

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council

PO Box 748 / Morrisville, VT 05661

Phone (802) 888-6373

Meeting Minutes of September 19, 2017

Planning Council Members Present: Paul Griswold (Chair), Etienne Hancock, Yvette Mason, Max Paine, Tom Snipp, and Mark Struhsacker

Planning Council Members Absent: Laura Streets

Guests: Ron Bomer, Kristen Connelly and her daughter Coral Clayton

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order in the Community Meeting Room of the Town Offices at 43 Portland Street at approximately 7:00 P.M.

Discuss: Fence regulations – Kristen Connelly and her daughter Coral Clayton joined the Council to discuss the fence that was erected the previous weekend in their backyard at 35 Howard Street. Ms. Connelly explained that the fence was placed 25 feet from the centerline of Washington Highway and that she did not think it needed a permit. Mr. Thomas explained the zoning issue with the fence, that it was stockade style at 3.5 feet in height, which is taller than currently allowed by the Zoning Bylaws given its closed style and its location - installed parallel to a street. He added that the Bylaws allow a fence along a street to be up to 4 feet high, only if the fence is 50% open. Ms. Connelly said that she was willing to remove every other picket from her stockade fence to make it 50% open and therefore compliant with the zoning bylaws. Mr. Thomas asked if the Council wanted to examine the current fence regulations before forcing the removal of every other picket from the stockade fence. Member Mason said that she did not like having stockade fences along roads because the fence limits views of a person's surroundings when walking or driving by. The Council discussed if the existing 2 foot height limit for closed fencing along roads was too short. 4 feet of fence height was discussed as an alternative. Member Snipp pointed out that a 2 foot tall front yard fence did not provide adequate safety for a child or dog. Member Hancock suggested changing the words "and streets" in the existing fence regulations to "primary frontage" as a way to deal with a unique situation like this double lot with frontage on Howard Street and Washington Highway. Council Members decided to work on this fence bylaw wording at the next Council meeting. Mr. Thomas asked Members to walk or drive by this Howard Street property prior to the next meeting so they could become familiar with the section of fence in question built along Washington Highway. Ms. Connelly asked if there would be enforcement regarding the fence while the Council worked on potentially revising the fence regulations. Mr. Thomas said that he would not look to do any enforcement on this property as the Zoning Administrator while the fence regulations were being looked at.

Discuss: Bumpouts and street trees in downtown – Mr. Thomas informed the Council that the angled parking proposal for Lower Main Street was cancelled last week by Town staff. The Council, by consensus, was disappointed by this decision. Mr. Thomas explained that Town staff thought the traveled portion of the road was too narrow (12 foot lanes) when the angled parking was chalked in. Mr. Thomas said there was concern that a plow truck with a wing on it would not fit down Lower Main Street if it was filled

with parked cars. Council Members unanimously said that they would still like to see the angled parking proposal move forward, perhaps, if needed, with 45 degree or 30 degree angled spaces to create additional travel lane width. Chair Griswold said that we need to plan our downtown for the 300 days a year when there is no snow instead of planning the entire downtown for the 50 or so plow days a year. Member Struhsacker said that Stowe would kill to be able to create this kind of parking and we should not waste this opportunity. Member Hancock said that older downtowns in cold weather states need to be attractive looking in order to remain vibrant and viable. Angled parking that slows through-traffic, along with the addition of street trees, will make Morrisville more attractive looking and keep it as vibrant as possible. Resident Ron Bomer said he did not agree with the Town using large highway plows on a residential road like Fairwood Parkway, and the dumping of so much sand. If the town does not have smaller plows, the town could contract for plowing with a vendor like the Blaisdell's, or do nothing in most storms like how the Barbour's maintain their nearby private lane.

