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**MORRISTOWN/MORRISVILLE
PLANNING COMMISSION
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Minutes of April 17, 2007

Members Present: Bill Henchey, John Meyer, Richard Duda, Lauren Traister

Members Absent: Andrew Volansky, Steve Berson, Kelly Rogers

Guests: Conservation Commissioners Steve Rae, Amy Walker, LCPC planner Mike Miller, Leon Whitcomb, Marc Cote, Barb Damon

Recorder: Mark Leonard, Zoning Administrator (ZA)

Chairman Bill Henchey called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. Mike Miller gave an overview of the Productive Resources chapter of the Town Plan, which broadly addresses agriculture, forestry, and earth resource extraction functions (primarily, gravel and sand pits). Bill asked about the capacity of gravel pits in town. Mike said that the Duhamel pit should be able to supply the town's municipal needs for the next 100 years. He said the town should make an effort to inventory potential sand & gravel pits that could be used as existing pits are depleted. Bill expressed some concern about the apparent increased extraction rate at the Godfrey pit on Cadys Falls Road.

Turning to agriculture, Amy Walker raised a number of issues and possible actions. She advocated for restrictions on the ability to subdivide or develop agricultural lands, noting that once they've been split up or developed, they can't be reclaimed for ag use. She mentioned the recent sale of the former Langdell farm on Route 15 as an example of a productive farm being developed for non-agricultural use. One option would be to increase the minimum lot size that ag lands could be subdivided into in order to keep some portion of the original parcel viable for farming. Where large agricultural parcels are being subdivided, there should be some incentive/requirement to cluster the proposed housing development on the edges of the farmland, leaving open land for continued ag use. She asked the Planning Commission to consider creating an agriculture & forestry only zoning district; the exact boundaries, minimum lot sizes, and uses to be allowed in such a district would have to be determined with input from farmers and other affected landowners.

Steve Rae suggested inventorying the current acreage and uses of agricultural parcels in town. Amy Walker said there should be more effective restrictions on developing parcel identified as prime ag land. Mike Miller said there is good data available on where there is prime ag land in town. He added that current zoning in the Rural residential with Agriculture district does not very effectively preserve or protect such lands if the owner seeks to develop it, particularly for development that does not trigger an Act 250 permit requirement.

Bill said that economic support and incentives for farmers were needed to help keep them going; we could not just mandate zoning restrictions preventing development of current farmland for other uses. He asked the Conservation Commission to identify its top priority for conservation efforts: farm land or open space, woodlands, wetlands?

Marc Cote said he's seen a lot of changes of the years and feels that the town has done a good job of trying to manage growth and preserve the rural, agricultural nature of the area. He said water quality is much better today than 50 years ago. He suggested that there can be too much regulation of land uses and that change can be good, bringing things to the community that people want and need. He said the national economy will drive the fate of local farmers, not anything the town does or doesn't do. He cited the gravel deposits at the Greaves farm across from the hospital as an example of a valuable resource that probably won't be developed due to its location and the difficulty of hauling gravel out of a largely residential area.

Barb Damon addressed the problems farmers statewide are having staying economically viable. She said there needs to be greater public awareness of agricultural land use issues and how it affects the community and state

as a whole, not just farmers. She encouraged the town to develop policies and recommendations that would help farmers move from less viable traditional activities such as dairy farming to other, potentially more economically beneficial, types of agricultural uses. She added that a regional approach was needed, not just town by town.

Mark relayed an update on the community planning survey from Heidi Krantz. Nearly 200 responses had been received to date, almost a 10% response rate. He passed out a number of surveys to each planning commissioner to review and update on the online survey site. Heidi had said that the responses reflected a fairly diverse set of opinions on the questions posed.

Mark passed out a flyer announcing a series of speakers, to be held during May and June, on economic and business development which will provide a good lead-in to the Economic Development chapter review. He also passed out information on a May 10 seminar sponsored by VLCT on Growth Centers.

The next meeting will cover the Natural Resources and Historic & Scenic Resources chapters of the Town Plan.

On a motion by Bill, seconded by John, minutes of the April 3rd meeting were approved.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Leonard, recorder

Minutes approved on: 5/1/07 (JM/RD)