

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 12 December 2022

Council Members present: Steven Foster, Joshua Goldstein, Etienne Hancock (Chair), John Meyer, and Tom Snipp

Council Members absent:

Guests: Conservation Commission Co-Chair Ron Stancliff, Tim Magee, Tom Cloutier, Barry Russo, Martin & Linda Green, Bill & Tom Gajewski of Savoy Texas LLC (aka owners of Morrisville Plaza)

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 5:00 P.M.

Meeting Minutes: Member Snipp moved to approve the October 25th meeting minutes. A vote of 5-0 affirmed the motion. Member Meyer moved to approve the as-revised November 22nd meeting minutes (name spelling correction). A vote of 4-0-1 affirmed the motion with Member Foster abstaining.

Discussion: Uptown Commercial Zone with Texas Savoy LLC – Brothers Bill & Tom Gajewski of Savoy Texas LLC (Morrisville Plaza) appeared before the Planning Council to discuss their Morrisville Plaza property, and larger trends they were seeing locally and regionally as commercial landlords. They responded that they like to focus on Amazon-proof businesses for prospective tenants. Member Meyer asked what the town could do to help draw businesses to Morrisville. The response was that the Town's growing population would lure more commercial tenants and businesses to Morrisville. The Council asked if the current Zoning Bylaws inhibit the filling of the two currently vacant commercial spaces in Morrisville Plaza. Bill Gajewski replied that he did not believe this to be the case, and added that the somewhat abnormal depth of the plaza building is actually a larger hurdle for commercial space. Council Members thanked the Gajewski brothers for coming all the way from Massachusetts to speak with them.

Public Hearing: Legislative Bodies Zoning change approval votes – Planning Director Thomas shared that the Selectboard & Village Trustees approved the 2022 zoning changes last week with only two minor edits. These edits included not moving forward with the proposed steep slope regulation portion of the Section 340 Environmental Resource Areas revision, and only deleting the paved road clause of the Section 510 Conservation Subdivision's density bonus. The conversation then turned to the directives provided by the Selectboard for the 2023 zoning changes. Mr. Thomas said that he had already drafted 2 of the 3 Selectboard requested zoning changes, with the unaddressed item being the directive to allow residents to have short-term rentals on 2 properties outside the village (instead of just the 1 property now currently allowed). Member Foster asked if properties with short-term rentals prior to the warning of the 2022 zoning change would be grandfathered from the Town's new short-term rental zoning rules. Mr. Thomas confirmed that this is indeed the case, and that he had already written "grandfather

letters” for a handful of concerned property owners that short-term rent dwelling units. The Council agreed by consensus to send a reply letter to the Selectboard, which Mr. Thomas would draft for the next Council meeting, that stated the difficulty with allowing additional short-term rentals without better data regarding the actual number of short-term rentals located outside the village. It was also decided that such a request would likely require the creation of an annual short-term rental registry (which would have the added benefit of ensuring building code compliance), but allowing more than one short-term rental property per person could not be handled within the existing regulatory framework. The Council instead centered its discussion on efforts to increase housing stock instead of allowing more short-term rentals, which (net) take away from the available housing stock and compound population already being lost due to the shrinking US household sizes. Incentivizing the development of more single-family homes via smaller minimum lot sizes (with Class 1 Development) was discussed, particularly in the Low Density Residential Zone, while also potentially increasing the minimum lot sizes in this zone for Class 3 Development. Upon request, Mr. Thomas said he would work with MW&L to roughly show areas in the LDR Zone where sewer lines could be extended to facilitate the development of more single-family homes in the Village. It was decided that Damon Lee and Brian Hammer, the developers of the new single-family housing development on Beacon Hill, should be invited to the January 24th Planning Council meeting where these efforts, and short-term rental regulations, would be discussed in more detail as distinct agenda items.

Discussion: Town Plan Implementation Letters – Mr. Thomas led the Council through draft letters that addressed Objectives in the Implementation Chapter of the Town Plan with a 1-year time horizon or less. Member Goldstein moved to approve the letter regarding LED lighting upgrades in Town owned buildings. A vote of 5-0 affirmed the motion. The Council also reviewed the Town Plan Objective letter that encouraged the creation of a Housing Committee. Mr. Thomas was directed to make various changes to that draft letter, including language therein about only town residents serving on the committee, affordable housing, and meeting the goals of the town plan, especially when it comes to walkability. Member Foster moved to direct Mr. Thomas to draft these minor changes for Chair Hancock’s approval and signature in the coming days, with said letter then being sent for consideration at an upcoming Selectboard meeting. A vote of 5-0 affirmed the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director