

FILE COPY
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PLANNING COMMISSION
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Minutes of June 20, 2006

Members Present: Bill Henchy, John Meyer, Kelly Rogers, Richard Duda, Andrew Volansky, Steve Berson, Lauren Traister

Guests: Karen Lynch (LEDC), Steve Rae (Conservation Commission), Bill Rossmassler (LCPC), Dave Crawford (Town Administrator), Todd Yando (Select Board)

Recorder: Mark Leonard, Zoning Administrator (ZA)

Bill called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. He welcomed the guests present, saying that this meeting was an opportunity for stakeholders in the town's future to discuss how and where economic development should proceed. Recent discussions over sewer service extensions and actions to secure funding for these had prompted this evening's agenda.

Town Administrator Dave Crawford said the Select Board was grateful for the Planning Commission's efforts in bringing many of the interested parties to this issue to the table. When talking about economic development, he considers two broad categories: retail & commercial services and manufacturing. He said the community needs to define how it sees itself. If it is viewed as a regional retail and commercial hub, how do you encourage and support those activities? How and where do you zone for commercial and manufacturing businesses.

Do you need municipal utilities to support these? What's needed to attract new businesses? What effect will the long-planned alternate truck route have, on the downtown village center as well as along the truck route? He added that if the Planning Commission envisioned the Commercial and Industrial zoning districts as planned growth areas, it only seemed to make sense to extend sewer and other utilities to these areas to the extent possible.

Karen Lynch explained Lamoille Economic Development Corporation's (LEDC) role in economic development. She said LEDC has a statutory mandate to create or encourage new jobs, primarily in the manufacturing or high-tech fields, in Lamoille County. It focuses on businesses that would bring high-paying jobs, rather than lower-paying retail and service jobs. LEDC offers technical assistance to such businesses. It has no planning or policy functions. It can be involved in infrastructure projects, such as the sewer line extension to Hearthstone, that would lead to new job creation. Zoning is the first of many steps in creating an environment conducive to new job creation.

Bill said the Planning Commission's focus in identifying future sewer service areas has been to limit commercial growth to those areas already zoned for commercial or industrial activities. The commission wants to plan for sewer system expansion, with the accompanying growth it would bring, rather than just allowing market forces to drive where commercial growth occurs. He noted the most recent bylaw revision that broaden the uses allowable in the separate Industrial and Commercial zoning districts. By removing some of the use restrictions in each district, the available areas for either type of activity were expanded without creating new commercially-zoned districts.

Karen believes that sewer is needed in both the eastern and western Industrial districts and that there is a need for additional industrially zoned areas. She said that providing sewer service to Hearthstone and the former engine house parcel would preserve the existing 80 Hearthstone jobs and potentially add 50 or more new jobs in that area. She had surveyed many of the existing businesses in the eastern Industrial district (east of Munson Avenue) and found none that wanted to connect to any possible new sewer line, freeing up their leachfield areas for expansion or new businesses. Bill Henchy responded that if there were no cost to these businesses, he believed many would opt to hook onto the municipal sewer line.

Bill Rossmassler said Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC) is looking beyond ~~current~~ ^{the} needs 

of current businesses to identify the needs of future businesses in the Commercial and Industrial districts. Besides traditional infrastructure such as water, sewer, and roads, this would include broadband internet service and other telecommunications requirements. He said recent surveys and community forums had identified the community's desire to protect and preserve a viable downtown area as well as the need for affordable housing. The community, through its planning agencies, needs to determine if there is enough space zoned for these needs and if not, where to expand or create new zoning districts.

Steve Rae cited the Conservation Commission's recent survey at the Morristown Community Forum. The roughly 70 residents who completed the survey are concerned about the quality of the town's environment. They support downtown revitalization projects and place more value on livability over economic development.

Steve Berson echoed previous statements that the town must collectively decide what kind of development, and where, it wants. He asked Karen what kinds of businesses have been inquiring about setting up in town. She replied that there is strong demand for office space in the central business district and for manufacturing anywhere in Morristown.

Bill Henchy reviewed the Planning Commission's process in identifying possible town sewer service areas (TSSAs). With only 25,000 gallons per day (GPD) of capacity available, the Planning Commission focused on serving existing businesses, rather than expanding into new, undeveloped areas. He personally favors an incremental development process over a big jump in a given direction. He sees the proposed 12-inch sewer line to Hearthstone as a big jump that would spur large-scale development along that line.

Richard Duda took an opposite view, believing the 12-inch line to Hearthstone and the engine house lot to be a small step in the development process.

John Meyer noted that the Planning Commission's original TSSA recommendation in November 2004 was based on a possible allocation of 50K GPD. The commission would likely have come to a different recommendation if a new or expanded sewer plant was factored into the discussion.

Lauren Traister said there needs to be better community input on this process going forward. There should be alternate visions for the town's future for the public to review, consider, and debate. Bill Rossmassler suggested using the Smart Growth Collaborative's resources and expertise to help define the community vision.

The ZA informed the members of the July 10 special select board meeting with the town's attorneys to discuss various zoning matters.

On a motion by Steve, seconded by Andrew, minutes of the June 6, 2006 meeting were approved, with one correction.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Leonard, recorder

Minutes approved on: 7/18/06 SB/LT