Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council

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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 21 May 2019

Council Members Present: Joshua Goldstein, Linda Greaves, Etienne Hancock, and Tom Snipp
Council Members Absent: Steven Foster, and Allen Van Anda
Guests: Bob Heanue, Sonny Demars, Steve Demars, John McQueen, June McKinley, Dr. Phil Kiely, Vera Jones, and Art Mathieson – CEO of Copley Hospital
Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order in the Community Meeting Room of the Old Tegu Theatre, 43 Portland Street, at approximately 6:00 P.M.

Prior meeting minutes – Approval of April 23rd and May 7th meeting minutes was tabled due to quorum issues. Member Snipp moved to approve the March 19th meeting minutes. That vote was affirmed by a vote of 3-0 (Member Goldstein arrived shortly after this vote).

Discuss: Health Care Facility Use in the COM Zone – Planning Director Thomas said the Selectboard voted last night to direct the Council to add the Health Care Facility use to the Commercial Zone to aid a doctor's office that was looking to move from its present Washington Highway location to a Demars Properties' building on Professional Drive. Art Mathieson, the CEO of Copley Hospital, said that he supports this zoning change because access to health care in the community would be negatively impacted if the doctors forced to leave the community for a zoning / real estate reason. Chair Hancock explained the history of why the Health Care Facility use was not currently allowed in the Commercial Zone, which was largely at the urging of the former CEO of the hospital. Mr. Mathieson explained that the advent of the Green Mountain Care Board changed this dynamic, which is why the protectionist zoning regarding health care uses was no longer needed. Sonny Demars said that the Health Care Facility uses already existed Uptown and they should be allowed everywhere. Member Goldstein and Chair Hancock said that the Council, given this new information, should potentially reevaluate the current Hospital Zone. The Council, relying heavily on the testimony of Mr. Mathieson, voted to add Health Care Facility as a Permitted Use in the Commercial Zone as part of the pending zoning change.

Discuss: 2019 Zoning Change Public Hearing – The Planning Council discussed the feedback received at the May 7th zoning change public hearing, including the letter submitted by Lamoille Housing Partnership about multi-family uses in the Hospital Zone. Mr. Mathieson explained that the hospital would likely expand out back (south) and not across Washington Highway. Vera Jones of Copley Hospital said that the hospital is no longer opposed to non-medical uses on surrounding properties. The Council, by consensus, decided to move forward with the proposed zoning change that tied multi-family uses to the Health Care Facility use in the Hospital Zone.

Planning Director Thomas said that the Town Administrator was very concerned about overnight parking availability in the municipal lot due to the zoning change's proposed uncapped density in Central Business Zone. Mr. Thomas directed to the Council to an overnight parking study of this lot he had been conducting for the last few weeks. Mr. Thomas explained that the 18 +/- unit apartment Lamoille Housing Partnership housing project proposed on Hutchins Street would very likely use up the rest of current designated overnight parking capacity in the municipal parking lot. The Council agreed that a strategic discussion on downtown parking was warranted to determine total parking need, with the goal of reconfiguring or expanding the municipal parking lot to create at least as many new overnight parking spaces as the Hutchins Street project would likely utilize. Mr. Thomas added that a goal of any such parking discussion should ensure that some overnight parking capacity still existed in the municipal parking lot to serve the future redevelopment of the Nepveu Building. June McKinley said that Morrisville needs more affordable housing and that not allowing the zoning change to move forward (i.e. killing the Hutchins Street project) was wrong on many levels. The Council, by consensus, decided to move forward with the density change in the Central Business Zone as proposed. Mr. Thomas said that he would put a municipal parking lot discussion on the June 4th agenda.

Member Goldstein moved to forward the as-revised zoning change package for 2019 to its Selectboard and Village Trustees hearing on June 17th and 19th. A vote of 4-0 affirmed the motion.

Upon a motion made by Member Snipp, the Council adjourned for the evening so certain members could testify at River Arts on behalf of Morrisville Water & Light's proposed "Lawrence Brook" solar project.

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director