

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 11 May 2021

Council Members present: Allen Van Anda, Steven Foster, Joshua Goldstein (call-in), Etienne Hancock (Chair), and Tom Snipp

Council Members absent:

Guests present: Selectwoman Judy Bickford, Selectman Eric Dodge, Graham Mink, Conservation Commission Member Kristen Connolly, Postmaster Jess Herring

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: Chair Hancock called the meeting to order on the veranda of Copley Country Club at approximately 5:05 P.M.

Prior meeting minutes – Member Foster moved to approve the April 27th meeting minutes as proposed. A vote of 3-0-2 affirmed the motion, with Members Van Anda and Goldstein abstaining.

Discuss (agenda addendum): Mask policy for public meeting – Chair Hancock began the meeting by asking for the Selectboard to establish a policy regarding the wearing of masks at indoor and outdoor public meetings. He said he would like to see an uniform policy adhered to for all town government board meetings so there were reasonable expectations as to mask wearing (or not).

Discuss: Cluster mailboxes for new neighborhoods? – Postmaster Jess Herring joined the Council to discuss his request for the town's zoning to require cluster mailboxes, instead of individual mailboxes, in new apartment neighborhoods. Mr. Herring shared the USPS' published regulations regarding mailbox type and placement. After a brief discussion, Planning Director Thomas was instructed to work with Mr. Herring to draft zoning language that would require cluster mailboxes that included parcel lockers for new multi-family uses. Member Goldstein requested that any zoning require a setback or screening of new cluster mailboxes so they would not be placed out on the main road. Mr. Thomas said he would work this request into the new zoning proposal.

Continued Public Hearing: Town Plan comments – The continued public hearing for the proposed Morrisville/Morristown 2020-2030 Town Plan resumed. Mr. Thomas spoke to Conservation Commission Member Kristen Connolly's recent request to add a goal into the Town Plan to protect existing residential areas from noise pollution resulting from new industrial development. Ms. Connolly asked for the Industrial Zone by MSI to be added as an additional locational example where buffering would be suggested in the Town Plan. Developer Graham Mink cautioned the Council that this well intentioned language could be used against an industrial development that the town wants during the Act 250 process. Member Van Allen suggested making the proposed Town Plan language reciprocal so existing residential uses would be protected from new industrial development, and existing industrial development would be protected from new residential development. It was agreed that these reciprocal protections would only take

place along definite zoning district boundaries, so this language could not be used obtusely by Act 250 and result in unintended impacts to proposed developments. Mr. Thomas said that he would revise the Town Plan language accordingly.

The Council agreed to a Town Plan language change proposed by Selectboard Member Eric Dodge that excluded tax money from funding the downtown riverwalk envisioned in between Lower Main and Bridge Streets. The Council also agreed to a language change in the plan proposed by Selectboard Member Bickford that suggested a committee be formed for visioning long-term projects that would benefit the town (similar to the Council on Rural Development's Community Visit that resulted in MoCo on Pleasant St).

A long discussion then ensued regarding Selectboard Member Bickford's ask for the Town Plan to support the creation of an inclusionary zoning study committee. Member Foster said he is opposed to inclusionary zoning, and suggested that the town look to more of a carrot versus stick approach in regards to the creation of more affordable housing. Graham Mink said that he would like the Town Plan to adopt language opposing inclusionary housing because it further restricts housing supply and therefore hurts overall affordability. Selectwoman Bickford said that the proposed Town Plan language is not regulatory, and that she envisions an inclusionary housing program that is local, flexible, and incentivizes the creation of affordable housing units. Mr. Mink said that organizations like Lamoille Housing Partnership were the best entity to create deeply affordable housing units, and private developers could not afford to do so because they do not have access to the same construction subsidies and annual tax savings. Member Goldstein agreed that not-for-profits should be relied on to supply affordable housing, and that if the town requires for-profit developers to do so, they will stop building in Morrisville (at a time when more housing of all types is desperately needed). Chair Hancock suggested that the existing language that allowed substantial waivers for the creation of affordable housing could be amended since it had not been used since it was first approved in 2019. It was ultimately agreed that instead of having the Town Plan include inclusionary housing language, it would more generally suggest the creation of a standing committee charged with promoting the creation of new affordable housing in Morrisville, and suggesting what incentives might be offered to help developers to do so. Mr. Thomas said he would make these Town Plan changes accordingly.

Discuss: Frontage for lots on multiple streets – As requested at the previous Council meeting, Mr. Thomas offered 3 options for how to best regulate corner lots. The Council decided that when lots have multiple road frontages, the minimum frontage requirement would need to be met on just one of the frontages, as compared to the existing zoning that required compliance with minimum frontage requirements along every abutting road.

Discuss: Admin approval for minor subdivision access via right-of-way – Mr. Thomas, using Graham Mink's recent subdivision of a single-family home lot adjacent to 734 Elmore Street as an example, proposed the requested zoning change that would allow a subdivision accessed by a 50 foot wide right-of-way to be administratively approved. Mr. Thomas clarified that Major subdivisions that created three or more new lots would

require DRB approval. The Council was amendable to this proposed zoning change. Mr. Thomas said it would be included as part of the Fall 2021 zoning change.

Discuss: Reword permit expiration in Section 402 – Mr. Thomas proposed clarified language regarding permit expiration and renewal. The Council was amendable to this proposed zoning change. Mr. Thomas said it would be included as part of the Fall 2021 zoning change.

Discuss: Intersection of Congress St & Cherry Ave – Mr. Thomas noted that the Selectboard's discussion of this intersection would take place on Monday night, and encouraged Council Members to join this Zoom meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director