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MORRISTOWN/MORRISVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION

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Minutes of July 5, 2005

Members Present: Richard Duda, John Meyer, Bruce Tomlinson, Bill Henchy, Steve Benson, Andrew Volansky, Kelly Rogers

Members Absent: none

Guests: Kevin Lane (Conservation Commission), Mike Miller (LCPC)

Recorder: Mark Leonard, Zoning Administrator (ZA)

Bill called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. Minutes of the June 21, 2005 meeting were reviewed and approved.

Mark presented a draft proposal for a new zoning district, dubbed the Route 100 Mixed Use District. The district would encompass properties along Route 100 from the end of the Business Office Park and Low Density Residential districts to the north to the intersection with Golf Course and Goeltz Roads to the south. The stated objective of the district is to "provide for limited commercial activities that are easily accessible to the public along Vermont Route 100 which are compatible with existing residential and agricultural uses".

The new district would allow most of the same permitted and conditional uses as the Rural Residential with Agriculture in which the area currently lies, with the addition of business and professional offices, business services, day care facilities, and retail business of less than 2,500 square feet. Mark said that establishing this new district would address the requests he has received for additional commercially zoned areas in town.

Mike Miller from LCPC stressed that the Commission should look at what its goals are in establishing any new zoning district. In light of the recent Route 100 traffic study, he said that any zoning changes there should consider the impact on traffic flow. He also suggested that any changes in the area should be compatible with the airport activity.

Bill stated his concerns about the objective, specifically allowing commercial activities. He felt moving in this direction was counter to what the Planning Commission had been trying to do for a number of years to prevent the Route 100 corridor from being commercialized. He said that the Commission should continue to work with business interests to infill available commercially zoned properties in the village and on the north end. He said the proposed sewer line expansion will drive commercial development in those areas to be served by municipal sewer.

Kelly and Bruce agreed with Bill's comments, with Bruce saying that he felt Route 100 was "off limits" to new commercial uses. Bruce suggested reviewing the commercial uses currently allowed in the Commercial and Industrial districts to make them less restrictive.

Richard agreed with the goal of preserving green space, but asked if we are not going to allow some limited commercial uses here, then where? He said that any commercially zoned area needs good traffic access, which this area would have. He suggested that a public forum to hear all sides of the issue might be a good idea.

Andrew agreed with the desire to preserve open space, particularly along this road.

Steve said he is not in favor of allowing Route 100 to become a strip mall, but recognizes the pressures for additional commercial space in the town.

John asked why the remaining parcels in commercially zoned areas have not been developed.

Bill said he is looking into ways to purchase the development rights to the ridgeline east of the airport and the Deuso farm across from the airport. Mike Miller suggested considering a separate airport zoning district.

The members agreed to table consideration of the proposed new zoning district while they look at other ways to allow commercial uses in town.

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Mike advised that the recent Chapter 117 revisions eliminated the requirement to refer certain permit applications to various state agencies. That section of the zoning bylaws (section 407) can be deleted. The requirement for state review of applications in flood hazard areas (section 325) remains.

Mark advised that the bylaws do not have a shoreline definition that would apply to the shoreline setback requirement in all zoning districts. The state definition only applies to lakes larger than twenty acres. He will research the issue further and present a proposed definition.

Mark also advised that our bylaws do not identify any district, or provide a definition for, where the various building trades that are a common activity and source of employment in the area are allowed. He suggested that this be identified as a specific use and that zoning districts where such use would be allowed be listed.

Andrew suggested considering size limits on large retail stores (aka "big box stores"). He felt that the Planning Commission should consider such limits now, before a big box retailer presents an application under the current, unlimited bylaws. He suggested using the size of the Hannaford's (63,700 square feet) and Price Chopper (54,000 square feet) as a reference point for determining what the maximum size should be. Members agreed to continue discussion on this topic at the next meeting.

On a motion by Richard, seconded by Steve, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Leonard, recorder

Minutes approved on: 7/19/05