

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council

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Meeting Minutes of December 5, 2017

Planning Council Members Present: Linda Greaves, Paul Griswold (Chair), Etienne Hancock, Max Paine, Tom Snipp, Laura Streets, and Mark Struhsacker

Planning Council Members Absent: None

Guests: Ron Bomer, Scott Thompson, Mariah Stokes, Vincent Connolly, and Conservation Commission Chair Ron Stancliff

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order in the Community Meeting Room of the Town Offices at 43 Portland Street at approximately 7:00 P.M.

Discuss: Ron Stancliff regarding a Town Meeting survey & energy policy – Ron Stancliff appeared before the Council asking it to jointly conduct a land use related survey at Town Meeting with his Commission. Chair Griswold suggested that the proposed survey answers should instead be given numerical values so responses would be easier to rank in terms of importance. Member Struhsacker suggestion adding identifying locations to specific survey questions to improve the results. Member Snipp suggested that the Conservation Commission make this survey available electronically. Mr. Stancliff agree to evaluate these changes and return to the Council with an update survey. Mr. Thomas said he would distribute the 2015 results from this same survey. Mr. Stancliff also spoke to the Council regarding the world's waning supply of fossil fuels.

Discuss: Resident request, add Transient Lodging Facility to RRA Zone – Vincent Connolly reappeared before the Council to discuss his purchase of 2283 Sterling Valley Road for a short-term rental business. Mr. Thomas reminded the Council that short-term rentals of more than 3 bedrooms and 6 people are currently not allowed outside the Village, in the Rural Residential Agricultural Zone. He added this this limitation was drafted to ensure the scale and impact of short term rentals comported with the fabric of its host neighborhood. Mr. Thomas added that he was going to change the name of the "transient lodging" use to "short-term rental" as the word transient carried a negative connotation. Mr. Connolly asked the Council to add the Transient Lodging Facility use for up to 8 guest rooms and 16 people to the RRA Zone. Mr. Thomas explained Stowe's pending zoning change for short term rentals. He said that Stowe's main interest seemed to be ensuring fire safety at its short term rentals, while ensuring collection its 1% rooms and meals tax. Mr. Connolly suggested that Morristown adopt this same local tax. The Council was interested in knowing more about this tax and if it was something that could benefit Morristown. Member Streets said that allowing what Mr. Connolly wants to do will drive up the cost of housing. She added that Stowe is a resort town and that Morrisville, with different goals, should have different regulations. Member Snipp said that we should be looking to make Morrisville a destination. Chair Griswold said that we should encourage the type of investment that Mr. Connolly made in Morrisville. He suggested that a 2 acre lot was more than large enough to accommodate the 16 people and corresponding cars requested by Mr. Connolly. Member Hancock said that he did not

want to change the existing zoning language. He also said that any allowance for short term rentals should be strictly limited to property owners that are town residents, as this keeps the rental money in the local economy. It was discussed that residency should be determined by a homestead on the property and an appearance on the voter checklist. Member Hancock suggested a tiered approach for any new short-term rental rules that dovetailed with State building code requirements and wastewater permitting. Conservation Commission Chair Ron Stancliff said that Sterling Valley Road cannot handle the traffic that would be created from additional conversions in the neighborhood like what Mr. Connolly was proposing. Member Struhsacker agreed about the road, but said that he would like to allow some sort of short-term rental use with the proper controls. Chair Griswold conducted a straw-poll of the Members. 3 Members were amendable to Mr. Connolly's zoning change request, 2 were opposed and 2 wanted more information on the topic before voting on it. Mr. Thomas said that he would submit a revised zoning proposal for the January 2nd Council meeting.

Discuss: Increase DRB waiver allowance from 15% to 25% – Mr. Thomas explained that he recently attended a VLCT conference where it was suggested that towns should be more flexible within their regulations to help good development projects obtain permits. He reported that South Burlington recently changed its dimensional waiver percentage to 50% for this reason. The Council did not express an interest in moving off the existing 15% waiver allowance in the Bylaws. However, the Council discussed adding additional criteria such as historic preservation and public art installations as reasons why the DRB could grant a waiver. Mr. Thomas said that he would research statute and likely provide a proposed zoning change for the next Council meeting.

Discuss: Home Business Use allowance review town-wide – It was decided to leave the existing Home Business regulations unchanged. The Council could not decide if it wanted to allow only certain sections of Town to have Home Businesses.

Discuss: Employee and housing shortage for local businesses – The Council discussed what Garret Hirschak, owner of MSI, said about the tight local housing and job market potentially curbing his Stafford Avenue expansion plans. The Council discussed allowing smaller lots in the RRA Zone, but decided that it was happy how new residential growth was being directed into the Village. Mr. Thomas expressed satisfaction that Bridge Street was seeing all of this new residential development, as the Listers' Office assigned this street the Town's lowest neighborhood value. Upon a point made by Mr. Bomer, the Council closed the meeting by discussing if Morrisville's designated downtown status was affecting this situation.

Approve prior meeting minutes – Member Paine moved to approve the November 7th meeting minutes. The motion was affirmed by a vote of 4-0-3, with Members Hancock, Snipp, and Struhsacker abstaining.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

– submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director