

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
PO Box 748 / Morrisville, VT 05661
Phone (802) 888-6373

Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 25 July 2023

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

Council Members absent: Tim Magee

Guests: Laura Streets (Selectboard), Bob Heanue (Village Trustee), Ron Stancliff (Conservation Commission), Police Chief & Interim Town Administrator Jason Luneau, Community Development Coordinator Tricia Follert, Highway Superintendent Kevin Barrows, Tom Cloutier, Martin Green, Mary Lou Nichols, Damon Lee, & Karen Rhodes

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: Chair Hancock called the meeting to order under the event tent at Copley Country Club at 443 Copley Country Club Drive at approximately 5:05 P.M.

Meeting Minutes: Member Meyer moved to approve the June 13th meeting minutes. A vote of 4-0 affirmed.

Discuss: Commercial vitality with Community Development Coordinator Follert

Community Development Coordinator Tricia Follert, and Mary Lou Nichols of downtown non-profit booster MACC, joined the Planning Council and spoke to the ongoing efforts to make downtown Morrisville and uptown Morristown more commercially vibrant. Member Goldstein explained that he recently had a problem finding an open restaurant in downtown on a Sunday night. Ms. Nichols spoke to how MACC is now offering micro grants to help both downtown and uptown businesses. Ms. Follert said that the market analysis done by the Town in 2012 had proven to be an invaluable tool. Chair Hancock queried if that study could be updated to provide data that could be used to add more vibrancy to these two business districts in 2023. Planning Director Thomas was asked to look at the downtown zoning for similar and surrounding communities (Stowe, Hardwick, Waterbury, & Richmond) and report back as to allowed and disallowed uses on the ground-level therein. A discussion ensued about encouraging more outside dining in downtown Morrisville, especially along sidewalks and in parking spaces. Ms. Follert shared that Town Administration's new requirement for adjoining jersey barriers made the outdoor dining that was allowed in downtown parking spaces during the pandemic currently infeasible. It was noted by Council Members that other communities have created these in-parking space outdoor dining allotments using wooden pallets, and that the Town's current policy requiring connecting jersey barriers is likely much too severe. Ms. Follert said that she would discuss this issue with Town Administration and the Selectboard again. Council Members also pointed out that a special tax district could be created to fund and physically enrich the built environment in downtown Morrisville. Mr. Thomas noted the existing Town Plan goal of extending the sidewalk width on the south side of Lower Main Street (to add more outside dining opportunities in front of Black Cap Coffee, Pizza on Main, North Country Donuts, & Aasaabee), as something that could be budgeted for now that would increase the appearance of commercial vibrancy in downtown Morrisville by this time in 2024.

Discuss: String light zoning change

Selectperson Laura Streets and her neighbor Karen Rhodes reappeared before the Council regarding their pending request for changes to the zoning rules regarding external illumination, specifically string lights. After hypothetical discussions that entailed different string light rules for rural and urban parts of town, and for residents versus non-residents, the Council decided to adopt the proposed revised outdoor lighting language that was including in its meeting packet. Said language allowed holiday or string lights to remain lit all year provided that said lights are turned off by 10:00 o'clock nightly and are attached to structures located outside of required setbacks. Mr. Thomas clarified that this language means that string lights could no longer be hung in trees or bushes outside the months of October through January. All Council Members were in agreement, so Mr. Thomas said this lighting edit would be included as part of the larger fall zoning change.

Discuss: Make another meals, rooms, and alcohol local option tax pitch to SB?

The Council discussed its previous push that asked the Selectboard to adopt the 1% local option tax for rooms, meals, and alcohol. It was explained to newer Council Members that the Selectboard rejected the Council's most recent proposal for this tax about five years ago, which was the same time that the Council successfully lobbied the Selectboard to end the business and equipment tax. It was explained that adopting the rooms, meal, and alcohol tax was meant at that time to replace the lost revenue from the concurrent elimination of the business equipment tax. It was discussed that the person who previously spoke out against adopting the local option rooms, meals, alcohol tax was Steve Benson of the Charlmont Restaurant. The Council Members agreed, especially given the Town's current budget issues, that now is a good time to again appear before the Selectboard and ask them to adopt this local option tax. In terms of what the approximately \$150,000 of additional tax money raised might benefit, Council Members focused on funding emergency services, funding the sidewalk fund, and funding the creation of new road pavement. Mr. Thomas was directed to revise the previous letter the Council sent to the Selectboard on this topic and send it to Town Administration for agenda scheduling once a majority of Council Members have signed off electronically on the revised letter.

