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MORRISTOWN/MORRISVILLE
PLANNING COMMISSION
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Minutes of June 6, 2006

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

Guests: none

Recorder: Mark Leonard, Zoning Administrator (ZA)

Bill called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. Members reviewed the discussions held and issues raised at the Community Forum held on May 20th. In discussing the needs for municipal planning arising from these discussions, Bill reiterated the Planning Commission's position that the town needs someone on staff as an in-house planner, rather than relying on contract services with LCPC or independent consultants. The ZA noted that his position had previously been full time, with ten hours a week dedicated as the town planner. Possible solutions might be to reinstate that part-time function, add to the Community Coordinator's position, or create a new, separate position (either full or part time). The ZA will convey this to the town administrator as the next budget cycle gets underway.

Steve noted that he and Bill had recently sat in on several DRB hearings as alternates and found the proceedings very enlightening. He said they provided a 'real world' perspective on the zoning and subdivision bylaws the Planning Commission is responsible for. He suggested that each PC member participate in DRB hearings as an alternate on a regular basis. Bill, noting that there are not always vacancies at the hearings, encouraged all members to try to fill in when there is a need. The ZA added that it would be equally beneficial to have DRB members participate in PC meetings when bylaw revisions are being considered.

Bill addressed the status of town-village discussions on a town sewer service agreement (TSSA). He said that LEDC executive director Karen Lynch was planning to apply for grant funding for a sewer line extension to the Hearthstone facility and adjacent former railroad maintenance facility. Bill felt that Karen was pursuing a different vision for economic development than the Planning Commission's. He felt it would be beneficial to meet with Karen, Bill Rossmassler from LCPC, and others on the broad topic of economic development so all the key players would be aware of others' views and hopefully forge a common approach. The PC's recent discussions on zoning around the airport could also be addressed at this meeting. The ZA said he would contact Karen, Bill, and town administrator Dave Crawford to meet with the Planning Commission at their next meeting (June 20). Bill asked to get a listing of LEDC's Board of Directors.

Steve outlined his proposal to study re-directing traffic in the central village area. The concept would involve making Portland Street one-way southbound between Bridge Street and Main Street and Pleasant Street one way northbound from Main Street to a new road connecting with Bridge Street between Hutchins Street and Railroad Street. The idea would be to create a 'village square' centered around the municipal parking lot and extend the central business area over to Pleasant Street. With the majority of truck traffic re-routed around the village with the planned alternate truck route, the central village area, with the proposed traffic re-flow, would be a more attractive destination for shopping and business.

Bill moved to have the Planning Commission initiate a downtown traffic re-flow study; Steve seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Bill added that this effort would be done in conjunction with the downtown zoning review that is getting under way. He said the Planning Commission would need to work closely with the Morristown Alliance for Culture & Commerce (MACC), downtown property owners, and other stakeholders in taking up what would be a very significant change to the village center. The ZA said he would begin the process of applying for a municipal planning grant in the upcoming fall cycle to conduct this study.

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The meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Leonard, recorder

Minutes approved on: 6/20/06 (SB/AN)