

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 13 October 2020

Council Members Present: Allen Van Anda, Joshua Goldstein, Etienne Hancock (Chair)

Council Members Absent: Steven Foster, Tom Snipp

Guests: Conservation Commission Chair Ron Stancliff, Engineer Tyler Mumley, Graham Mink, Grant Wieler

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: Chair Hancock called the meeting to order on the front porch of the Clubhouse at 441 Copley Country Club Drive at approximately 5:05 P.M.

Prior meeting minutes – Approval of prior minutes was tabled due to quorum issues.

Discuss: Zoning more land for the multi-family use (Graham Mink) – Graham Mink and Engineer Tyler Mumley appeared before the Council asking for more land to be zoned to allow for the multi-family use, particularly new 9-unit apartment buildings. The specific request being made was to eliminate the existing requirement that residential uses had to be located primarily on upper floors in the Commercial Zone. Chair Hancock explained that the genesis for this requirement was to ensure that the remaining undeveloped commercially zoned land that is, or could be, served by water and sewer, would not be gobbled up by residential uses. Member Van Anda said that the Commercial Zone needs to provide jobs for the community, so Morrisville remains more than just a bedroom community. Both Engineer Mumley and Mr. Mink said that the existing mixed-use building requirement is a deterrent to development of residential dwellings, and it significantly drives up project costs due to the much more strict building codes for mixed-use buildings. Member Goldstein said he was supportive of this request. He added that would like to see more people living in the Commercial Zones to give the businesses therein more close-by customers, give the area more vitality, and ultimately make it more walkable. Mr. Mink said that this request is really an affordable housing issue. He explained that he has zero vacancy across all of his residential buildings right now, and that the situation is the same with other landlords in town. Engineer Mumley suggested a wider zoning fix, which could include expanding the Mixed Office Residential Zone and allowing Multi-Family housing therein. Chair Hancock said that the Council would consider these comments and discuss this matter, and possibly make a decision, at the next Council meeting. Mr. Mink said that he was fine waiting for the Fall 2021 zoning change for any of the aforementioned changes to happen.

Discuss: 2020 zoning changes – Planning Director Thomas said that the Village Trustees voted to approve the 2020 zoning changes at their October 7th meeting, which completes the 2020 zoning change process.

Discuss: 2021 newly warned zoning changes – Planning Director Thomas discussed each of the following zoning changes with the Council and guests in attendance.

§204.5b - Allow Class 2 development in IND Zone #2 (Houle St. frontage east)
§340 - Add steep slope protection (20% or more) to Environmental Resource Areas
§401.1 - Codify existing treatment of temporary structures (less than 1 year)
§402.1 - Do not require the Zoning Administrator to renew expired permits
§423.4 - Reword Accessory Apartment regulations
§479 - Clarify that campaign signs can be in place 60 days before election day
§840.8 - Set wet hydrant locations & require dry hydrants in major rural subdivisions -
Engineer Tyler Mumley commented that this change would be a hardship on rural development.
§IX - Remove studio / one-bedroom limitation from Accessory Apartment definition
§1091 - Remove the “Fairwood area” from the Medium Density Residential Zone
§1102 - Add the “Fairwood area” into the Low Density Residential Zone

No decisions were made regarding any of the aforementioned zoning change proposals. Mr. Thomas reminded those in attendance that the Planning Council’s public hearing for these zoning changes will take place at the Town Offices on October 27th at 5pm.

Discuss: Revised Land Use Chapter of the Town Plan Chapter – The Council reviewed the proposed changes to the Land Use Chapter of the Town Plan, which were made for “downtown designation” purposes. These changes were deemed by consensus to be acceptable. Mr. Mink said that he may suggest some additional changes to the Land Use Chapter of the Town Plan for the next Council meeting. Mr. Thomas added that the Land Use Chapter may need an additional update depending on what the Council decides regarding the aforementioned discussion about loosening restrictions on the Dwelling Unit Multi-Family use in the Commercial Zone.

Discuss: Draft Energy Chapter of the Town Plan – The Council reviewed the draft Energy Chapter of the Town Plan and directed Mr. Thomas to make a few changes thereto, especially regarding an anticipated rise in electricity demand per household as heat pumps and electric cars become more mainstream. Mr. Thomas said he would present the revised Energy Chapter of the Town Plan at the October 27th Council meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director