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**MORRISTOWN/MORRISVILLE
PLANNING COMMISSION
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Minutes of October 6, 2009

Members Present: Bill Henchey, Reeves Larson, Max Paine, Andrew Volansky, John Meyer

Members Absent: Lauren Traister, Paul Griswold

Staff: Mark Leonard (ZA), Bill Rossmassler (LCPC Planner), Heidi Krantz (Community Coordinator)

Guests: see attached

Agenda: see attached

Chairman Bill Henchey called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Staff planner Bill Rossmassler reviewed the new agenda format and went over this evening's agenda items. Bill H noted that changes to zoning along Route 100 (the 'Route 100 corridor') had been discussed during previous zoning bylaw revisions in 2004 and 2006, as well as during the 2008 Town Plan revision, but that due to more pressing issues had not been addressed in the current set of proposed bylaw revisions. He said tonight's discussion would focus on the segment of the corridor from the southern Village boundary (vicinity of PJ's market & the Bishop Marshall School) south to the airport. The Oct 20th meeting would take up zoning questions related to the airport and its surrounding properties.

Bill H posed the first question: should the current Central Business District (CBD) be extended further south along Route 100, and if so, how far? Ed Debor responded that he would need more information on why the current CBD boundaries were set in order to address this question.

Bill H next posed the question of how to entice visitors & traffic off the pending Route 100 bypass into the CBD's central Village locations & businesses. Ed Debor said we should look at how other towns had handled similar situation and identify 'best practices', as well as pitfalls and failed efforts. Bill H said Bennington's experience might be enlightening. Heidi said the National Main Street Program offered resources in planning this type of effort.

Bill H mentioned plans to develop 'gateways' on the north, central, and southern bypass access points, saying these gateways should serve to attract visitors & customers to the central Village district.

Ed Debor said there's potential for the bypass to hurt existing Village businesses, saying that there needs to be a 'critical mass' of downtown businesses & attractions to draw customers there. Dana Wildes opined that the bypass, by removing heavy truck through traffic, will help make the Village more pedestrian-friendly. Heather Sargent said part of the answer is effectively marketing what Morrisville has to offer, mentioning the ice rink, rail trail, and shopping.

Steve Rae noted that the rail trail project may be delayed due to a recent finding (subject to further legal appeals) that the project will require Act 250 permitting. He said VAST, who has the development rights for the trail, would welcome input from the Town on when & where to begin re-development. Heather suggested talking to Stowe officials about linking the rail trail to their network of recreational trails.

Turning back to the question of zoning changes along the Route 100 corridor, Bill H asked whether people thought commercial uses should be allowed going south from the Village to Morristown Corners Road. Steve Rae said there should be a balance between business & residential uses so that residents are not adversely impacted by non-residential activities. Heather wanted to 'protect' Route 100 from commercial development. Susan Low said the Town should focus on re-developing existing vacant commercial spaces before considering expanding commercial zoning to other areas.

Max said he hears from people who say there's a need for a Village grocery store, particular for seniors who often don't have a car, but that prospective business owners don't feel they can compete with the supermarkets (Price Chopper, Hannaford's) on the north side of town.

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Ed said demographic trends are going down, which will drive, in part, what businesses go where and which will survive. Bill H said we should be planning for zoning which will create the environment to attract and retain good employment opportunities for young people

Bill H laid out a series of questions to help guide the next discussion on possible zoning changes around the airport.

Bill H reviewed the letter to the Planning Commission from the Select Board identifying changes to the proposed zoning bylaw revisions it wants made before holding another public hearing (warned for October 26th). The ZA reviewed the statutory requirements for re-submitting the proposed changes to the Select Board for the public hearing. The PC voted to re-submit the proposed changes, with the Select Board's requested changes.

Bill H discussed how to bring the question of establishing a retail store size limit before the public. When the Select Board removed the proposed 75K-square foot cap, they said they wanted to consider having a non-binding referendum on the question at Town Meeting in March 2010, after some form of public discussion & education on the pros & cons of such a cap. Bill aid he had heard from the manager of the Berlin Mall that Wal-Mart official have told him they would definitely entertain plans for smaller-scale stores, less than the 150K SF model others had told the Select Board was the template.

Bill R went over the latest revision of the proposed Planning Commission schedule through early next year.

On a motion by Max, seconded by Andrew, minutes of the September 15, 2009 meeting were reviewed and accepted as presented.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted:
Mark Leonard

Minutes approved on: 10/20/09