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MORRISTOWN/MORRISVILLE
PLANNING COMMISSION
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Minutes of June 5, 2007

Members Present: Bill Henchey, John Meyer, Andrew Volansky, Kelly Rogers, Steve Berson

Members Absent: Richard Duda, Lauren Traister

Guests: Town Administrator Dave Crawford, Community Coordinator Heidi Krantz, Mike Miller (LCPC), Village Trustees Dana Wildes & Ed Debor, Conservation Commissioner Steve Rae, LEDC director Tim Soule

Recorder: Mark Leonard, Zoning Administrator (ZA)

Chairman Bill Henchey called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. He noted that this evening's meeting was planned as 'stakeholder' meeting on Economic Development issues as part of the Town Plan update. Heidi began the discussion by reviewing some of the general responses to economic development questions on the community survey that was conducted in May. She added that she and Chip Sawyer of LCPC are still reviewing the survey responses and hope to be able to present the final results in July or August, before the Planning Commission begins its consideration of the Land Use chapter of the plan.

Tim Soule said that from his perspective as director of the Lamoille Economic Development Corporation, it was important that the Town Plan and subsequent zoning bylaws convey a welcoming, hospitable message to businesses. He agreed with Bill that enabling existing businesses in town to grow and expand was as important as attracting new businesses. He said the more flexible the town's zoning bylaws are for non-residential activities, the better for enhancing economic development to the general benefit of the community as a whole.

Asked by Steve what are the challenges to increased economic development, Tim said the cost and availability of housing was a key factor, with child care for working parents another. He suggested that an inventory of all commercially-zoned parcels would be useful in determining if what exists today is adequate or if new areas should be considered.

Dana Wildes echoed Tim's comments on zoning flexibility, saying there was a need for more non-residential uses in the Rural Residential with Agriculture zoning district that encompasses the great majority of the town area outside the village.

Dave Crawford said there needs to be plan for how to extend sewer lines into existing commercially zoned areas. Bill added that development of the Business Office Park (BOP) as originally envisioned when it was established would require a comprehensive infrastructure plan for sewer, water, electric, roads, and telecommunications services. Who would pay for the upfront investment in these vital services was unclear, but he suggested that a public-private partnership might be the best way. Tim mentioned a similar effort led by LEDC recently completed for an industrial park in North Hyde Park.

Bill said there was general consensus on the need for and benefits of economic development, but any zoning changes to enable such development must be well-thought out and planned.

Ed Debor reminded the Planning Commission that the Village Trustees will have a say in the Town Plan's policies and recommendations and that he expects it to call for more flexibility in commercially zoned districts.

Tim offered comments on the existing Economic Development chapter of the Plan. He said hunting should not be overlooked as an activity that generates tourism and recreation revenues. He noted that the plan does not mention Johnson State College, which he feels is a regional economic asset that Morristown can exploit. He cited the town's gravel pits and their role in creating jobs as another major economic asset the town should recognize and enhance. He said the plan needs to address the transportation requirements of the various economic sectors that exist in town. He also said the key role of Copley Hospital and the broader health care services sector on the local economy should also be emphasized.

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Tim identified the recent effort to keep the bypass project on track as an example of the town's businesses and community leaders working together toward a common goal. He suggested identifying strategic partnerships among various public and private interests in pursuing other goals laid out in the plan. Dave announced that a meeting of such groups, to include the Select Board, Village Trustees, Morristown Alliance for Culture & Commerce (MACC), and the Planning Commission, was scheduled for June 21st. Bill said the PC's regular meeting on June 19th would be cancelled in favor of this meeting.

Mike Miller said there were possibilities for mixed (commercial and residential) uses within various zoning districts, noting that current zoning generally separates these types of uses into different districts. This could provide a greater degree of flexibility, although some types of non-residential uses are clearly not suitable in close proximity to residential areas.

On a motion by Andrew, seconded by Richard, the meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Leonard, recorder

Minutes approved on: 7/17/07 AV/BH