

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 25 October 2022

Council Members present: Steven Foster, Joshua Goldstein, Etienne Hancock (Chair), John Meyer, and Tom Snipp

Council Members absent:

Guests: Tim Magee, David Ring, Barry Russo, James Brewster, Ron Stancliff, Scott Thompson, Wally Reeve, Tom Cloutier, Paul Griswold, Coleen Shepard, Laura and Martin Green

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 at 43 Portland Steet at approximately 5:00 P.M.

Meeting Minutes: Member Snipp moved to approve the September 20th meeting minutes. A vote of 4-0 affirmed the motion. Member Meyer moved to approve the September 27th meeting minutes. A vote of 4-0 affirmed the motion.

Public Hearing: 2022 pending zoning change & hearing schedule – Planning Director Todd Thomas reminded everyone of the November 7th and November 16th Selectboard and Village Trustee warned zoning change public hearings. It was decided that the next Planning Council meeting would be warned for the November 7th Selectboard public hearing, and the regularly scheduled Planning Council meeting on November 8th would not be held.

Discussion: Zoning Bylaws interpretation questions at 10/12 DRB hearing – As Member Foster arrived for the meeting, Chair Hancock and Mr. Thomas related to the Planning Council that a few Zoning Bylaw interpretation issues came up during the October 12th Development Review Board (DRB) meeting. Mr. Thomas explained that there is no direction provided in the Zoning Bylaws for how to calculate a waiver. It was decided that the Planning Council would look at calculation options and decide on one at an upcoming meeting. Architectural Repetition, Section 206 of the Zoning Bylaws, and the definition of the word Building were also discussed. It was decided that Mr. Thomas would propose a rewrite for the definition of Building, and the front door and front porch requirements in Section 206 for a future Council meeting. Mr. Thomas said that he would start this work once the pending revision to the Zoning Bylaws was approved by the Legislative Bodies. Due to all the new residential development thereon, the Planning Council also talked about pedestrian safety and traffic calming on Jersey Heights. It was decided that this would be a separate topic at a future Planning Council meeting, hopefully with a traffic engineer present. Member Goldstein reiterated previous comments that he would like to see the Selectboard fund a master plan for streetscape improvements in this area, and in the downtown. It was decided that language interpretation issues at DRB meetings should be a standing Planning Council agenda item going forward, and that at least one Planning Council member should observe all future DRB meetings. Chair Hancock said he would attend the November 9th DRB meeting.

Discussion: Waterbury Housing Study & as-of-right permits (John) – Member Meyer and Mr. Thomas spoke about the recently published Waterbury housing study. It was noted that Morrisville was years ahead of Waterbury in terms of making Zoning Bylaw changes to create the badly needed new housing-starts in its downtown and core village areas. A longer conversation ensued regarding as-of-right permits. It was decided that Mr. Thomas would bring a list of development applications like the Bourne multi-family conversion on Winter Street, and the Farrell carriage house multi-family conversion on West High Street, to the next Planning Council meeting to study if limited projects like these could be permitted administratively (via a future zoning change). Section 505(b) of the Zoning Bylaws was also discussed, and it was agreed that Mr. Thomas would present revised language that strengthens this regulation at a future Planning Council meeting.

Discussion: Supporting new commercial development (Josh) – Member Goldstein spoke to his desire to make Morrisville, especially the shopping plazas located uptown, more desirable to commercial development and infill redevelopment. The new residential component to Northgate Plaza (old Plaza Hotel) was discussed, including the under-construction sidewalk that now separates the plaza's parking lot from Northgate Avenue. Similar opportunities for infill development were discussed at Morrisville Plaza, including making it more pedestrian friendly. It was decided that a representative for the new ownership of Morrisville Plaza would be invited to an upcoming Planning Council meeting to discuss the vision for it, and what that ownership group has done with their shopping plazas elsewhere. (Note - via a later staff discussion it was agreed that Bill from the Savoy-Texas LLC ownership group would attend the December 13th Planning Council meeting at 5:00 PM.)

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director