Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council

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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 5 November 2019

Council Members Present: Allen Van Anda, Steven Foster, & Etienne Hancock (Chair)
Council Members Absent: Joshua Goldstein & Tom Snipp
Guests: Bob Heanue, Ron Stancliff, Dan McLaughlin, & Paul Griswold
Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: Chair Hancock called the meeting to order in the Community Meeting Room of the Old Tegu Theatre, 43 Portland Street, at approximately 6:00 P.M.

Prior meeting minutes – Quorum issues prevented a vote on the October 15th minutes.

Discuss: Conservation Commission for 10ac min. lot sizes on Elmore Mtn Rd – Conservation Commission Chair Ron Stancliff appeared before the Council proposing a zoning change. He asked the Council to increase the minimum lot size on the foothill of Elmore Mountain (the area east of Elmore Mountain Rd and Route 12 to the Elmore town-line) from a 2-acre minimum to a 10-acre minimum lot size. He said that intent of this change was to protect intact forestland and the steep slopes on the 28 subject properties. Upon a question from Council Member Hancock, Mr. Stancliff said that the foothill of Elmore Mountain was the first area where the Conservation Commission would propose a 10-acre minimum lot size. He suggested a 10-acre minimum lot size would also be appropriate in Mud City and in Sterling Valley. Paul Griswold said he was opposed to requiring larger lots in the town than the existing 2-acre minimum lot size. He said that the existing 2-acre minimum lot size had served the town well for about a half century. He added that a 10-acre minimum lot size would price middle-income people out of these desirable parts of the town, creating rich enclaves that are not accessible to working people. Dan McLaughlin cited pristine and sensitive areas in the town that could benefit from larger minimum lot sizes. Mr. Hancock said that he sees value in reevaluating the existing blanket policy requiring a 2-acre minimum lot size in the town. He asked the Conservation Commission to propose criteria for determining what lands qualified for the additional development protection offered by a 10-acre minimum lot size, such as steep slopes, sensitive habitat, etc. Mr. Thomas said that he would provide mapping of such areas at the Council's next meeting.

Discuss: Proposed change to Section 206 Design Criteria – The Council discussed revised §206 Design Criteria that would require a minimum total area of private and common space in all Dwelling Unit Multi-Family uses. Council Member Van Anda said that having common space, such as an outdoor grilling area, was an important part of getting to your neighbors, which builds community. The Council decided that the total aggregate area of private and common space in new multi-family uses could be in the form of decks, roof-deck, porches, and patios, but not lawn space. The Council also decided on requiring a total aggregate area of private and common space of 60 ft2 per unit in each new multi-family development after reviewing South Burlington's zoning.

Discuss: Simplify new waiver criteria – Mr. Thomas submitted simplified waiver criteria language to the Council. He said that the Development Review Board found the existing language too wordy during its most recent waiver request hearing. He added that this experience also made it clear that the criteria regarding property value impacts needed to be rewritten. The Council, by consensus, found the simplified waiver criteria acceptable. Mr. Thomas said it would be included as part of the spring zoning change.

Discuss: Morristown Road Policy – Given the road damage done by the Halloween Storm, Mr. Thomas asked the Council to table the Morristown Road Policy lane width discussion until the December meeting, at which time the highway department could more reasonably provide the requested wing and plow measurements.

Discuss: Town Plan Transportation Chapter – The Council reviewed the revised transportation chapter of the 2020-2030 Town plan. The Council, by consensus, found the revised chapter to be acceptable.

Discuss (agenda addendum): Sign Bylaw – The Council discussed the wording in the zoning bylaw that currently banned businesses using temporary signage to promote sales and products.

Discuss (agenda addendum): New Village sewer ordinance – Council Member Van Anda discussed the financial burden and the inequity of the Village's new sewer ordinance. He said he would like to see the Planning Council work with the Selectboard on a proposal to make Village water and sewer services part of the Town government.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director