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Council of the Borough of Jim Thorpe
101 East 10th Street
Jim Thorpe, PA 18229

Re: **Proposed Amendment to Special District Regulations**

Dear Members of Council:

I am writing to express my concerns regarding what I understand to be a proposal to amend the unnumbered note to the Special District Area, Yard, and Height Regulations, Attachment 8 to Chapter 500 of the Borough's Code, <https://ecode360.com/attachment/JI2772/JI2772500h%20Special%20Dist%20Area%20Regs%20Table.pdf>. That note reads: "Dwelling units with on-site disposal must be built at least 1/2 mile away from Mauch Chunk Lake, Mauch Chunk Creek, or any other stream or watercourse." I understand the Council to be considering an amendment to change the setback from 1/2 mile to 1000 feet.

While I am not a resident of Jim Thorpe, my husband, Steve, and I own 35 acres on the other side of Mauch Chunk Lake on Twin Crest Drive in Mahoning Township. We enjoy a 10-minute drive to Mauch Chunk Lake along East White Bear Road and spend many days fishing, kayaking, and swimming in the Lake. We discovered this area after Steve retired from the US Air Force. At that time, we were stationed in Denver, Colorado.

After seven years in Denver, we were weary of the constant development, overcrowding, and heavy traffic. We longed for a place with natural beauty and like-minded residents who appreciated rural charm and wildlife. My parents live in the California Bay Area, and Steve's parents live in Luzerne County. With our shared passion for outdoor recreation, natural scenery, and a slower pace of life, it wasn't hard for us to decide to move to northeastern Pennsylvania. When we started looking, there was a lot to choose from, and we even toured homes around Lake Harmony but quickly decided that it was overdeveloped and too congested. We found our forever home three years after we started looking and couldn't be happier living in Carbon County. Mauch Chunk Lake's continued high quality is essential to both the quality of my life and the value of my property.

Mauch Chunk Lake is an important amenity for this region, not just for the Borough. The Mauch Chunk Lake Park is a county park. The Middle Carbon County Comprehensive Plan, which you will find on the Borough's website at https://www.jtborough.org/sites/g/files/vyhlif4566/f/uploads/mid_carbon_comp_2012.pdf, recognizes the regional significance of Mauch Chunk Lake and the park in various places. For

example, on page 9-23, the Plan states: “Mauch Chunk Lake, part of the county-owned park surrounding it, is the predominate Planning Area water body west of the Lehigh River.” The discussion continues over the following several pages of the natural resource section of the Plan, with emphasis on the importance of water quality within the lake and the entire Mauch Chunk Creek watershed.

Development along the shores of Mauch Chunk Lake poses three risks to that vital regional resource:

- (1) On-lot wastewater systems can threaten groundwater quality and water quality in the lake, where the groundwater discharges.
- (2) Development will result in runoff from lawns, driveways, roofs, and other developed areas that will threaten water quality in the lake.
- (3) The intensity of development – the number, size, and closeness of houses and other buildings – significantly affects the lake's natural, scenic, and esthetic values.

The proposed amendment does not adequately protect against those three risks.

First, the distance of a *house* from the lake is not necessarily related to the distance of the on-lot wastewater system from the lake. Therefore, the set-back in the regulations to preserve lake water quality from the on-lot sewage disposal must be a set-back of the on-lot wastewater system.

Second, the regulation should address surface runoff. It should require a set-back of built or otherwise developed portions of the property from the lake. I am concerned that a lawn – if the owner uses fertilizers or pesticides – can pose a risk, so it is not just paved areas and buildings that matter. The Council should consider requiring buffers or other measures to mitigate this risk.

Third, the development of closely spaced homes along the shore of the lake will work a marked change in the values served by the lake. That matters not only to the Borough but to the County (which owns the park) and all regional residents. The Council should solicit the views of the County and invite public comment from residents of surrounding municipalities affected by any amendment before proceeding.

I would value the opportunity to address the Council when it considers any proposed amendment. While I am aware that non-residents of the Borough typically are not invited to comment, in this circumstance, I suggest that the Council may want to receive comment from a wider area.

I ask that this letter be received by the Council as a comment on any proposed regulation and considered by the Council when deciding whether or how to amend the regulation.

Respectfully,

Carol Etheridge

copies provided for:

Hon. Gregory Strubinger
Hon. Michael Yeastedt
Hon. Robert Schaninger
Hon. Joanne Klitsch
Hon. Jay Miller
Hon. Jessica Crowley
Hon. Michael Rivkin
Jim Thorpe Borough Planning Commission

cc: James R. Nanovic, Esquire (via email jrn@nanoviclaw.com)
Carbon County Board of Commissioners
David G. Mandelbaum, Esquire (via email mandelbaumd@gtlaw.com)