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**MORRISTOWN/MORRISVILLE
PLANNING COMMISSION
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Minutes of December 15, 2009

Members Present: Bill Henchey, Max Paine, John Meyer, Reeves Larson, Andrew Volansky, Lauren Traister

Members Absent: Paul Griswold

Staff: Mark Leonard (ZA), Bill Rossmassler (LCPC Planner)

Guests: Amy Bell & Craig Keller (VT Agency of Transportation/AOT), Ron Stancliff, Leon Whitcomb, Rhoda Bedell

Agenda: attached

Prior to the start of the public meeting, the Commission met in executive session, with ZA Leonard, Town Administrator Dan Lindley, Selectman Bob Beeman, & Community Development Coordinator Heidi Krantz participating, to review applications for the Zoning Administrator/Planning Assistant/Health Officer position. Five applicants were selected for interviews, scheduled for Dec 22nd.

Chairman Bill Henchey called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm and introduced the guests.

Craig Keller, Chief of Utilities & Permits at AOT, gave a presentation on Access Management (copy attached). Craig said access management, both at the state & local level, is primarily focused to traffic & safety factors, but is closely tied to land use & development as increased development along a highway corridor will inevitably impact traffic & safety on that highway. The ZA asked when state access permits are required for a project. Craig said they are needed whenever a project involves work within a state highway right of way (ROW), alters drainage into a state highway, or is projected to generate greater than 75 peak hour trips. Craig said his section reviews all state land use (Act 250) permit applications for potential impacts on state-maintained roads and also reviews any local permit applications on the request of the municipality or when such applications could affect state highways.

AOT Planning Coordinator Amy Bell said access management can be an effective tool for implementing land use goals. While access management requirements and their associated work on state highways often generates concern, and sometimes opposition, from adjacent property owners and especially businesses who rely on access to their property, she said good use of sound access management principles typically have a long-term benefit to businesses. She referenced a 'best practices for access management' manual, available online.

Max asked about minimum and/or desired sight distance criteria. Craig said sight distance requirements were based on standard traffic safety factors & applicable speed limits. A typical sight distance requirement for a new curb cut in a 50 MPH road section would be 420 feet in either direction.

Max asked if it was possible to require an applicant seeking a new access permit to grant easements or ROWs to adjacent properties to facilitate future development. Craig said AOT can require such ROWs as a condition of approval for an access permit and suggested the local zoning board (DRB) could do the same on town roads.

Leon Whitcomb asked for an explanation of policies and uses for rights-of-way and easements within a ROW. Craig explained that the state may own the land within a highway corridor or, more typically, have a right of way across the property of others granting them the use of that ROW for the road and its associated features. State law permits public utilities to use the ROW for necessary utility lines & infrastructure (such as poles & guy wires), without having to obtain the landowner's permission. He

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stressed that such use was only allowed within the limits of the ROW, typically fifty feet wide; any use beyond that would require the landowner's consent.

Ron Stancliff asked if the state had seen a decline in access permit applications, reflecting the economic downturn & decline in new development projects. Craig estimated a 10-15% decrease in permits over the last two years.

Bill H addressed the long-standing interest in developing a multi-use recreation trail connecting Morrisville & Stowe. He asked if such a trail would best be within an existing highway right-of-way, or on an entirely separate route. Noting the PC's interest in establishing 'buffer zones' along the highway in areas that might see new commercial development that would be deeper than the ROW, he wondered whether these zones might facilitate segments of a rec trail.

Amy Bell, who said she had previously been AOT's planner for bike & pedestrian access, said it really depends: who are the intended users of such a trail? What are the community's preferences? She recommended the Town conduct a feasibility study that would help address these & other questions and better plan the route for such a multi-use recreation trail. She acknowledged it is certainly easier to work within existing ROWs, as opposed to negotiating ROWs with multiple property owners along a newly proposed route, but said the end result is often a route along a mix of new & existing ROWs.

Max asked if the Route 100 corridor from the Morrisville line south to the Stowe line is suitable for cyclists. Amy said, while certain segments with wider shoulders may work, as a whole the road is not well suited for cyclists.

Bill H thanked Craig & Amy for their inputs on the Commission's review of uses along the Route 100 corridor.

Bill R advised that this evening was the last of the scheduled roundtable discussions regarding the Route 100 corridor. He recommended using the next meeting (Jan 5th) as a working session to review the public inputs received over the last few months and start to develop proposals for possible zoning changes along the corridor.

On a motion by Max, seconded by Andrew, minutes of the December 1, 2009 meeting were reviewed and accepted as presented.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted:
Mark Leonard

Minutes approved on: 1/5/10