

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council

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Meeting Minutes of November 7, 2017

Planning Council Members Present: Linda Greaves, Paul Griswold (Chair), Max Paine & Laura Streets

Planning Council Members Absent: Etienne Hancock, Tom Snipp & Mark Struhsacker

Guests: Ron Bomer, Garret Hirschak, Bob Burley, Jim Grover, Annette Johnson, Amanda and Joe LaRock, Kali & Michael Trigg

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: Employee and housing shortage for local businesses – Garret Hirschak, owner of Manufacturing Solutions, Inc. appeared before the Council. He said that MSI was bussing in as many as 40 workers daily from as far away as Burlington because his company was having a very hard time recruiting, and housing local workers. He said that his employees were coming from Morrisville, but mostly points north, including Newport, and east as far as St J. Mr. Hirschak explained that a new assembly line worker made \$15 an hour, approximately \$30,000 annually. Such a salary yields an affordable monthly rent, at 30% of salary, of about \$750. He said his manufacturing clients cannot absorb higher salaries and there is simply not enough housing nor enough people in Morrisville for him to expand, even while paying a competitive salary. Mr. Hirschak said that there was too much control on land development via zoning and that perhaps the ample land in the RRA Zone could be leveraged to bring down land and housing costs. Council Members thanked Mr. Hirschak for his comments and told him that MSI's employee and housing shortage issues would be examined further by the Council. Mr. Hirschak asked for a letter from the Council supporting MSI's pending Vermont Economic Growth Incentive application. The Council directed Mr. Thomas to do as such.

Discuss: Resident request, add Transient Lodging Facility to RRA Zone – Vincent Connolly appeared before the Council to discuss the zoning violation he received the previous week for having a short-term home rental listed on the internet for more than 20 guests. Mr. Connolly said that he purchased 2283 Sterling Valley Road as a business opportunity for short-term rentals. Mr. Thomas said that short-term rentals of more than 3 bedrooms and 6 people is currently not allowed in the RRA Zone, hence the zoning violation. Mr. Connolly said that he owns a house at Killington where he runs a similar short term lodging opportunity that is sprinkled and meets all fire codes. He emphasized that he would want to meet all life safety requirements with his new Morrisville home. He pointed out that Stowe, which is less than a mile from his property, has a pending zoning change that would allow him to do exactly what he was prohibited from doing in Morrisville. He said, he wished he knew about Morrisville's 3 bedrooms / 6 people maximum short term rental capacity rule before he bought this home. He added that the current regulations would be a real drag on property values. He said he would have bought in Stowe instead if he was aware of this rule. Mr. Connolly asked the Council to

examine the Transient Lodging Facility for up to 8 guest rooms and 16 people use that is allowed in the LDR Zone and also allow this use in the RRA Zone. Chair Griswold said Mr. Connolly's business was a high value business that brought money into Town. He encouraged the Council to make what Mr. Connolly was proposing legal. Member Streets disagreed. She said that she does not want to live in a vacation town and wants rules that help keep Morrisville's homes owner-occupied. She added that this type of rental housing use has hollowed out Stowe as a community while reducing housing inventory, which drives up the cost of housing. Resident Annette Johnson cautioned the Council that Morrisville will lose its community and turn into Stowe if what Mr. Connolly is proposing is allowed. Amanda and Joe LaRock supported any zoning change that would help a business like Mr. Connolly's that brings money into the local economy. Member Streets questioned if money actually made its way into Morrisville from these uses as the landlord lives out of town and these people are hiring personal chefs and not eating out at restaurants in Morrisville. Kali & Michael Trigg, on behalf of Scott Britt, said that the existing zoning cap of 3 bedrooms / 6 people was too small. They said that Mr. Britt has 4 bedrooms that can fit 10 plus people comfortably on his 200+ acre property without bothering neighbors. The Council agreed by consensus that larger short term rental uses should be permitted by the DRB so the neighbors have a say. Mr. Thomas said that he would provide a zoning proposal at the Council's next meeting that treated these larger short term rentals like a Home Business. He said that it would also make sense to incorporate some of Stowe's proposed zoning language, as a renter up to ski for the week has no knowledge or interest of where the town line is between the two communities.

Discuss: Airport runway safety improvements comment letter – Mr. Thomas told the Council that impact comments were requested regarding the airport's new, but somewhat limited, expansion plans. He said that the main impetus was to pave the runway's safety areas to arrive at runway length that can accommodate planes landing in wet weather. A new taxiing area would also be added to the north end of the runway. Council Members discussed the project with unanimous strong support for the airport in general. Elmore Selectboard Member Bob Burley said that he, for safety reasons, would like to see the ditches close to the runway filled in and the airports VASI lights moved back to their original location. The Council unanimously instructed Mr. Thomas to write a supportive letter regarding the airport's expansion plans that included Mr. Burley's comments.

Discuss: Home Business Use allowance review town-wide – Discussion of this agenda item was tabled until the December meeting due to the late hour.

Discuss: Supervisory Union school gym capital project letter – Mr. Thomas told the the Council that the school's capital project committee decided to table its proposed gym/capital project. The Council decided to send its already written letter to the school's capital project committee, but with minor changes that reflect the project's new status.

Approve prior meeting minutes – Approval of the October 17th meeting minutes was tabled due to quorum issues.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

– submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director