

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
PO Box 748 / Morrisville, VT 05661
Phone (802) 888-6373

Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 12 July 2022

Council Members present: Joshua Goldstein, Etienne Hancock (Chair), John Meyer, and Tom Snipp

Council Members absent: Steven Foster

Guests: Tim Magee, Selectboard Member Judy Bickford, Conservation Commission Co-Chairs Ron Stancliff & Kristen Connelly, Nancy Pritchard, Jessica Dambach, Sharon Rowell, Dan McLaughlin, Bob Bortree, David Ring, Tom Cloutier, Graham Mink, Luke Aupperlee, Allen Deuso, Lisa Andrus, Helene Nilsen, Henry Hamel, Tommy Gardner, Jill Mudgett, Cathy Chaffee, and various other members of the public that did not speak at the meeting.

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: Chair Hancock called the meeting to order under the tent adjacent to the clubhouse at Copley Country Club at approximately 6:00 P.M.

Prior meeting minutes – Approval of the June 28th meeting minutes were tabled due to Member Foster's absence.

Discuss: §207 Historic Preservation changes suggested by Paul Trudell – Planning Director Thomas explained that he made the changes suggested at the last Council meeting by Architect and DRB Member Paul Trudell to the pending rewrite of the §207 Historic Preservation Criteria section of the Zoning Bylaws. Chair Hancock said that thanks to a sketch offer by Mr. Trudell, illustrations of these architectural details would be included in the next update of the Zoning Bylaws. He added that the intent of this prescriptive language was to avoid the costly and lengthy process that having a separate historic preservation board review would create. Member Meyer said that the prescriptive language and architectural sketches would ensure that customers could easily understand the new architectural requirements. Member Snipp said that the Planning Council's proposed §207 rewrite was a good start towards preserving the historical character of our community. Member Goldstein asked to have a building products supplier invited to the next Council meeting to review the proposed changes to §207 Historic Preservation Criteria. Mr. Thomas said he would ask Lee from Country Home Center or Mike from rk MILES to attend the next Council meeting to speak to the added material cost expense of the proposed new requirements. Chair Hancock said that the draft §207 Historic Preservation language should be shared with the Trustees and Selectboard to garner feedback before the document is finalized and forwarded to those bodies for approval this fall or winter. Public comments related to, and unrelated to, this zoning change were as follows:

Jessica Dambach clarified that “enhanced building materials” would not be required on the rear of new buildings.

Bob Bortree opined that labor was the main cost driver of siding a building, not materials. David Ring and Tom Cloutier said they did not like the proposed blank wall language.

Graham Mink also said that this new blank wall language, which was originally suggested by Architect Trudell, had no local historical base. He added that articulating foundations and roofs is particularly expensive (further escalating the cost of new housing).

Dan McLaughlin said that the proposed 5 foot articulation language could be reduced down to 6 inches or a foot, and still be effective, without necessitating corresponding foundation work.

Jessica Dambach said that Mr. Mink's apartment complex on Brooklyn Street was described to her recently as a ghetto.

Luke Aupperlee said that more open space and green areas was needed in Mr. Mink's apartment developments.

Sharon Rowell said that she wants Mr. Mink's buildings in Morrisville to look more like the one he just built on Maple Street in Stowe. Mr. Mink responded that the economics of the two areas are not the same, especially if the goal is to keep housing in Morrisville at least reasonably affordable.

Allen Deuso questioned where the historic district was. Mr. Thomas responded that the original 1983 Morrisville Historic District consisted of the commercial core of downtown Morrisville (Route 100), and the district was extended in 2006 to the directly adjacent residential areas (but the section of Bridge Street being discussed was not in the Historic District and would not be impacted by the proposed §207 Historic Preservation language).

Lisa Andrus questioned the fire safety aspect of Mr. Mink's developments.

Bob Bortree asked about the failed attempt to establish a demo delay bylaw for historic buildings in Morrisville.

Helene Nilsen said that historic preservation should be emphasized.

Henry Hamel said that there is a desire by the community that the rich character of Morrisville/Morristown be preserved and not be represented by the look of the most recently built buildings, and that this was more important than affordability.

Tommy Gardner asked why the Council's meeting packets were not posted online.

Jill Mudgett asked for more public outreach as to how the zoning approval process works.

Discuss: Lamoille County Star Gazers light pollution proposal – The Council Members reviewed the written zoning changes suggested by the Lamoille County Stargazers that were intended to enhance evening dark skies for stargazing. Members Meyer and Hancock said that the proposal from the Stargazers was not too different than what was already in the Zoning Bylaws (other than the request for regulating specific lumen strength and new low lighting zones). Cathy Chafee complained about how the dog park and street lights on Copley Ave impact her home. Mr. Thomas responded that street lights are specifically exempted from the Zoning Bylaws. David Ring questioned the existing language for parking lot lighting. Mr. Thomas was asked to research industry standards for commercial parking lot lighting for the next Council meeting. Member Meyer suggested editing the existing zoning to incorporate as much of the Stargazers proposal as possible for the next meeting. Member Goldstein expressed a long-term desire to have a consulting company draft a master lighting and streetscape plan for Morrisville.

Discuss: Conservation Subdivision Bylaw changes – Mr. Thomas suggested reducing the description of a Minor Subdivision in the Zoning Bylaws to 1 new lot at a time (instead of the current practice where a Minor Subdivision can create up to 2 new lots at a time) as a means to curb developers from circumventing the conservation subdivision process. The Council, by consensus, was amendable to this change. Mr. Thomas suggested striking the existing Section 5 density bonus language from the Conservation Subdivision Bylaw because it had never been used, and it was overly generous. Chair Hancock agreed that striking it may be the easiest path forward. Conservation Commission Co-Chair Ron Stancliff gave a long speech about why the acreage of sensitive environmental areas should be removed from the density calculations in the Conservation Subdivision Bylaw. Mr. Stancliff was informed that the Council has already discussed and declined to act on this proposal. Kristen Connelly said that language should be added to the Conservation Subdivision Bylaw about connecting newly conserved areas to existing conserved lands. Mr. Thomas agreed and said he would make these edits with Conservation Commission Co-Chair Kristen Connolly, and they would be included as part of the Fall zoning change.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director