

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 28 June 2022

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

Council Members absent:

Guests present: Tim Magee, Development Review Board Member Paul Trudell, Conservation Commission Co-Chair Member Ron Stancliff, Nancy Pritchard, Jessica Dambach, Jennifer Faith, Sharon Rowell, Gary Brooks, Urban Martin, Mary Lou Nichols, Jake Farmer, Barbara Miller, Henry Hamel, Susan Wickart, Dan McLaughlin, 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 on the veranda of the clubhouse at Copley Country Club at approximately 6:00 P.M.

Prior meeting minutes – Member Foster moved to approved the June 14th meeting minutes. A vote of 4-0-1 affirmed the motion, with Member Goldstein abstaining.

Neighborhood meeting: Pending zoning change on Brooklyn St – Mr. Thomas spoke to a proposed zoning change on Brooklyn Street, which would reintroduce the longstanding multi-family residential use to the west side of street (the east side of the street would remain unchanged in the Medium Density Residential Zone). The section of the street that would be impacted by this zoning change begins at the Rail-Trail on the south, and ends at the driveway entrance to (and including) the Brooklyn Heights condos on the north. It was explained that the multi-family use was mistakenly taken away from this neighborhood by the Selectboard in 2018, and it was now being returned because it was illegal to not allow the 3 non-multi-family residential properties on this section of Brooklyn Street to be developed in a similar way as surrounding properties. Neighboring property owners, who were all invited to this informal meeting via mailed letter, made the following comments:

Nancy Pritchard asked why this area could not be rezoned Medium Density Residential again, instead of High Density. Mr. Thomas responded that the Medium Density Residential Zone no longer included the needed multi-family residential use.

Jessica Dambach, representing the Brooklyn Heights Condo Association, shared traffic concerns regarding additional development in this area.

Jennifer Faith asked her neighbors to appreciate her current circumstances, and said she was shocked and dismayed when she found out her family's funeral home property could only be redeveloped as a single-family home or duplex under the existing zoning when her property was surrounded by large multi-family housing uses.

Gary Briggs said he was opposed to the zoning change and spoke the location and age of sewer lines on Brooklyn Street.

Urban Martin asked if the 2018 zoning decision could simply be reversed.

Jake Farmer said he was concerned about increasing traffic and historic preservation.

Henry Hamel also said he was concerned about historic preservation. He asked for new development to be no more than 2.5 stories tall, and setback at least 8 feet from the sidewalk or road on Brooklyn Street.

Sharon Rowell agreed that front lawns should be required, and said she was opposed to rezoning the east side of this section of Brooklyn Street.

Member Steve Foster responded that, at most, there was likely to be a maximum of 41 new dwelling units created on the east side of the street if this zoning change was approved.

Council Members thanked everyone for attending, and sharing their comments. Audience members were invited to stay for the following agenda item that aimed to create stronger historic preservation criteria for the core downtown area, and main roads in and out of the downtown (including the small section of Brooklyn Street being rezoned).

Discuss: §207 Historic Preservation changes (Paul Trudell) – Architect and DRB Member Paul Trudell appeared before the Council to discuss the pending rewrite of the §207 Historic Preservation Criteria section of the Zoning Bylaws. Architect Trudell suggested that illustrations of architectural details should be included in the Zoning Bylaws, with a focus on window and door trim. He said the Planning Council’s proposed §207 rewrite was an excellent start towards keeping the past in our view as we redevelop our community. He cited that the current historic preservation regulations should be expanded to require that the sides of buildings, and not just the front façade, be sided with “preferred exterior building materials.” He added that the practice of developers building utilitarian buildings out behind historic buildings should also be banned. These rear buildings, according to Architect Trudell, should echo some of the same historic details as the street-front buildings that they are being built behind. Another recommendation of Architect Trudell was to strengthen the existing §206 Design Criteria “Blank Walls” language to require actual building articulation, not just fenestration. Regarding fenestration, it was decided to allow vinyl clad windows in §207, but require that the mutton of any 2 over 2 windows be located on the window’s exterior. The 8 foot maximum front setback in §207 was discussed as becoming a minimum setback instead from the sidewalk on Jersey Heights and Brooklyn Street. Council Members thanked Architect Trudell for his time. Member Goldstein suggested that people such as Donnie Blake and suppliers like rk MILES be invited to future discussions to review the proposed changes to §207 Historic Preservation Criteria.

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