Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council

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Meeting Minutes of August 2, 2016

Planning Council Members Present: Andrea Beeman, Paul Griswold (Chair), Etienne Hancock, Yvette Mason. Max Paine & Mark Struhsacker
Planning Council Members Absent: Tom Snipp
Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas
Guests: Marjorie Ward

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.

Discussion: Rte 12, Rte 15A, Summer Street & Copley Avenue intersection letter – Planning Director Thomas asked the Council to approve the draft letter to the Selectboard regarding improvements to the intersection of Rte 12, Rte 15A, Summer Street & Copley Avenue. Council members reviewed the letter, directed Mr. Thomas to fix one typographical error and moved that it be sent to the Selectboard. The motion was affirmed by a vote of 6-0.

Discussion: Review proposed Town Plan changes before the August 16th Hearing – The Council reviewed the changes proposed to the Town Plan for the Planning Council's hearing warned for Tuesday August 16th (the next regularly scheduled meeting). Mr. Thomas explained that a paragraph was being inserted into the Town Plan lauding the excellent work of the Agency of Community Development and its Downtown Program. He further explained that this is a requirement of Tricia's pending designated downtown renewal. The Council had no questions regarding the proposed change. Mr. Thomas said that he had already previously submitted this language to both legislative bodies and warned Town Plan hearings for both.

Discussion: Summer 2016 zoning change postmortem – Mr. Thomas asked the Council to provide direction as to what part of the Bylaws he should work on next. Mr. Thomas said that he provided three choices for future zoning efforts on the agenda and that he would of course welcome Council Members adding additional work items. The Council discussed these three items as follows:

1. Mr. Thomas said that it came to light at the last zoning change hearing that the split between the High Density Residential (HRD) and Medium Density Residential (MDR) zones seemed somewhat arbitrary. He noted that west side of Congress Street was HDR while east of Congress Street was MDR. He added that the southern border of the HDR Zone was surrounded by the Low Density Residential Zone (LDR), with that an abrupt transition being even more head-scratching. After a lengthy discussion, Mr. Thomas said that he would present a proposed zoning change for the next meeting that turned the southern half of the HDR Zone into the MDR Zone.

2. Mr. Thomas then turned the question to rezoning the south side of Upper Main Street from Cumberland Farms to Summer Street. Mr. Thomas explained that the seven properties in this small area where all non-conforming save for Mary Dick's house. He noted that Mike Bourne's building on 0.2 acres next to the Senior Center has nine apartments in it that would need more than an acre of land to be conforming given current density maximums. Mr. Thomas added that he thought it would be prudent to encourage some reinvestment in these properties were mostly in need of maintenance. Member Mason said that she was opposed to removing these 7 properties from the Mixed Office Residential Zone and adding them into the Central Business Zone. Member Hancock moved to add these seven properties into the Central Business Zone. The motion was affirmed by a vote of 4-2. Mr. Thomas was additionally asked to provide the Council with ordinance examples that would improve livability in the village regarding better management of apartment houses. Mr. Thomas cited an ordinance that would require dumpsters to be screened as an example. Mr. Thomas said he would bring a few ordinance examples to the next Council meeting.
3. Mr. Thomas said that he would like to revise the zoning parking minimums and better tie them to defined uses.

Guest Marjorie Ward added that she wants the sight distance improved at Court Street by eliminating a parking space.

Approve prior meeting minutes – Member Struhsacker moved to approve the June 7, 2016 minutes. A vote of 5-0-1 affirmed the motion with Member Paine abstaining.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM – submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director