

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 27 April 2021

Council Members present: Steven Foster, Etienne Hancock (Chair), and Tom Snipp

Council Members absent: Allen Van Anda, and Joshua Goldstein

Guests present: Selectwoman Judy Bickford, Selectman Eric Dodge, Graham Mink, Conservation Commission Members Ron Stancliff & Kristen Connolly

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: Chair Hancock called the meeting to order adjacent to the veranda of Copley Country Club at approximately 5:00 P.M.

Prior meeting minutes – Member Foster said that the draft meeting minutes should be revised to specify that only a study of inclusionary zoning was supported at the last Council meeting, not the direct addition of that concept into the Town Plan. After some discussion, the Board Members attending agreed. Mr. Thomas said that he would add a proper agenda item for an inclusionary zoning discussion to the May 11th meeting agenda. Member Foster moved to approve the April 13th meeting minutes as amended to note “a study of” inclusionary zoning only. A vote of 3-0 affirmed the motion.

Discuss: Intersection of Congress St & Cherry Ave – The Council discussed the draft letter to the Selectboard that contained a menu of proposals intended to improve the safety of the intersection of Congress Street & Cherry Avenue. Mr. Thomas said he had revised this letter as directed at the previous Council meeting. Selectboard Member Eric Dodge said that he was supportive of painting in a crosswalk near the crest of the hill on Congress Street, and T’ing up Cherry Avenue where it intersects Congress Street. Chair Hancock also emphasized the importance of the speed limit signage review, line striping, and letters to area employers, that were included on page 3 of the letter, which would help with existing speeding problems. Member Foster moved to approve the as-written letter and send it to the Selectboard for consideration. A vote of 3-0 affirmed the motion.

Discuss: Common mailbox area for new neighborhoods? – Mr. Thomas said that the local Postmaster reached out to him requesting that the town’s zoning require cluster mailbox placement, instead of individual mailboxes, in new neighborhoods. Mr. Thomas said Jess the Postmaster used Pope Meadow as an example of where such a change would have been beneficial to the USPS. Developer Graham Mink said that he was supportive of the Postmaster’s request, even if it was an approximately \$2,500 cost to purchase and install a cluster mailbox system. Member Foster countered by saying that the residents of Pope Meadow likely enjoy simply walking out to their front door to fetch their mail from their private mailbox. Selectboard Member Eric Dodge added that dozens of private mailboxes located in the grass-strip between the sidewalk and the curb were something that the road crew needed to maneuver around during snow removal. Mr. Thomas was asked to invite the local Postmaster to the next Council meeting, and also distribute the USPS’ published regulations regarding mailbox placement, in an effort to determine if there was a desire to require cluster mailboxes in new multi-family developments.

Discuss: Historic Preservation zoning on lower Portland St? – Mr. Thomas wanted to clarify if the §207 Historic Preservation zoning was intended to be required for the non-Route 100 section of Portland Street. He noted that the non-Route 100 section of Bridge Street was not subject to this requirement. He cited a planned multi-family building on the corner of Foundry Street and Portland Street as a locational example. Chair Hancock said the under-construction 14-unit Foundry Street development would soon create many more people living down by the Oxbow, and create future customers for any new ground-floor commercial space created by this Bylaw. Members Foster and Snipp agreed. Mr. Thomas said that with this direction, he would leave the existing zoning for this area as-is.

Discuss: Frontage for lots on multiple streets – Mr. Thomas questioned if the Zoning Bylaw should continue to require corner lots to provide the minimum frontage on both streets. He said the municipal interest in access to house sites is for police, fire, and ambulance response, and that these services did not need access points from both streets in a corner lot situation. Mr. Thomas used 203 Houle Avenue as an example of how this multiple frontage requirement would have prohibited a proposed garage at this property if James Road had pre-existed the house. Council Members discussed if this Bylaw should be rewritten to specify that the frontage should be determined by the driveway location. Mr. Mink said that he liked how the current proposal allowed a property owner to determine what street their frontage would be located on. Mr. Thomas said he would re-examine this zoning change, and provide a couple of options therefor at the next meeting.

Discuss: Required frontage and access clarification – Mr. Thomas proposed some clarifying language as to when the Zoning Administrator could administratively approve minor subdivisions, and when, alternatively, DRB approval would be required. Conservation Commission Member Ron Stancliff asked why this change was being proposed now. Mr. Thomas responded by saying that the existing language left too much to interpretation as to when administratively approval could actually take place. He added he and local engineer Tyler Mumley frequently need to re-read and parse this section in an attempt to determine proper jurisdiction. The Council Members did not have any questions or concerns with the proposed clarifying changes. However, Mr., Mink, using his recent subdivision of a single-family home lot adjacent to 734 Elmore Street as an example, said that a simple project such as this, that relied on a 50 foot wide right-of-way out to Elmore Street, should be able to be administratively approved. The Council agreed to evaluate this additional change, and Mr. Thomas was instructed to draw up a proposal for administrative approval of such for the next Council meeting.

Discuss: Codify subdivision town plan compliance standard – Mr. Thomas proposed an addition to §810.3 of the Zoning Bylaws that would codify the DRB's longstanding Town Plan compliance finding for subdivision approvals. The Board was amenable to this change, and it was determined that it would be included as part of the zoning change that would commence later in the fall.

Continued Public Hearing: Town Plan comments – Mr. Thomas resumed the continued public hearing for the proposed Morrisville/Morristown 2020-2030 Town Plan. Conservation Commission Member Kristen Connolly said that noise pollution

contributed to negative health consequences, and spoke to adding a goal into the Town Plan to protect existing residential areas from noise pollution from new commercial development. She used the Airport Industrial Zone and the Industrial Zone by Lost Nation Brewing as locational examples. The physical means offered to buffer noise impacts from these aforementioned areas were: linear parks, green space, fencing, and berms. Mr. Mink questioned how the Town would practically measure and regulate noise. Mr. Thomas offered that some towns accomplish similar protection to what is being discussed by requiring stockade fencing, and a vegetated setback, when a new commercial development was taking place along a zoning boundary line that was adjacent to previously developed residential property. Mr. Thomas said that he would work with Ms. Connelly to draft and add noise attenuation language into the Land Use and Wellness Chapters of the new Town Plan. It was decided that this new language would be evaluated at the next Council meeting. It was also discussed that the Town-level Census data was now delayed until August. Council Members agreed to keep the Town Plan hearing open until this data was received. Mr. Thomas said that the Village Trustees has already expressed a preference to not vote on a Town Plan that relied on old 2010 Census data.

The meeting adjourned at 6:20 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director