MORRISTOWN/MORRISVILLE
PLANNING COMMISSION
P.O. BOX 748
MORRISVILLE, VT 05661
Phone (802) 888-6373
Fax (802) 888-6377

Minutes of November 18, 2008

Members Present: Bill Henchey, Kelly Rogers, John Meyer, Max Paine, Andrew Volansky

Members Absent: Steve Berson

Staff: Mark Leonard (Morristown ZA), Chip Sawyer & Bill Rossmassler (LCPC Planners)

Guests: Selectman Bob Beeman, Village Trustee Dana Wildes, Conservation Commissioner Jim Pease, Steve Rae, Berta Pykos, Robert Heanue, Michael Oman (Oman Analytics), Dian Gayer (VT Design Institute, Kathleen Ryan

Prior to the start of the public meeting, the Planning Commissioners and Selectman Bob Beeman met individually with the three prospective PC members (Leslie Chilton, Reeves Larson, and Paul Griswold). Following the interviews, the Planning Commissioners and Selectman Beeman agreed to meet the next afternoon to discuss the candidates and come to a consensus on a recommendation to the Select Board on an appointment to the PC.

Chairman Bill Henchey called public meeting to order at 7:00 pm and reviewed the agenda.

Michael Oman, of Oman Analytics, provided an update on the Downtown Opportunities Study being undertaken under a state transportation grant. He advised that the idea of establishing a one-way traffic circulation through the downtown village area, one of the original study obkectives, had been found to be not viable. Several options for improvements were reviewed (see attached handout). He will be finalizing his findings and presenting a report at a later date.

Using the information developed in the Design Review study conducted by Landworks in January 2007, members discussed options for incorporating design review standards (DRS) in the Conditional Use (CU) and Subdivision (SD) approval processes. Addressing options for lot density or coverage, Bill posed the question of using setbacks or a percentage of lot density as means to set limit on lot coverage.

Chip offered the possibility of using appropriate landscaping requirements as a substitute for lot density percentages. In this manner lots, especially commercial lots, could have fuller development but be adequately screened from views along public roads. This could smooth out the 'hard edges' of full density development. Andrew suggested linking landscaping and lot density percentage requirements.

Bill asked what landscaping standards would be used. Chip pointed to the descriptions in Section 4 of the 1/31/07 draft DRS prepared by Landworks as a guide. Bill said the Planning Commission, in incorporating DRS in CU/SD approval processes, needed to move from the conceptual ideas in the Landworks draft to specific, practical bylaw language. He suggested more prescriptive and restrictive DRS at the beginning of these application reviews, so that applicants could incorporate any changes early in their planning process, at less expense, rather than trying to fix projects late in the approval process or even after they are underway. He asked Chip to review the DRS for Stowe and other towns.

Jim Pease noted that many of the suggested landscaping requirements in the draft DRS use "should" (i.e., recommended) versus "shall" (mandatory). He felt that any bylaw requirements needed to be mandatory, not just recommendations, in order to be effective.

The ZA noted that many subdivision proposals involve three or fewer lots and are often in wooded or other naturally vegetated areas of the Town. He suggested that landscaping standards for subdivisions apply for major (four or more) subdivisions and providing the DRB the latitude to consider existing trees and vegetation in the overall landscape scheme.

FILE COPY

The ZA suggested establishing building envelopes using a percentage of lot size for proposed subdivisions. In this manner, a larger lot (e.g. 10 acres) would have the same percentage of building envelope available to develop as smaller lots.

Dana Wildes urged the PC not to be overly restrictive in establishing lot density requirements for Planned Unit Developments, leaving flexibility for developers to preserve open spaces in the PUDs.

Bill Rossmassler said the bylaws should allow the DRB to use some discretion in reviewing applications as each project may have its own unique circumstances that may not always fit within restrictive DRS but which still fit the intent of the design review requirement.

The ZA reviewed the existing exterior lighting requirements for Conditional uses (section 490). He noted they are very specific and have not been a problem in applying to CU applications. Bill recommended tabling any changes or additions to these standards.

Addressing retail store size limits, Bill noted that responses to last year's community survey indicated a majority in favor of establishing limits of between 50,000 and 75,000 square feet. The intent of these limits is to prevent the establishment of 'big box' stores. Members unanimously agreed to establish a limit of 75,000 square feet for any individual retailer.

The ZA reminded members that the current bylaws do not establish a minimum lot size for residential uses within commercially zoned districts (Central Business District & Commercial District). The lack of such minimums has left the DRB without specific standards when considering requests for multi-family residential uses within these districts. He noted that all of the residential zoning districts have minimum area (lot size requirements) per residential unit, with the highest density in the High Density Residential (HDR) district, which abuts the Central Business district. The HDR minimum area per unit is 4,000 square feet. He recommended using this as the minimum area per unit in the CBD as well, with a larger minimum, 6,000 square feet per unit, in the Commercial district. Members agreed with these limits.

Dana Wildes suggested allowing higher density bonuses within the CBD and COM districts for senior housing and affordable housing projects, noting that higher densities would make these projects more economically viable and that such uses do not usually create the higher parking requirements that are a factor in other multi-family developments.

On a motion by John, seconded by Kelly, minutes of the November 4, 2008 meeting were approved.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted: Minutes approved on: 1/6/09
Mark Leonard