

Corrie Miller
North Fayston Rd

April 30, 2018

Dear Fayston Selectboard,

As a town resident, I want to thank you for requesting feedback on the recently proposed updates to Fayston's Land Use Regulations (LURs). I have thoughtfully reviewed the proposed LURs, attended both relevant Selectboard meetings, and read people's written comments. I have a deep appreciation for the work the Planning Commission has done to match the values of the townspeople and the future we desire (as articulated in the Town Plan after the town planning process) with the regulatory tools available to the town to achieve that future. I also have a deep appreciation for the Selectboard's commitment to listen to our voices and consider what matters to people as you make decisions regarding the LURs. It has been helpful for me to hear and try to understand people's concerns and deeply-held values.

I grew up running loose through the pastures and woods of my family's farm in Virginia. Now, housing developments and strip malls define my native Shenandoah Valley. When I discovered Fayston, I settled here because this place has the rural community character and scenic landscape of my youth. I fear the fate of my Shenandoah Valley home for my new Fayston one and am motivated to safeguard what makes this place such a great place to live.

It is with this motivation that I look to you for leadership in approving the proposed LURs without changes that dilute their value. I strongly believe these proposed regulations will help Fayston **be proactive** in the face of very real challenges and will **help Fayston hold onto the aspects of this community that make us special without compromising our economic vitality.**

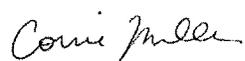
I offer the following perspectives:

- While some have suggested these regulations respond to a problem that doesn't exist, I see several very real problems that these regulations address. Spatial data suggests that between 2001 – 2011, 500 acres of forest cover in the Mad River watershed became developed or cleared. Forest cover, and its associated healthy soil, protects our community from flood vulnerabilities (on private land and public infrastructure) and from polluted swimholes. Furthermore, the watershed has 437 miles of roadway, 1/3 of which are privately managed. These road densities are equivalent to those in the outer Chittenden County towns, but unlike most of those towns, Fayston's roads are on very steep slopes. 40% of the existing privately managed road and driveway network in our watershed is on slopes over 15%, and that percentage is likely higher in Fayston. Because of stormwater runoff, bad development in these headwater areas (characterized by unmitigated development on steep slopes, up long driveways, with large building envelopes, next to water resources, within habitat resources, or spanning a large footprint) causes vulnerabilities and ongoing expenses for our Town and our residents. The proposed LURs are a step forward with respect to acknowledging these current challenges and proactively reducing future damaging impacts and expense.

- “Smart growth” principles, like clustered development, shorter driveways, conservation of natural resources, are not “no growth” principles. State and national land use planning and development professionals have shown that we don’t have to choose between no growth and the important natural resources on which we depend. We simply need to invest a little now to protect our larger longer-term investment. A little extra time and dollars spent on each development project can save money for the landowner and public infrastructure later and protect shared community resources.
- Everyone has a different opinion on the ways the LURs may impact property values. Missing from public dialogue is that property values will be negatively impacted if property taxes continually rise due to increasing municipal budgets (from more and more unmitigated uphill stormwater runoff causing damage downhill) and especially if the scenic rural landscape and special character of our region is spoiled by unchecked development. The proposed LURs simply provide a “check” for development, ensuring that it is done in a way that balances the landowners’ interest with the community’s.
- Our community has an opportunity to join with other Mad River watershed towns as we learn from past mistakes and allow changing rules. Just because an 800-foot driveway to service one home was allowed in 1970 is not a good reason to allow it now, 50 years later, when we know better. No one did anything wrong in 1970 when they didn’t know better, but it is our responsibility to learn from past mistakes and not make them again.
- The proposed LURs aren’t as much of a drastic change from our current regulations as some of the rhetoric suggests. The proposed Natural Resources Overlay District simply requires the Development Review Board (DRB) to look at certain projects and gives the Town (via the DRB) more ability to require amendments to a development project to better protect shared town resources. (Note: “Shall” is critically important terminology in the LURs for this reason.)
- Fayston is unique. We have forested hillsides, narrow streams, healthy wildlife, and scenic views. This means we have a responsibility – like the members of any town – to protect what makes us unique for the next generation to experience and benefit from. We are steeper than most Vermont towns. We are the headwaters of the Mad River and of Lake Champlain. This brings me pride, as a resident of Fayston, but it also means we have the responsibility – as upstream neighbors to Waitsfield, Moretown, and Waterbury – to do what we can to limit the flood problems and dirty water we send their way. I am not alone – the resources and landscapes unique to Fayston are why many people have chosen to live here. The relatively small costs and inconveniences of the proposed regulations are our responsibility and worth this investment.
- While I think we all understand this, I also think it is important to mention in this conversation that some things with real value cannot be quantified with a price.

Thank you for helping to balance individual landowners’ interest with those values shared among the community and to balance short-term considerations with longer-term ones.

Respectfully,



Corrie Miller