Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 18 September 2018

Council Members Present: Allen Van Anda, Linda Greaves, Paul Griswold (Chair), Etienne Hancock, and Tom Snipp
Council Members Absent: Joshua Goldstein
Guests: Bob Grundstein, Steve Foster, and Graham Mink (site walk only)
Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: The meeting was first called to order at 5:45 PM at 217 Bridge Street for a site walk thereof. Post site walk, the meeting resumed in the Community Room of the Old Tegu Theatre, 43 Portland Street, at approximately 6:30 P.M.

Discussion: Site walk of 217 Bridge Street (Mink) – Planning Council Members Van Anda, Greaves, Griswold, Hancock, and Snipp, along with Planning Director Thomas, were provided a tour by Graham Mink of his new multi-family residential building at 217 Bridge Street at 5:45 PM. The group walked through a one-bedroom and a two-bedroom apartment. All agreed that this new 9-unit apartment building was well designed and well built. The tour concluded with a discussion on building materials, and the carrying costs and longevity thereof. When the Planning Council returned to the old Tegu Theatre Building to continue the regular portion of the meeting at approximately 6:30 PM, the discussion of this building continued. It was discussed if there could be a zoning incentive for developers to use heat pumps so air conditioners would not be sticking out of street facing windows. After an initial suggestion from Member Van Anda, Member Hancock agreed that the minimum building materials requirements discussed at the previous meeting should be limited to Portland and Main Streets. Mr. Thomas said that this was a good compromise. He suggested having DRB Member and local architect Paul Trudell attend the Council's next meeting to talk about appropriate building materials that would also be complementary to what already exists in Morrisville's historic downtown.

Discussion: 2018 zoning changes hearing votes – The Council discussed the recent votes taken by the Trustees and the Selectboard on the 2018 zoning changes. Mr. Thomas explained that zoning change votes went relatively well, with the Selectboard only taking issue with the residency requirement for short term rentals. He added that he was forced to recommend that the originally proposed prime ag soil open space changes within the conservation subdivision bylaw should not approved. It was explained that the regional planning commission contacted Act 250 to express concerns about this portion of the local zoning change (development of prime ag soils), and that Act 250 opined that the proposed changes to the conservation subdivision bylaw could be seen as a material change to the Act 250 permit for the Village's 2007 sewer plant expansion.

Discuss: Planning Council resignation & application – The Council signed letters thanking former members Laura Streets, Mark Struhsacker & Max Paine for their service.

Discussion: Business Enterprise vs Mixed Office Res zones – The Council discussed that the intent of the Business Enterprise Zone was outdated and most of what was allowed therein, largely at the school property, was no longer desired by the BJAMS school board, the Town, nor the commercial real-estate market in an online world. In an effort to further simplify the town's zoning, it was decided that the Business Enterprise Zone would be folded into the Mixed Office Residential Zone, with some design control added to the newly expanded Mixed Office Residential Zone. Mr. Thomas said that this BED to MOR zone change and the revised design criteria could be made applicable in most zones as part of the next summer's zoning update.

Discuss: High Density Residential zone changes – Mr. Thomas presented the Council with some data regarding what other larger communities in Vermont allow in terms of units per acre in their high density residential zones. Morrisville was found to be in the least permissive density quartile from that queried group. Mr. Thomas also provided the Council with data containing the lot size, existing units, and units allowed for every property in the newly reconfigured High Density Residential Zone. The data revealed that 26% of the properties in this zone already had more units per parcel than allowed by zoning. The data also revealed that there were 6 existing units of housing where the lot was too small to be built on under the current zoning. Mr. Thomas added that the existing zoning allowed the potential conversion of 7 single-family homes into multi-family housing. It was discussed that halving the existing 4,000 ft2 per unit density requirement would move Morrisville into the top 1/3 of allowed density, slightly less dense than Barre. He said that he would work on a proposal for such for the next Council meeting, along with establishing design criteria in the HDR Zone.

Discuss: Novus Energy 150 kw solar farm on Elizabeth Lane – The Council reviewed the proposed solar project off Elizabeth Lane. They determined that this was a good project, as it was located on a reclaimed gravel pit, with no visibility to LaPorte Road, and it had no Morristown abutting property owners. Mr. Thomas said that he would draft a letter of support in the morning which would note that the new house lots recently approved off Elizabeth Lane should be added to the solar farm site plan.

Discuss: State Planning goals – It became apparent that the Council wanted to look at different statute than what Mr. Thomas provided. He said he would provide the alternative statute for the next meeting.

Discuss: Open Planning Council seat – Steve Foster of Goeltz Road expressed his interest in the open Planning Council seat. After speaking to Mr. Foster about his real estate company (K2 Realty) and his work to redevelop the empty train station into 10 Railroad Street restaurant, the Council members unanimously recommended that he be appointed to the open seat on the Council.

Prior meeting minutes – Upon a motion made by Member Hancock, the as revised September 4th meeting minutes were approved by a vote of 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director