

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 14 June 2022

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

Council Members absent: Joshua Goldstein

Guests present: Selectboard Member Don McDowell, Tim Magee, Gary Nowak of the Lamoille County Stargazers, Chris Ransom, and Conservation Commission Members: Ron Stancliff, Kristen Connolly, and Jessica Zehngut

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 – A vote on the May 24th meeting minutes was tabled due to quorum issues.

Discuss: Lamoille Stargazers regarding light pollution – Gary Nowak of the Lamoille County Stargazers met with the Planning Council to talk about the upcoming total solar eclipse, and light pollution in Morrisville. Mr. Nowak, starting with the eclipse, noted that the last full solar eclipse for 55 years would be coming to Morrisville at 3:17 PM on 8 April 2024. He stressed that the Town should be prepared for an onslaught of eclipse viewing tourists if the weather cooperated. In regards to light pollution, Mr. Nowak emphasized that the old-fashioned style street lights on Copley Ave were detrimental to the usefulness of the Grout observatory on the adjacent school campus. Member Snipp said that some of these lights were owned by the school, but the municipal streetlights are already slated to be switched to LED in the coming months. Mr. Nowak proposed specific zoning changes in regards to curbing light pollution. Mr. Thomas said that the Council would review his proposals and make corresponding decisions at the June 28th Council meeting.

Discuss: Conservation Commission regarding the Conservation Subdivision Bylaw – Conservation Commission Co-Chair Kristen Connolly appeared before the Council regarding a letter dated 12 June 2022 that examined the Conservation Subdivision Bylaw, and recommended the Zoning Bylaws to be amended to delete the density of environmentally sensitive, and otherwise unbuildable areas, from development proposals. Discussion began by debating if the existing Section 5 bonus should remain part of the Conservation Subdivision Bylaw. Ms. Connolly suggested eliminating it. Mr. Thomas said that the bonus allowed too much density, and was a liability as written. The Council directed Mr. Thomas to bring the meeting minutes for when this bonus was last revised, and the bylaw's original bonus language, to the next Council meeting. Member Foster expressed strong opposition to the Conservation Commission proposal to delete the area of found environmental constraints from density calculations during the zoning process. The Council again discussed the upfront soft costs of finding and sizing these environmental constraints. Chair Hancock expressed concern regarding adding more

engineering costs to taxpayers pre-development, especially politically. Chair Hancock said that he would like to concentrate on closing the loophole where developers recently avoided using the Conservation Subdivision Bylaw by doing multiple 2-lot at a time minor subdivisions. Mr. Thomas was asked to propose a solution to this issue for the next Council meeting. Ms. Connolly suggested that forest connectivity, and connectivity of new open space to existing open space, be added as a goal, and possibly even a bonus of a revised Conservation Subdivision Bylaw.

Discuss: Joint Rules of Procedure – Mr. Thomas shared that the Joint Rules of Procedure document, which was included in the evening’s meeting package, had now been approved by both Legislative Bodies. Member Foster said that he was glad to see that the current non-town resident board members were now grandfathered by the new rules, but lamented that the revised rule’s retained exclusionary residency requirements.

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