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**MORRISTOWN/MORRISVILLE
PLANNING COMMISSION
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Minutes of May 7, 2002

Members Present: Julia Compagna, Bill Bourne , Sam Guy, Bruce Tomlinson, Kelly Rogers, Kevin Lane

Members Absent: Bill Henchey,

Recorder: Mark Leonard, Zoning Administrator

Guests: Mike Miller (LCPC Planner), Bill Rossmassler (LCPC), Mike Stafford (Trails Committee), Gert Lepine

Julia Compagna, co-chair, called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM. The meeting will review the Natural Resources section of the Town Plan.

Bill Rossmassler addressed state and regional efforts underway which affect natural resources. The state is completing work on the Mount Mansfield State Forest Management Plan. The plan is due to be unveiled at Peoples Academy on June 18th. The next effort will address Putnam State Forest in the Wocester Range, which includes portions of the southeast part of Morristown. He said that various efforts, both public and private, over recent years have looked at issues impacting the Wocester range, with limited results. A new effort is getting underway, driven by the towns in the area. He expressed the view that forest management issues must be addressed on a geographic basis, not restricted by town boundaries. Such efforts could mirror the Lamoille County Regional Plan. He pointed out pending legislative initiatives on on-site septic requirements and stormwater treatment. Any new state laws on these topics will impact local development. The Planning Commission needs to become familiar with these changes and adjust its policies and recommendations accordingly.

Mike Stafford spoke of the need to look closely at soils and mountain elevation map overlays to identify locations where development should be restricted due to poor soil conditions and steep grades. LCPC can help produce maps with this information. Presently, locations with grades over 20% restrict septic systems and those over 25% grade require Act 250 review. He suggested consideration be given to establishing forest cutting restrictions. It was noted that state laws prohibit restrictions on logging and agricultural/silvicultural uses in local zoning bylaws. He also noted that the current Town Plan and Zoning Bylaws do not address riparian buffers (buffer zones along streams, brooks, and other waterways); state guidelines recommend 50' buffers. With regards to trails, Mike stated that the Trails Committee would like to see some reference in the Natural Resources section on a "greenway" connecting the village center with outlying areas of town and joining up with other trail networks.

Gert Lepine pointed to the issues raised by the DRB's recent approval of a six-lot subdivision on the Mud City Loop as an example of the need for better information on land characteristics and planning guidelines to be considered when reviewing such applications. The parcel in question has, in her view, poor soils, steep slopes, and other features which should have been given greater consideration in deciding whether to approve the application. The DRB needs to have this sort of data to make more informed decisions.

Mike Miller suggested that each sub-area of the Natural Resources section (i.e., water quality, wildlife, soils, etc.) should have its own set of goals which would result in specific policies and recommendations.

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Julia said these issues all point to the broader question of how does the town want to control rural development. She believes it is not possible to stop growth, so policies and recommendations in the Town Plan need to address how best to manage that growth. Increasing the minimum lot size (currently 2 acres for a single family home in the Rural Residential with Agriculture District) may not be the best solution. Concepts such as cluster development and Planned Residential Development may allow for preservation of open spaces while still enabling landowners to develop their property and get some return on their investment in the land. She said the commission needs data on how much land in town is currently conserved or otherwise protected from development, and where that land is, to determine if the appropriate amount of land, in the most appropriate spots, is protected.

Following the discussion on Natural Resources, the Commission concluded the public portion of the meeting. Minutes of the April 2 and April 16 meetings were reviewed. On a motion by Kelly, seconded by Bruce, both sets of minutes were approved unanimously. With the special warned hearing on proposed amendments to the zoning bylaws complete, the ZA will forward the minutes of that hearing, along with the summary of proposed amendments to the Select Board and Village Trustees for their review and action to hold public hearings as required under 24 VSA section 4404.

The next meeting will be on May 23, 2002 at the Water & Light Department building on Elmore St. It will address the Scenic & Historic Resources section of the town plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Leonard, recorder

Cc: Town of Morristown Select Board
Morristown/Morrisville Development Review Board
Town Clerk