

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Commission
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Meeting Minutes of April 16, 2013

Planning Commission Members Present: Paul Griswold, Etienne Hancock, Reeves Larson, Max Paine & Mark Struhsacker

Planning Commission Members Absent: Tom Snipp

Staff: Todd Thomas, Zoning Administrator & Planner

Guests: Tom Hirschak & Terry Owens

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:05 P.M.

Discussion: Reorganization – The Commission will reorganize at its next meeting.

Discussion: Meeting with the Conservation Commission– The Planning Commission discussed its recent meeting with the Conservation Commission regarding the Special Use Zone. Member Griswold said that he was uncomfortable adding language to the Town Plan about the Special Use Zone when it was so late in the process and this zone had not been discussed in any detail previously. Member Griswold also questioned the relevance of the Conservation Commission's comments regarding the largely developed residential edge to the Special Use Zone when there were no conservation issues at stake in this area. Mr. Thomas said that the original Town Plan language suggested that there was ample land in the Special Use Zone and that it need not be expanded. He added that the Conservation Commission's language was quite similar, but expressed the adequacy of the zone's land area in a more vehement way by asking that the zoning line between Special Use Zone and Low Density Residential Zone "be strictly respected." After a lengthy discussion, the Planning Commission decided that the line between the Special Use Zone and the adjacent houses in the Low Density Residential Zone was not the purview of the Conservation Commission. The Planning Commission decided to retain the original language in the Town Plan about the Special Use Zone having ample land area and decided not to include the language suggested by the Conservation Commission at the last meeting that asked that this zoning line be strictly respected.

Member Griswold quoted from the bylaws of the Conservation Commission, which included a directive therein about maintaining an inventory of conserved land in Morristown. The Planning Commission agreed that it would be beneficial if the Conservation Commission would supply this data. Member Hancock said that he would be interested to know what percentage of the Town cannot be built on versus what percentage of the Town is zoned commercial. He expressed a desire to find out if there was some sort of optimum ratio between the two for planning purposes. Member Hancock said that he would also like to see what the Town's percentage of conserved land is and the percentage of land zoned for business zoning when juxtaposed to similar communities in Vermont. It was agreed that Mr. Thomas would draft a letter to the Selectboard asking for the Conservation Commission to supply the total acreage of conserved lands in Morristown, understanding that conserved lands are not just State or

Town owned property, but can also include conservation easements and other land restrictions, such as the purchase of development rights.

Approve prior meeting minutes – Member Larson moved to approve the April 2 Planning Commission meeting minutes. A vote of 5-0 affirmed the motion.

Discussion: The Zoning for Green Mountain Arena – Tom Hirschak and Terry Owens entered the meeting room and a discussion began regarding the zoning for Green Mountain Arena. Mr. Thomas said that this agenda item was not properly warned and the Planning Commission could not make any decisions about rezoning the arena until it was discussed again at the next properly warned meeting. He added that if the Commission was considering changing its previous vote about leaving the Green Mountain Arena parcel zoned residential, that this vote would have to be properly warned and discussed at the upcoming May 7th meeting. Mr. Hirschak informed the Commission that he had the Green Mountain Arena under purchase and sale and it would no longer serve as an ice rink or recreational facility. Mr. Hirschak added that the rink's current owner, Randy Latona, had already made the decision to close the rink. Mr. Hirschak said that he has outgrown his current business facility in Cadys Falls and that he would like to move that operation to the arena. He said his Cadys Falls facility is short on space and the arena would allow him more storage and allow more auctions to be held in Morristown. Mr. Hirschak also said that moving his facilities to the arena would allow him to hire two to three new additional employees. Mr. Thomas reiterated that the zoning for the arena needed to be changed in order for Mr. Hirschak to use it as he was proposing. Mr. Hirschak said that the arena will sit empty and deteriorate if the zoning is not changed. Upon a question from the Planning Commission, Mr. Hirschak said that his accepted offer on the rink was contingent upon a successful zoning change. Mr. Hirschak said that he also purchased an option on land next to his other auction facility in Williston. He said that if the arena is not rezoned, he will be moving more of his operations to Williston because this move makes more sense for his business (than expanding locally). Member Larson said that Hirschak Auction is a good business, but a decision to rezone the arena required more public input. Member Paine expressed a desire to keep the recreation use at the arena. Terry Owens replied that there was no existing recreation use at the arena, because it had been closed and it would not reopen. Member Struhsacker and Member Griswold cited the large number of families that attended the Planning Commission's Town Plan meeting with the Selectboard last month expressing the desire to have the zoning remain as-is for the arena. Member Struhsacker said he did not know how the Planning Commission could go back on the decision made that night at this juncture and that he thought the Town Plan should remain as currently constituted (with the potential rezoning of the arena eliminated therefrom). Commission Members thanked Mr. Hirschak for his time and advised him that he could request the Selectmen to rezone this parcel during the Town Plan public hearing process.

Discussion: Schedule Town Plan hearings – The Commission reviewed the proposed report to the State regarding the Town Plan. Mr. Thomas said that he would make final changes to this report in the morning and it would accompany the Town Plan hearing notices when it was sent out to the State and neighboring communities. The Commission

agreed to schedule the Town Plan's first hearing on either May 21st or May 28th, with the date depending on how quickly Mr. Thomas could prepare the hearing notices.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:15 PM – submitted by Todd Thomas, ZA

