

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 23 May 2023

Council Members present: Etienne Hancock (Chair), John Meyer, & Wally Reeve

Council Members absent: Joshua Goldstein, & Tim Magee

Guests: Selectperson Laura Streets, Karen Rhodes, Tom Cloutier, Laura & Martin Green

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: Chair Hancock called the meeting to order in the Community Meeting Room of the Old Tegu Theatre at 43 Portland Street at approximately 5:02 P.M.

Meeting Minutes: Member Meyer moved to approve the April 14th meeting minutes. A vote of 3-0 affirmed the motion.

Discussion: Jersey Heights sidewalk connections project vote postmortem

Council Members discussed the vote at the April 18th Special Town Meeting that failed to fund the construction of two sections of sidewalk that would have filled the gaps between developer-built sidewalks on Jersey Heights & LaPorte Road. The Planning Council decided, by consensus, to wait until autumn to decide if this sidewalk funding and construction effort should be brought back to the voters in 2024. Tom Cloutier encouraged the Council to bring this project back to the voters. Martin Green suggested getting the project cost estimates to the votes sooner next time. Planning Director Thomas also noted that the on-road sidewalk section in front of 485 Jersey Heights would still be constructed this year. It was decided that where this partial sidewalk terminates on the west (at the property line with 485 Jersey Heights) it will have a reveal measuring the depth of the concrete and that stay-mat should be used to protect that reveal from plows and erosion until the corresponding section of sidewalk in front of 511 Jersey Heights could be constructed. Mr. Thomas also distributed pre and post Truck Route traffic counts for Jersey Heights. It was also decided that these traffic counts should be updated again in 2025 once the Riverside Village housing development was complete.

Discussion: Laura Streets string/holiday light regulation change

Selectperson Laura Streets and her Campbell Road neighbor Karen Rhodes appeared before the Planning Council requesting changes be made to the existing regulations for string/holiday lights. Ms. Rhodes discussed the glare being created on her property by her neighbor's string lights. Ms. Streets said that all such lights should be required to turn off by 10 PM nightly. The Council agreed with this statement. The Council Members were sympathetic to Ms. Rhodes glare issues, and decided to have Mr. Thomas study if the town regulations should differentiate between holidays lights, which generally run on ¼ watt bulbs, and string lights, which are typically larger and throw more light and glare. Mr. Thomas said that he would look to see how other Vermont towns regulate this issue and come back with a proposal for stricter regulations. Chair Hancock suggested regulating this kind of outdoor lighting perhaps by UL classification.

Discussion: Town Plan implementation letter (bury overhead utilities downtown)

Mr. Thomas said that the Selectboard discussion about creating a committee to plan for and oversee the burying of overhead utilities in downtown Morrisville was being table until at least July, if not until later in the summer. He explained that the Selectboard was only scheduling matters on its agenda that needed immediate attention due to the ongoing budget strife and the just underway hiring process for a new Town Administrator.

Discussion: Revise §505(b) parking lot landscaping zoning regulations

Mr. Thomas presented a strike and replace proposal for §505(b) of the Zoning Bylaws regarding landscaping standards. After some discussion, the Council, agreed that the proposed language provided more specificity, and it should be included as part of the fall zoning change.

Discussion: Improving the intersection of Portland and Bridge Streets

Mr. Thomas explained that the Town Administrator asked him to discuss the function of the intersection of Portland and Bridge Streets with the Planning Council. He explained that the Town Administrator was most concerned with the new traffic that would be entering this intersection from Lower Portland Street from the two new large apartment buildings being constructed within the next year at 56 & 82 Pleasant Street. The Council did not think the amount of residential development proposed on Pleasant Street would be impactful. The Council stressed that the pedestrian crosswalks at the corner of the Bijou Theatre need to be more pronounced, and they think a rapid response flashing beacon would improve the safety of this intersection for pedestrians. Chair Hancock said that the larger problem, especially for people unfamiliar with the area, is that the traffic flow rules are very unclear at this intersection. He mentioned having just come back from Europe where a similar intersection would have structural curbing or a similar feature along the outside radius of the curved travel lane, even if it was at grade, to demonstrate the traffic flow to the driver who was not accustomed to this intersection. The Council decided that it did not have the expertise to accurately answer the Town Administrator's question and that he should inquire at LCPC for further assistance.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director