Discuss: Progress on meeting Town Plan Objectives – Member Hancock, echoed his comments about adding street trees to the downtown and traffic calming, saying that these were Town Plan objectives that he would like to see the Council work on in the coming months. Mr. Thomas called the Council's attention to a plan for street tree bulb-outs on Portland, Main and Bridge Streets prepared by the Alta Planning Group. He added that this plan was completed considering truck turning movements. Member Hancock said that he also wants to preserve the rural nature of Route 100 south towards Stowe. Mr. Thomas recommended not allowing the Home Business use on Route 100 as a way to ensure this road does not get commercialized over time. Chair Griswold said that the Town Plan should be promoting Stagecoach Road as the scenic gateway into Morrisville. Mr. Thomas said that he would add that language to the Town Plan.

Discuss: Supervisory Union school gym capital project – Segueing from the previous discussion, Member Hancock spoke to an objective in the Town Plan that seemed to support the proposed gym capital addition to the school campus. Council Members discussed and disagreed on what constituted a "fieldhouse." Member Mason said that a fieldhouse is more of a community center, it is not just a gym. Chair Griswold said that the proposed gym was not big enough to constitute a field house. He added that he wanted to see any field house constructed run by a non-profit that looked to rent out the facility for events and sports leagues to offset this facility's construction and operating costs to the taxpayers. Mr. Griswold said that he would like to see naming rights sold on this facility, which the school would have first priority of in terms of use. He closed his remarks by stating that our educators, the school administration, is not well equipped nor tied in well enough to the economics of the community to be charged with planning, building, and maintaining the new gym. Member Snipp said that he thinks Mr. Griswold is being too critical of the school and the capital plans that include the new gym. He said that Planning Council should be looking at what the gym would do for the community in the big picture and not be critiquing the design of the current proposal. Member Snipp questioned the appropriateness of publishing a portion of the previous Planning Council minutes in Front Porch Forum. These minutes covered the presentation by Mr. Andy Lundeen, staff member of the LSSU office, regarding the proposed school gym capital

project (per the EMUU Board). Member Snipp said that these minutes were posted at the sole direction of Chair Griswold and he was never contacted prior to the posting. Chair Griswold stated that before he posted the minutes to Front Porch Forum, he met with Planner Thomas, and polled the other council members about doing so. Chair Griswold said that he received a positive answer about posting the minutes to Front Porch Forum from all but two Council Members (one member was not available and the other member did not attend the subject meeting). Having an affirmative response from a majority of the Council, he said he released the minutes posting to Front Porch Forum. Statements and answers then continued with no agreement regarding this topic. Chair Griswold offered to excuse himself from the meeting to give the Members time to discuss the posting of the minutes to Front Porch Forum. Chair Griswold said that if the Council Members decided this action was inappropriate, he would offer his resignation as Chair. The Members refused to accept his suggestion. Member Struhsacker then made a motion stating that it is incumbent that the school administration explore different avenues, like naming rights, to pay for the new gym because taxpayers alone cannot be counted on to afford the increased costs of either proposed school capital project. A vote of 6-0 affirmed that motion. Member Hancock made a motion directing the Council to evaluate if the language in the Town Plan conformed to the school's proposed gym capital project. Member Snipp said in response that there were components of the Town Plan language that clearly were no longer relevant, like the section about the larger running track that had been voted down twice. Member Struhsacker suggested the Council write a letter to the school's capital committee asking them to detail what parts of the gym capital proposal are essential and how these costs can be paid for. Mr. Thomas said he would work on a draft letter for the next Council meeting. Members decided to table additional discussion of the school gym capital until the next meeting.

Discuss: Zoning Administrator recommendation renewals – Mr. Thomas said that the Planning Council needed to make Zoning Administrator appointment recommendations to the Selectboard. Per 24 VSA Section 4448, it was recommended that Todd Thomas remain the Town's Administrative Officer for another three year term. It was also recommended Dan Lindley continue as Acting Administrative Officer, with Mr. Lindley only obtaining authority when Mr. Thomas is unavailable to function as the primary Administrative Officer for a period of 21 or more consecutive days.

Approve prior meeting minutes (multiple sets) – Member Paine moved to approve the July 18, 2017 and August 15, 2017 meeting minutes. Approval of the September 5th meeting minutes were tabled due to quorum issues.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

– submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director

