Chapter 9 Article I, Article 3, Article 9, Article 10 and Appendices – K Jennrich.”

The original agenda indicated that Jennrich would present an

“update” about the proposed revisions. A revised agenda posted at noon on Friday before the Monday meeting dropped the word “update” but still did not mention any discussion about the “ballot” documents the committee had received and that the county website already indicated would be discussed.

Indeed, the county’s website posted the documents as “items of special concern” for the March 13 agenda and called attention to Thome’s submissions, saying they did not represent the position of the county’s land and water conservation department or of the committee but were “meant for discussion purposes only.”

Given the controversial nature of the ordinance amendments, *The Times* contended that because the proposed ballot had been posted on the county’s website as a matter to be discussed — and the actual ballot and a companion piece was in-

cluded in the meeting packet — the discussion of the ballot should have also been listed on the meeting agenda rather than simply taken up under the general “shoreland protection ordinance amendment item.”

*The Times* was able to communicate its objection to the agenda to conservation committee chairman Jim Winkler over the weekend prior to the meeting. However, after checking with corporation counsel Michael Fugle, Winkler told *The Times* that Fugle said the agenda passed muster and that he would move forward with the discussion.

On Monday morning before the meeting, Fugle also indicated directly to *The Times* that he believed the meeting notice was legally sufficient and that the ballot discussion did not have to be specifically mentioned but could

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