

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

Minutes of December 4, 2001

Members Present: Julia Compagna, Kevin Lane, Bruce Tomlinson, Sam Guy, Kelly Rogers, and Bill Henchey

Members Absent: none

Guests: Kathleen O'Neill, Chair Morristown Conservation Commission

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM. by Julia Compagna, Chair.

Julia opened the meeting by introducing Kathleen O'Neill and stating that she had been invited to attend this evening's meeting to enhance communication and understanding between the two commissions. In response to a question from Kathleen, Julia outlined the Planning Commission's role. She identified the commission's statutory responsibilities for establishing and revising zoning bylaws and the Town Plan. She went on to say that the Planning Commission was looking to move beyond these roles and become more involved in tangible planning issues. Dealing with pressures to expand commercial uses along the Route 100 corridor between Stowe and Morristown provides a starting point for a coordinated effort between the two commissions on land use and preservation issues.

Kathleen outlined the Conservation Commission's role. The commission grew out of the "Our Town" community forum in November 1999 where strong community sentiment to preserve the rural character of the area and avoid 'big box' commercial development and sprawl was expressed. There was some talk of forming a land trust, similar to Stowe, but the interested parties here opted to form a conservation commission. A conservation commission can do nearly everything a land trust can, but is a part of the municipal government structure and hence accountable to the public, through the Selectboard. It is resource-constrained and has no regulatory or statutory authority. It can only make recommendations on issues it has studied to the Selectboard.

The Conservation Commission's primary focus is land conservation. Kathleen explained how land trusts and conservation easements work. Another commission function is coordinating community environmental issues. It has used grants to establish community water testing programs. The commission still views its mission as fighting sprawl, but recognizes the need to ensure its efforts are consistent with the Town Plan. The commission doesn't advocate for no growth; rather, it wants to see smart, well-planned growth.

Kathleen said the commission has received a \$10,000 grant to develop a land use plan and will need to work closely with the Planning Commission in this effort. She stated that the land use plan is a portion of the Town Plan. The grant will be used to expand the level of detail in that part of the Town Plan. The Conservation Commission feels the land use plan needs to be more specific and that the plan needs to be reflected in the town zoning bylaws. She suggested gathering interested parties (Planning Commission, Conservation Commission, Selectboard,) to come up with a 'vision' for the land use plan and then have a contractor write the plan accordingly.

Julia stated that the Town Plan is more of a vision statement, a general guideline for various programs and policies in the town, than a land use plan. The Planning Commission has sought to gauge community sentiment through neighborhood forums or public hearings when considering redefining district boundaries or restrictions, thus garnering a broader perspective. Kathleen suggested that the commissions and Selectboard review a first draft of any land use plan prior to holding any public forums.

Kathleen reiterated that the land use plan needs to be consistent with the town zoning bylaws. The more specific the land use plan, as part of the Town Plan, the easier it will be to enforce the zoning bylaws. The Planning Commission, Conservation Commission, and Selectboard need to work in concert to meet the overall goals of the town. These bodies can use the Lamoille County Planning Commission for technical support in dealing with regulatory and policy issues for land use planning.

Bill asked for the Conservation Commission's input on existing bylaws. He said the Planning Commission relies most heavily on affected property owners and neighbors for input on land use and bylaws changes. Perhaps we need to develop a referendum or survey to better gauge town sentiment on land use questions. We have to balance different, sometimes competing, interests, with some wanting more development to provide jobs and improve the local economy while others want to severely restrict development.

Kathleen said the Conservation Commission has had to fight the perception that it is solely concerned with conserving land; i.e., to stop or prevent growth. It recognizes the need to have a vision for the town that reflects the whole community's wishes, that is reflected in the Town Plan and the zoning bylaws. There needs to be input on that vision from all stakeholders. The commission respects the economic needs of the community. Nonetheless, it has had input from some community members concerned about continuing 'sprawl'. It feels the zoning bylaws need to be tightened up to make them more effective. It wants to focus development in certain areas, thus preserving the character of those other areas in town where development is restricted.

Kevin asked how the land use grant would be executed. Kathleen replied that they will go to LCPC who will either do the work in-house or contract it out, defining the tasks to be accomplished and any statutory requirements of the land use plan.

Julia thanked Kathleen for coming to the meeting and encouraged continued communication and cooperation between the two commissions. Kathleen suggested having a Planning Commission member attend Conservation Commission meetings to improve information crossflow (Kevin Lane is a member of both bodies).

The minutes of November 20, 2001 were reviewed. Bill moved and Sam seconded a motion to approve the minutes; approved unanimously.

The commission reviewed its mail; no action was required.

Julia asked if the Zoning Administrator had reviewed what, if any, permits had been issued for the former Mac Miller property on Cady Falls Road; to date this is still pending. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

Julia addressed the ongoing issue of barn mini-storage. No proposed bylaw has been drafted yet. She asked what is the impetus for this issue: a perceived need for mini-storage space in the Rural Residential Agriculture district or a lack of commercial space in the Commercial and Industrial districts. The matter will be taken up again at the next meeting when possible wording for a draft bylaw would be reviewed.

Julia asked the zoning administrator if the Planning Commission budget for the coming fiscal year was level-funded; Mark replied that to his understanding it was.

The next Planning Commission meeting will be on December 18, 2001. The following items are on the agenda:

- Cynthia Tokos will present information on the Downtown Economic Study
- Discuss a draft barn mini-storage bylaw

The joint MPC/DRB/Selectboard meeting, originally schedule on December 18, 2001 will be on January 15, 2002. Julia asked the zoning administrator to warn the meeting and to send invitations to the DRB, Selectboard, Conservation Commission, Village Trustees, Community Partnership, Recreation Trails Committee, and River Arts.

Kelly moved and Sam seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting; motion was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Leonard, recorder

Cc: Town of Morristown Selectboard
Morristown/Morrisville Development Review Board