Discuss: Planning Council membership

It was discussed that Planning Council member Tim Magee had fallen beneath the required 50% attendance policy required by the Joint Rules document that governs the Planning Council & Development Review Board. It was decided that notice would be sent to the Trustees & Selectboard that Mr. Magee should be removed from the Council due to his failing attendance, and the fact that he has not responded to emails or texts messages from the staff for months now. Mr. Thomas added that he would ask Town Administration to advertise for the open Planning Council seat as soon as the removal of Mr. Magee was perfected by both the Trustees and Selectboard.

Discuss: Letter to SB about downgrading certain Town roads

Highways Superintendent Kevin Barrows joined the Council to speak about existing town roads that were being plowed and maintained that did not meet the Town's

minimum requirements for receiving these services. From the discussion about discontinuing the town road crew from servicing of these roads, Mr. Barrows said that he expected to save about \$15,000 to \$20,000 of taxpayer money annually if this request was approved. The list of roads that was discussed as being discontinued included Lague Road, Vall Road, Cloverdale Road, Neil Road, Lanphear Road, Watanjay Farm Road, Sand Ridge, Ledge Road, Vermont Made Acres, Stearns Road, Wyman Road, Ross Hill Road, Rooney Road, Tine Mckee Road., Chafee Road, and Cram Road. Mr. Thomas noted a letter from Jason MacArthur explaining how the Lamoille Kennels were located at the end of Vermont Made Acres Road, and because the kennel accepts the Town's stray animals, it should be removed from the list of roads that do not meet the Town's minimum requirements for servicing a public purpose. The Council was agreeable to removing Vermont Made Acres from the Highway Superintendent's list, Mr. Thomas was requested to draft a letter for electronic approval that suggested the Selectboard review the Morristown Road Policy regarding discontinuing the town maintenance and plowing of these roads this summer so the residents thereon on had ample time to find private plow services for the winter months.

Discuss: S.100 housing changes, no more single-family zoning & zoning map edits

Mr. Thomas spoke to the numerous zoning map and zoning bylaw updates needed to bring Morristown and Morrisville into compliance with the new S. 100 "Housing for Everyone" Law. He explained that single family zoning was now illegal throughout Vermont, and the Town could require nothing less than duplexes in rural areas. Mr. Thomas added that the Town could require nothing less than 4-plexes in village areas that were serviced by municipal water and sewer. The Council talked about how important architectural requirements would be to ensure that a new 4-plex would fit into the existing built environment of places like Fairwood Parkway or Jersey Way which were established and almost uniformly single-family neighborhoods. Chair Hancock talked about requiring minimum lot sizes of 4-acres in the rural sections of the town as opposed to 2-acres so the density of these areas would not be doubled by this new law and resulting new development. Mr. Thomas noted that the Sewer Service Management Area that is designated in the Zoning Bylaw was now more important than ever as it was the only defense against developers creating de facto zoning changes by elongating existing water and sewer lines. It was discussed that there was a tremendous amount of work to be done regarding this new law and Mr. Thomas would prioritize it by the various deadlines in the State Statute dictating when the new law would be phased in by. Mr. Thomas told the Council Members that this would be an agenda item every meeting due to S.100 for many months going forward. Mr. Thomas was asked to print out the pending zoning changes that the Council had agreed to for 2023 thus far so they could be reviewed as a separate agenda item for the next Planning Council meeting. It was agreed that the Council, at its next meeting, will need to decide to push these changes through in late summer or early fall on the typical schedule or hold them until the S 100 "Housing for Everyone" zoning changes can be included therewith in the following months.

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director