

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council

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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 17 September 2019

Council Members Present: Allen Van Anda, Steven Foster, Joshua Goldstein, and Tom Snipp

Council Members Absent: Etienne Hancock, (Member Linda Greaves has resigned)

Guests: Bob Heanue, Ron Stancliff, Dan McLaughlin, John McQueen, Melissa LeBlanc, and Ray Belanger Jr.

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order in the Community Meeting Room of the Old Tegu Theatre, 43 Portland Street, at approximately 6:00 P.M.

Prior meeting minutes – Approval of the May 7th and May 21st meeting minutes were tabled due to quorum issues. By consensus, the Council approved the April 23rd meeting minutes. Member Foster moved to approve the July 16th meeting minutes. The motion was affirmed by a vote of 3-0-1 with Member Goldstein abstaining. Member Goldstein moved to approve the August 20th meeting minutes. The motion was affirmed by a vote of 3-0-1 with Member Snipp abstaining.

Discuss: Short-term rentals zoning – The Council discussed the data provided regarding the town's existing short-term rentals. The number of housing units being used as short-term rentals increased 28% so far in 2019 vs 2018. There are now over 100 unique short-term rental options in town and the median nightly rent is \$217. Mr. Thomas spoke of software that can track this kind of data and automate the regulation this use. An annual per short-term rental unit registration fee of \$200 was discussed as a means to fund this technology. No decisions were made in this regard. Melissa LeBlanc said that she has both an owner-occupied and a non-owner occupied short-term rental and the revenue has helped her family financially, and her guests patronize local businesses. Upon a question from Member Goldstein, she confirmed that her vacancy rate at her older short-term rental was only about 25%.

Discuss: Pinewood Estates residents that want Village (LDR) zoning – The Council decided to take no action regarding this resident request from the prior meeting.

Discuss: Copley Municipal Parking Lot – The Council reviewed the new plans for the Copley Municipal parking lot off Pleasant Street. The budget and layout were acceptable to the Council. Member Goldstein stressing that he wanted to see a planter strip with street trees included between the proposed overnight parking spaces. Not doing so would violate the Town's own zoning requirement for parking lot landscaping. Member Goldstein also added that he wanted to see more connectivity in the plans from the proposed pocket park over to MoCo.

Discuss: Council composition – It was decided that a letter would be sent to the Selectboard and Trustees regarding changing the Council from a seven member to five member board. Chair Hancock's concerns regarding the Council's current composition not matching the larger community demographic was also discussed, but it was decided that this issue could take care of itself as the Council's membership changed over time.

Discuss: Changes to parking minimums – Member Goldstein said that the current parking minimum, at 2 spaces per housing unit, was overkill in the High Density Residential (HDR) Zone. He said that such a large parking requirement would use up a lot of the land where the Council would like to see infill development. After some discussion, the Council decided to change the HDR parking minimum from 2 to 1 parking space per unit. Mr. Thomas said that he would like to mirror that change in the Central Business Zone. He explained that with all the new development happening downtown, it was time to bump that ratio up from 0.75 spaces per unit to 1 parking space per unit. It was agreed that these changes would be made part of the next zoning change.

Discuss: Morristown Road Policy – The Council reviewed the revised Morristown Road Policy. The Council took no issue with the changes made to allow the acceptance of dead-end roads, but there was concern expressed regarding the new width of pavement required by the "urban road cross-section." The Council agreed that the 33% increase in travel lane width that was just approved would create speeding problems in newly approved developments if the Town zoning requirements were changed to match the new road policy. Mr. Thomas was instructed to draft a letter to the Selectboard asking for a reconsideration of the 12 foot travel lanes in the new road policy. Mr. Thomas said he would provide a draft of this letter for Council approval at its October 1st meeting.

Discuss: Town Plan – The Council directed Member Thomas to draft a new land use chapter of the Town plan for review at the October 1st meeting.

Discuss (agenda addendum): Zoning for Morristown Corners Rd – Ray Belanger Jr. appeared before the Council asking for his land on the corner of Morristown Corners Road and Cadys Falls Road to be rezoned residential. Mr. Belanger said that with the Selectboard likely ordering a zoning change this fall for Denise Trombley's increase in the waiver percentage, he needed the Council to rule on his zoning now. He added he could not wait a year and a half until the next zoning change. The Council asked Mr. Thomas to place this item on the next meeting agenda, with perhaps looking at allowing a mix of uses in the Industrial Zone.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director