

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council

PO Box 748 / Morrisville, VT 05661

Phone (802) 888-6373

Meeting Minutes of 15 May 2018

Council Members Present: Linda Greaves, Etienne Hancock, Max Paine, & Tom Snipp

Council Members Absent: Paul Griswold (Chair)

Guests: Conservation Commission Chairman Ron Stancliff

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 Street at approximately 6:00 P.M. The Council added an agenda item regarding party status for Act 250 and other state projects.

Discuss: Route 100 South solar farm by East Light Partners – This agenda item was tabled as the project may not be moving forward.

Discuss: Ron Stancliff and Conservation Commission for larger rural lot sizes – Conservation Commission Chair Ron Stancliff appeared before the Council asking for larger minimum lot sizes in rural areas of the town. He lobbied for 10 acre minimum lot sizes on Upper & Lower Elmore Mountain Road area, in Mud City, and up by the Town Forest. The Council asked Mr. Thomas to compile a list of minimum lot sizes in other towns to see how Morristown's 2 acre minimum lot size compared. Member Snipp asked if regulation should be added to ensure that an ambulance can get to within 100 feet of any house's front door. Mr. Thomas said that enacting a bylaw like that leads to regulating private driveways. He then shared a story with the problems that Hyde Park ran into by regulating private driveways on Leo Trombley's property off VT Route 15 E. The discussion turned to limiting development on Class 4 Roads located far out in the town that stretched that availability of village based resources like fire and rescue. Mr. Thomas said that it was good fiscal and planning policy to ensure that existing roads were utilized for new development, instead of extending or creating new roads far from the village. Member Hancock said that any effort to limit development on Class 4 Roads in the far reaches of the town would need to be accompanied by a good financial argument, such as 20 years of data on the cost to maintain rural roads, and the future costs of the State's new municipal stormwater permit. Mr. Thomas said he would research this and try to quantify taxes paid by road length in different parts of town to help with the decision making process. It was also decided by consensus to add a carrot in the conservation subdivision bylaw for development close to the village or perhaps accessed by paved roads while dialing back the allowed density in very rural areas. Mr. Thomas said that he would work towards these goals for the June 5th Council meeting.

Agenda Addendum: Party status for Act 250 and other state projects – The Council approved letters that would be sent to Act 250, the Public Utility Commission, VTrans' district permit coordinator, and the district permit specialist regarding the lack of party status in Morrisville and Morristown for regional planning commissions.

Discuss: Verizon cell tower at Copley Golf Club – Mr. Thomas related that a well-publicized public balloon test (during leaf-off season) was conducted for the proposed

Verizon cell tower last Monday. The Council reviewed the pictures he took of where this cell tower would be visible. He said that, overall, the tower was less visible than he thought it would be, but there were areas of high visibility between 250 & 450 Upper Main St. He added that the cell tower would also be visible from the bottom of Country Club Road and nearby on Maple Street, but he could not see the balloon on Elmore Street, Harrel Street, or Elmore Mtn Road. Member Greaves said that she was supportive of the proposed Verizon tower because it would allow cell coverage to better penetrate the school and hospital. She added that there are many good reasons for the cell tower besides the school. She added that a majority of the public now depend on cell service for more than just phone calls, including the hospital which currently does not have good interior service. She said that cell service is really the new standard for communication. She added that it was incredibly important for school children to have good cell service in case there was an active-shooter incident at the school. The Council agreed unanimously that they would push to change the fuel source for the cell tower generator from diesel to propane for environmental reasons. The Council decided to wait until its June 5th meeting, when Chair Griswold could attend, before providing a letter to Verizon or the Public Utility Commission regarding this cell tower proposal.

Discuss: Merging of Airport Business and Industrial Zones – The Council reviewed the proposed bylaw changes that would merge the Airport Business Zone into an Industrial Zone. The Council was supportive of these changes. Mr. Thomas said that these changes we be included within the next zoning change.

Discuss: Merging of Mixed Office into Medium Density Residential Zone – Mr. Thomas led the Council through a proposed zoning change that would dissolve the Mixed Office Residential Zone and merge this area, which is centered around Park St., into the surrounding Medium Density Residential Zone. Mr. Thomas opined that he doubted if a new office building would ever be built in this zone and the existing office uses would be protected from this zoning change as grandfathered uses. It was discussed that the market had spoken when Dr. Kiely's large house sat on the market for most of two years without any business/office interest. The Council agreed by consensus to merge the Mixed Office Residential Zone into the Medium Density Residential Zone with the next zoning change.

Discuss: Merging of Business Enterprise into Commercial Zone – Mr. Thomas and the Council discussed the origin of the Business Enterprise (BE) Zone. That being, a business zone with strict design criteria that did not allow retail uses to avoid competition with downtown Morrisville. It was agreed that the world and the Town's zoning bylaws had changed a lot since 2008. Mr. Thomas said that the Commercial Zone now contained similar design review criteria as the BE Zone and that new retail development was largely dead thanks to Amazon and smartphones. The Council agreed that reasons for this zone being created was no longer a reality 10 years later. As such, the Council agreed to have a visioning discussion for the BE Zone / Bishop Marshall area at its next meeting.

Approve prior meeting minutes – Member Paine moved to approve the May 1st meeting minutes. The motion was affirmed by a vote of 4-0.

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