

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council

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Meeting Minutes of 19 June 2018

Council Members Present: Joshua Goldstein, Linda Greaves, Paul Griswold (Chair), Etienne Hancock, and Max Paine

Council Members Absent: Tom Snipp

Guests: Jeal Breckenridge, Graham Mink, Carrie Wilson, Principal of the Bishop Marshall School, and Justin Wicks, Chair of the Bishop Marshall School Board

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order in the Community Meeting Room of the Town Offices at 43 Portland St at approximately 6:00 P.M.

Discuss: Richard Duda for solar screening – Mr. Thomas said that Richard Duda was requesting that the Planning Council eliminate the 15kw minimum threshold for the screening of ground mounted solar in the zoning bylaws. Mr. Thomas explained that Mr. Duda has the rear of a solar tracker just over his property line which makes it appear as if a billboard is within his view-shed. Member Hancock said that requiring screening for small solar arrays will make them more expensive and financially less viable. Member Griswold said that the zoning bylaw did not currently require the screening of houses or barns so he questioned why ground mounted solar should be screened. By consensus, the Council was opposed to Mr. Duda's request.

Discuss: Visioning for the Business Enterprise / BJAMS – Mr. Thomas and the Council again discussed the origin of the Business Enterprise (BE) Zone and how the world had changed a lot since this zone was created, with these changes undercutting the need for some of the original protections in this area's zoning. The Council was joined for this discussion by Carrie Wilson, Principal of the Bishop Marshall School, and Justin Wicks, Chair of the Bishop Marshall School Board. It was agreed that the school's open fields were a big amenity, as the local demand for outdoor recreation and tournaments had grown in recent years. Ms. Wilson explained how she was lured to move outside the county largely due to the formalized recreation facilities in the Essex area. Mr. Wicks said that a long-term goal of the school's is to build a fieldhouse on the property. Member Greaves said she was fully in favor of supporting an initiative that gave the youth of this community more active recreational choices. Chair Griswold said that the Town Plan envisions the creation of a very similar field house facility, which could also be used for community events like craft fairs and home shows. It was discussed that private funds could be raised to help the school with this initiative and that the school, as the landowner, if not the building owner, would have a large say on the Board that prioritized how this building could be used. Mr. Wicks said that he would discuss this initiative with the rest of the school board.

Discuss: Completing a sidewalk improvement plan? – Mr. Thomas told the Council that the Selectboard began the sidewalk improvement planning process on Monday night.

He said that they chose to prioritize sidewalk replacements on the south side of Upper Main Street and for the section of at-grade sidewalk on Elmore Street.

Discuss: Rail Trail communities – Mr. Thomas passed out a pamphlet on what it means to be a rail-trail tourist town. The Council also talked about access requirements. Mr. Thomas said he would bring some mapping to the next meeting to facilitate this discussion further.

Discuss: Proposed Zoning Bylaw change package — Mr. Thomas presented the Council with the package that would be advertised for this summer's zoning change. He said that the only undecided items therein was the request from Rick White for a larger sign size in the Rural Residential Agricultural / Special Industrial Zone (RRA/SI) and the location of the boundary line between the MDR and HDR residential zones. The Council reviewed Mr. White's request and decided, with the aid of research for sign size versus rate of speed of passing traffic, that the 25 ft² of signage allowed in this zone was adequate. Therefore no changes would be made to the sign size allotment in the RRA/SI Zone as part of the current zoning change. The Council discussed the desired location of the MDR vs HDR zone east of Congress Street. Jeal Breckenridge and Graham Mink talked to how the Council had previously and was proposing to eliminate multi-family use in most areas of the village, which was why expanding the HDR, even modestly, was important. Member Hancock said that he had grown up seeing the negative impacts of multi-family residential on the quality of life in the core of the village. Mr. Mink said this was more a symptom of management than use, as a poorly maintained single-family home can negatively impact a neighborhood as well. The Council decided to add property east of Congress Street to the High Density Residential Zone, specifically, from Congress Street on the west, all the properties above Union Street, east to a point of intersection with the Pot Ash Brook, and then northeast along and against the flow the brook to the east edge of 274 Upper Main Street and then up said eastern property line, crossing Upper Main Street and then turning west along the rear property lines of 284 & 241 Upper Main Street, splitting the Graded School Building property, and returning to the point of beginning.

Prior meeting minutes – Quorum issues prevented the May meeting minutes from being voted. Upon a motion made by Member Paine, the June 5th meeting minutes were approved by a vote of 4-0, with Member Greaves abstaining.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director