

Town Board alters ag zoning limit

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Chairman says eliminating 35-acre mandates puts community in sync with Working Lands Initiative

The Saukville Town Board adopted revisions to its agricultural zoning ordinance last week designed to work in tandem with the state's new Working Lands Initiative.

The ordinance allows lots as small as five acres within four agricultural zoning districts: A-1, general agriculture, from 20-acre minimum; A-2, exclusive agriculture, from 35 acres; A-3, agricultural transition, from 35 acres; and A-4, rural countryside, from 10 acres.

Town Chairman Barb Jobs said the ordinance should clear the log jam on a number of properties where the owners were confounded by 35-acre lot minimums.

"With that 35-acre requirement in place, the town wasn't looking at slow growth, it was no growth. The town has essentially had no growth for five years," Jobs said.

"Now that this ordinance is in place, I know we are going to hear from four or five people who have had to wait for years to have a land division considered."

Jobs said there have been several cases in the town where a property has been held in an estate with the heirs unable to sell an unwanted home because 35 acres had to be included.

She said the current thought is that requiring 35-acre lots actually hurts agriculture, because people are building single-family homes in the middle of large lots — cutting the land off from farming.

"There is no guarantee we are going to approve those land divisions now, but at least this ordinance gives them the option of pursuing it," she said.

A public hearing on the ordinance drew a room full of residents to the board meeting, but no opposition was voiced.

Still, Supr. Curt Rutkowski voted against the ordinance, saying there were still too many inconsistencies in the wording.

The Plan Commission unanimously recommended adoption of the ordinance revisions at its December meeting.