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**MORRISTOWN/MORRISVILLE
PLANNING COMMISSION
P.O. BOX 748
MORRISVILLE, VT 05661
Phone (802) 888-6373
Fax (802) 888-6378**

Minutes of December 5, 2006

Members Present: Richard Duda John Meyer, Andrew Volansky, Bill Henchy,

Members Absent: Steve Berson, Lauren Traister, Kelly Rogers (leave of absence)

Guests: see attached list

Recorder: Mark Leonard, Zoning Administrator (ZA)

Chairman Bill Henchy called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Agenda items for this meeting are to discuss petitioned changes to the Special Use District (SUD) boundaries and review the Community Profile section of the Town Plan.

Richard Sargent spoke on behalf of SUD residents on Mansfield Avenue and Washington Highway. In August of this year, a petition signed by 24 residents and/or property owners on those streets was submitted to the Planning Commission requesting that the zoning district boundaries be re-drawn to move all properties located on Mansfield Avenue from the SUD to the adjoining Low Density Residential (LDR) zoning district. Dick said that when the SUD was established in 1989, there was some thought that Copley Hospital might one day expand to the west, toward Mansfield Avenue, so it seemed logical to include Mansfield Avenue in the SUD. In the intervening years, Coley has expanded in the opposite direction and most of the vacant lots on Mansfield Avenue have been developed for residential use. A recent application to develop the one remaining open lot, on the corner of Mansfield Avenue and Washington Highway, into a mixed-use (commercial & residential) structure spurred the residents to seek the petitioned change.

Barbara Stevens noted that when she built her house on Mansfield Avenue nearly 50 years ago there were only three houses on it. Now it's entirely residential, with ten new units having been added in just the past few years.

Board members reviewed a letter from Marcia Shafer, owner of a 0.75-acre parcel on the corner of Mansfield and Washington Highway, detailing her efforts over the years to sell her property and to petition in 1994 for Mansfield Avenue to be included in the SUD, which the Planning Commission approved in 1995. The letter stated she has been unable to sell her home to anyone interested in keeping it in residential use. She states that she does not object to the proposed change of Mansfield Avenue to residential use only, so long as her property fronting on Washington Highway remains in the SUD.

Bill acknowledged the strong sentiment of a majority of property owners on Mansfield Avenue and several on Washington Highway to see the proposed change enacted. He explained that the Planning Commission will be heavily involved in the Town Plan revision over the next year and that that process may well result in a number of zoning bylaw changes, including possibly this district boundary change. He said he wanted to visit the area in question to get a better understanding of the character of the area and its relationship to the hospital and other health care facilities in the vicinity. He added that he hoped to speak to Mrs Shafer and others who had an interest in the matter before deciding how to respond to the petition.

Peter Wright, representing Copley Health Systems, said the hospital would prefer to see the existing boundaries remain unchanged. He emphasized that there are no plans envisioned to expand toward Mansfield Avenue and acknowledged that to do so would necessitate purchasing existing residential properties, but said that the hospital would prefer to leave all options for future expansion open.

Carol Chanania expressed concern about the impact on property values if Mansfield Avenue remained zoned for non-residential uses, such as the one proposed for the vacant corner lot. Bill responded that commercial property generally is more valuable than residential.

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Richard Crawford asked if Copley might use 'eminent domain' to one day acquire residential property on Mansfield Avenue for its use. Mike Miller of LCPC explained that Vermont's laws are very restrictive regarding use of eminent domain. Peter Wright said that as a community-run non-profit organization, he could not imagine Copley ever trying to use this method to acquire property. He repeated that Copley had no plans to expand toward Mansfield Avenue, but if they ever did, he was confident they would seek to acquire any property through the 'willing buyer-willing seller' principle.

Jim Pease said the ongoing revision of the Town Plan presented a good opportunity to review existing uses and boundaries for all the town's zoning districts and to decide whether they remained relevant and appropriate.

Bill thanked those attending for their input and said their concerns would be given due consideration in the next bylaw revision. He invited them to participate in the Town Plan revision process.

Mike Miller presented a draft revision of the Community Profile section of the Town Plan and reviewed data that had changed from the current version, noting census data and trends. Peter Wright highlighted a significant drop in the number of people in the 25-34 year old group between the 1990 and 2000 census. Bill suggested moving the information on education experience to the Education section of the plan.

Heidi Krantz reported in options for conducting a survey of residents to gauge their views on key questions going into the Town Plan revision. She said it might be possible, and desirable, to distribute a survey by a number of means, including online as well as via mailings. She was checking on what money is available to conduct the surveys, which she estimated might cost between \$1-3,000.

Members agreed to Heidi's request to authorize spending \$100 from the Planning Commission's budget for holiday decorations at the gazebo on Main Street.

The next meeting on Dec 19 will look at the Community Facilities, Utilities, and Services section of the Town Plan.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Leonard, recorder

Minutes approved on: 12/19/06