

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council

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Meeting Minutes of November 15, 2016

Planning Council Members Present: Paul Griswold (Chair), Etienne Hancock, Max Paine & Mark Struhsacker

Planning Council Members Absent: Andrea Beeman, Yvette Mason & Tom Snipp

Guests: Laura Streets & Marci Young

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: Parking lot landscaping best practices – Planning Director Thomas reminded the Council that it asked him to take pictures of the parking lots of the recent large commercial developments uptown and compare them with the existing zoning bylaw requiring internal parking lot landscaping for this meeting. Mr. Thomas said that exiting bylaw requiring parking lot landscaping was vague and non-descript, as an example he asked constituted “a large expanse of parking” as described in the existing bylaw. He said that he thought we could do better as a community by requiring some more definitive parking lot landscaping in the bylaw for sites like Tractor Supply in uptown. He then used a photo of the Tractor Supply parking lot to demonstrate that it contained nothing by pavement and zero landscaping. The Council also looks at photos of the lacking parking lot landscaping to Maplefields-Aubuchon and CVS. Mr. Thomas reminded the Council that the CVS project was not a change in use so the conditional use landscaping section of the Town’s existing zoning bylaws did not even apply to that redevelopment site. He said that this bylaw problem demonstrated by the CVS project should and would be corrected by the proposed zoning changes discussed at the Council’s previous meeting. Member Hancock mentioned that some parking lot landscaping he had seen in Montpelier does not contain a curb so it can take in stormwater within the lot. Mr. Thomas said that this was a technique that he hoped the to-be drafted parking lot landscaping bylaw could also employ. Member Hancock said that he would like this draft language to offer a carrot to encourage treating stormwater within the landscaping on-site to reduce the amount of impervious surface and to reduce future costs to the municipally maintained stormwater swirl-separator. Mr. Thomas said that he would work on drafting this language for the next Council meeting. Mr. Thomas also assured Member Struhsacker that any changes to the zoning bylaws for parking lot landscaping would be forward looking and would not further reduce the amount of parking spaces in downtown’s municipal parking lots which would be grandfathered.

Discuss: MDR to LDR zoning change for the Fairwood Parkway area – Mr. Thomas said that he thought the zoning for the Fairwood Parkway area was incorrect as Medium Density Residential and that Low Density Residential was a better fit for this neighborhood. He said that LDR zoning better matches the built environment and density of this neighborhood and it would also preclude multi-family apartment complexes from

popping up amongst its predominantly single-family homes. He added that LDR zoning also provides a better transition into the village from the adjacent Rural Residential Agricultural zoning directly to the east in the town. It was suggested that a wider community forum should be had with this neighborhood before the zoning for it was switched from MDR to LDR. Mr. Thomas said that he would try to schedule this forum for the December 6th Council meeting.

Discuss: Industrial to Commercial zoning change for island lots on Rte 15W – Mr. Thomas explained how the Buker and Demar properties on Route 15W were in reality an island of industrial zoned land surrounded by the commercial zoned Stewart property. The Council agreed by consensus that it would be prudent to include these two lots within the Commercial Zone with the next zoning change.

Discuss: Minimum parking ratio changes – Mr. Thomas brought the Council's attention to the existing minimum parking ratios in the zoning bylaw. He then juxtaposed the very small list of uses therein with more than three pages of defined uses from the definitions section of the zoning bylaw. He said that if there is a defined use in the definitions section of the bylaw, it should also likely appear on the table of minimum parking ratios. He added that he would like to amend the parking ratio section of the bylaws so the zoning bylaws defined used matched the defined uses specified in the minimum parking ratios for the January 5th Council meeting. Member Hancock asked if there was an industry standard for parking minimums. Mr. Thomas said that the Institute of Transportation Engineers had established themselves as the industry standard for trip generation numbers, but that parking ratio minimums were more of an artful process in terms of what you wanted them to produce for your community. Mr. Thomas added that his professional belief is that the word minimum is there for a reason and that minimums should be looked at as a floor number to protect public safety and that professional commercial developments largely already know (and will build) what they need for parking above the Town's minimum. Mr. Thomas added that he hoped to reduce existing minimum parking requirements within his planned revisions. Chair Griswold asked that the parking revisions encourage some larger parking spots for pickups and SUVs.

Approve prior meeting minutes – Member Paine moved to approve the November 1, 2016 meeting minutes. The motion was affirmed by a vote of 4-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 PM – submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director