Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
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Meeting Minutes of November 19, 2013

Planning Council Members Present: Andrea Caldwell, Paul Griswold (Chair), Etienne Hancock, Yvette Mason, Max Paine, Tom Snipp & Mark Struhsacker
Planning Council Members Absent: None
Staff: Todd Thomas, Planning Director
Guests: Nicole Gilbert of Great Big Graphics

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:00 P.M.

Discussion: Sign Bylaw review w/ Nicole from Great Big Graphics – Nicole Gilbert of sign shop Great Big Graphics appeared before the Council to discuss how she views the Town's sign bylaw from her unique perspective. Ms. Gilbert said that Morristown is one of the few towns she does work in that has a sign bylaw. Member Mason asked Ms. Gilbert what issues she runs into working with the sign bylaw. Ms. Gilbert said that her customers mainly run into issues with the sign bylaw when it comes to lighting. She said that many customers want internally illuminated signs, in addition to bottom-up lighting. Mr. Thomas explained that the bylaw currently required all sign lighting to be mounted top-down using a cutoff fixture and that the intent of this regulation was to curb light pollution. Ms. Gilbert said that requiring the top-down lighting meant that electrical had to be run up through the sign, making it more expensive. Ms. Gilbert went through the sign bylaw with the council pointing out areas where there was confusing language or where improvements could be made. Member Griswold pointed out that there should be a correlation between sign size and speed limits, thereby allowing larger signs on roads with higher speed limits. Mr. Thomas said that this issue was recently addressed by changing the sign size in the Special Industrial Zone from 6 ft.^{2} to 25 ft.^{2}. He clarified that this would allow a larger sign size for a business like Harrison's Concrete. Mr. Thomas said that he would work with the council regarding Ms. Gilbert's suggestions and draft revisions to the sign bylaw for an upcoming meeting.

Discussion: Zoning changes for fence regulations – Mr. Thomas presented the changes to the fence regulations agreed on at the last meeting, which would exempt many types of fences, like split rail fences, from zoning permit requirements. The proposal included allowing, by-right, up to six foot tall fences along side and rear property lines, up to four foot tall fences along front property lines (if the fence was of an open style) and up to 2 foot tall fences along front property lines (if the fence was of an closed style). Mr. Thomas reiterated that all other non-compliant fences would need Conditional Use approval. Mr. Thomas also asked the council if the 45 degree corner fence provision was still needed in the sign bylaw, given the shorter front fence requirements that were agreed to. The council agreed that the 45 degree corner fence provision could be eliminated from the bylaw.

Discussion: BE Zone & INN Zone review and changes – The council reviewed if lot 191 should be included into the INN zone. The topographical difficulties of developing this lot were discussed. The council was split as to if this lot should be included in the business zone. The council decided that they would like to discuss this issue further with the property owners present at a future meeting.

Mr. Thomas again distributed the list of buildings larger than 19,000sf in Morristown. He asked council members what building size may be impactful enough to require Conditional Use review. The council agreed to establish a Conditional Use trigger of 30,000 ft.^{2} for buildings in the Business Enterprise Zone and a Conditional Use trigger of 50,000 ft.^{2} for buildings in the Innovation Zone.

Mr. Thomas said that he was getting pushback on the requirement for underground power in the Innovation Zone. He said that he believes the general manager of Morrisville Water & Light gave him an incorrect cost differential for underground versus overhead power. Because the site features three-phase power, it was estimated to cost an extra quarter million dollars to require underground power throughout the site. The council discussed this requirement and if the additional cost was worthwhile. Member Hancock said that he did not recall seeing other industrial parks with overhead power lines. The council agreed that it would keep the underground power requirement in the zone for now and look to discuss this issue with the Selectboard and Village Trustees when the revised zoning was up for approval.

Discussion: New work priorities – Mr. Thomas said that he would present a revised version of the setbacks in the COM Zone at the December 17th meeting.

Approve prior meeting minutes – Member Snipp moved to approve the November 19th meeting minutes. A vote of 5-0-2 affirmed the motion with Members Caldwell & Struhsacker abstaining.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM – submitted by Todd Thomas, ZA