

**MORRISTOWN/MORRISVILLE
PLANNING COMMISSION
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Minutes of August 6, 2002

Members Present: Julia Compagna, Kelly Rogers, Kevin Lane, Bill Henchey*, Sam Guy*, (* late arrival)

Members Absent: Bill Bourne, Bruce Tomlinson

Recorder: Mark Leonard, Zoning Administrator

Guests: Alice Angney (LSSU Superintendent), George Cormier (LSSU)

Julia called the meeting to order at 7:10PM

The topic for this evening's Town Plan review is Education. A previous hearing on Education issues was held on June 18, 2002, with inputs received from Community College of Vermont, the Bishop Marshall School, and the Morristown Library. A written input from the director of the Green Mountain Technology & Career Center (GMTCC) was read into the record.

Julia noted that the current plan envisioned several major school facility projects which have since been completed. She asked whether the growth projections made at that time have been borne out. Mrs Angney stated that the school district enrollment numbers were on track with what had been forecast. Julia inquired if there were any expansions or renovations anticipated in the next five years as a result of the 2000 Census data. Mrs Angney said no. Julia asked if the school district had any land acquisition plans. Mrs Angney said their current land was sufficient, but that their recreation fields, which are shared with various community groups, are at full capacity, with demand increasing.

In response to a question on the impact of Act 60 on Morristown's school funding, Mrs Angney said that the district regarded Act 60 as a fact of life, not good or bad. She said that various state education funding formulas had preceded Act 60 and should Act 60 be changed or eliminated, some other funding formula would take its place. The most significant impacts were on tax rate growth stemming from the statewide common level of appraisal process. The frequency of the town's reappraisal might be looked at as a factor in managing tax rate growth (possible recommendation in Town Plan?). George Cormier added that the taxpayer's perception of Act 60 and school funding was that of a loss of local control. Morristown's local school tax rate was 5th highest out of ten in the county last year. It is estimated to be 7th out of 10 in the coming year.

George noted that tuition student revenue (from sending towns without their own middle or high school) was vital to the town's level of education services currently provided. Tuition students, by agreement, come from Elmore and Wolcott. Other towns without their own high school can send students to Peoples Academy if desired. Alice addressed the 'school choice' option currently available. Under it, a small number of high school students (3% or 6 students, whichever is less) from one district may apply to attend a high school in another district.

The school district is a key partner with the town and various community groups in providing facilities and services to the community. The town and school now have a formal cost-sharing agreement for joint maintenance of the recreation fields. The school makes its facilities available for a variety of community users. It annually hosts a week-long conference by the Responsive Classroom Initiative, bringing in over 100 attendees from across the country. This provides a showcase for the district's programs and positively impacts the local economy. The district

works with community groups, local businesses, and GMTCC on mentoring and apprentice programs. Other community programs using school facilities on a year-round basis include "Success by Six" which provides county-wide social outreach services from offices in the Graded School, the Morristown After School Program (MASP), K-Care, and Early Elementary Education (EEE) for 3-5 year olds, the Council on Humanities' adult book study program, and the Summer Youth Program. Additionally, Alice pointed out that the schools want to assist home-schooling families in any way possible. Home-schoolers can participate in any programs offered at the school, within resource and capacity constraints.

Both George and Alice wanted to specifically acknowledge the role of community volunteers in running various programs and assisting with maintenance of the recreation fields. George mentioned that the district was seeking grant funds for improvements to the baseball fields and Graded School playground. Julia suggested that school facilities should be cross-referenced in the "Community Facilities" section of the Town Plan. Neither George nor Alice offered any suggestions for Policies and Recommendations in the Town Plan.

Sam moved to accept the minutes of the July 16 Planning Commission meeting. Kelly seconded the motion and they were unanimously approved.

The next meeting will be on August 20, 2002 at the Water & Light Department building, addressing the Community Profile and Housing sections of the town plan.

Sam moved to adjourn and Kelly seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Leonard, recorder