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**MORRISTOWN/MORRISVILLE
PLANNING COMMISSION
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Minutes of November 7, 2006

Members Present: Richard Duda John Meyer, Lauren Traister, Andrew Volansky, Bill Henchy

Members Absent: Kelly Rogers, Steve Berson

Guests: David Raphael (Landworks), Heidi Krantz (Community Coordinator), Mike Miller (LCPC)

Recorder: Mark Leonard, Zoning Administrator (ZA)

Chairman Bill Henchy called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. David Raphael began a discussion of design review standards by going over some of the standards used on other Vermont towns. Given the range of standards that exist, the Planning Commission needs to determine what level of detail and amount of regulation Morristown wishes to consider. Critical tasks in making this determination will be introducing the concept and rationale for design review standards to the public and engaging all stakeholders in this discussion before any standards are proposed for adoption.

From an implementation standpoint, David suggested that a Design Advisory Board could be formed to review Conditional Use and Site Plan applications, with recommendations going to the DRB for their action. He added that design review standards could be adopted on a district-by-district basis. Existing structures and uses would be 'grandfathered' but any changes in these structures would require design review.

Lauren felt that some initial, limited design requirements, coupled with more general guidelines, might be the best way to ease the community into the idea of design review, with additional requirements being considered as people became accustomed to the concept and had a chance to see how they were applied. David agreed, saying he could envision a progression of standards, from initially being mostly advisory (light) to specific restrictions and requirements (heavy).

Richard asked about the economic impact of having design review; would they create additional costs to property owners or developers that might inhibit the economic development the Town seeks? He also did not want standards that might have the unintended consequence of stifling new and innovative designs and projects which might not fall within the prescribed standards but which might, nonetheless, have both an economic and aesthetic benefit to the community.

David replied that this is clearly a consideration. He stated his belief, based on experiences with other towns, that good design standards are good for business, allowing businesses and developers to know up front what is expected and eliminating much of the guesswork about what the community will or won't accept. By factoring in design standards early on in the project planning, costs and changes can be minimized. He added that some business might in fact be attracted to a town having design standards, knowing that their investment in a well-designed project won't be jeopardized by poorly designed development in the case where there are no standards.

Bill asked about the timeline and mechanics of introducing and adopting design review standards. David laid out a three-step process of one or more informational meetings/workshops to introduce the idea and get public feedback, drafting a set of guidelines and standards, and incorporating those into the next zoning bylaw revision. He stressed the value of involving other groups (e.g., MACC, DRB) in the process. He added that the ongoing Town Plan revision process could provide good feedback on what the public wants (or doesn't want) in the way of design review standards.

Bill asked David for his initial recommendations. David said he would suggest adopting a limited set of standards initially, then seeing how they evolve and grow according to the Town's needs and desires. He suggested starting with site and landscape design standards and historic preservation requirements, adding that these should be

applicable to both the downtown village districts and north end commercial districts.

Andrew said that the issue of retail store size should be part of the discussion of design review standards.

Mark said standards should be simple, understandable, and enforceable. He said very technical standards and requirements might be beyond his or the DRB's ability to evaluate. These might require an independent assessment of a given project proposal, as is currently used for evaluations of some major projects, at the applicant's expense.

David presented a draft pamphlet on Design Review Standards for the initial (education) phase of the process. He proposed to prepare a second informational pamphlet containing whatever standards are eventually proposed. Lauren suggested adding information on how design review standards can help developers, how they can be economically advantageous, and how good design saves money and is good for the environment.

David said the next step would be to present the idea of design review standards, along with an initial draft of such standards, to the public. The scheduled Town Plan stakeholder input meeting on January 16th was identified as the target date for this discussion, with the Planning Commission reviewing the material at the December 19th meeting.

Given the length of the previous discussion, members agreed to postpone their discussion on developing a vision statement for the Town Plan until the next meeting (November 21). Mike Miller asked the members to try to identify two or three key phrases and themes to define the vision. He said the board could consider either a set of guiding principles (how does a given action or policy further the goals of the Town Plan?) or a vision (what do we want the Town to be in X years?).

On a motion by Andrew, seconded by Lauren, the meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Leonard, recorder

Minutes approved on: 11/21/06