

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council

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Meeting Minutes of 3 April 2018

Planning Council Members Present: Linda Greaves, Paul Griswold (Chair), Etienne Hancock, Max Paine, Tom Snipp, and Laura Streets

Planning Council Members Absent: Mark Struhsacker

Guests: Ron Bomer, Graham Mink, Buckwheat Lowe, and Conservation Commission Chair Ron Stancliff

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order in the Community Meeting Room of the Town Offices at 43 Portland Street at approximately 6:00 P.M.

Discuss: Ron Stancliff on Conservation Commission survey results – Ron Stancliff appeared before the Council to discuss the Conservation Commission's Town Meeting survey results. Chairman Stancliff said that 56 surveys were completed and most of the responses supported actions that preserved the town's open spaces and rural character and directed additional development to village areas. He suggested that larger minimum lot sizes should be put into place in places like Sterling Valley, Mud City, and Elmore Mountain Road. It was also noted that the Town meeting survey showed surprisingly low support for snowmobile trails. Other than this fact, Mr. Stancliff said that the survey results had not changed much since its previous iteration, which was conducted prior to the current Town Plan.

Discuss: Graham Mink on setbacks in the Airport Zone – Graham Mink appeared before the Council asking for side and rear setback relief in the Airport Business (AB) Zone. Mr. Mink said that most of the parcels in the AB Zone were either very large lots (dozens of acres) or relatively small residential lots (less than half an acre). Mr. Mink added that the existing 25 foot side and rear setbacks prevent a business from buying and converting these small residential lots next to the airport runway for business use. He said that the side setbacks alone on these runway lots take up more than half of the available lot width. Mr. Mink suggested adopting the 10 foot side setbacks for the AB Zone that currently exist in the Industrial Zone. He further suggested that the AB and Industrial Zones were very similar and really should be merged into one zone. The Council said it would take up this setback request and the suggestion of merging the Airport Business Zone and Industrial Zone on its next agenda.

Discuss: Special Tax Exemption 32 VSA §3836 (Paul) – Chair Griswold asked the Council to tweak how it previously agreed to use the 32 VSA §3836 exemption, which allows Town Meeting to exempt \$75,000 of Grand-List value for new homes and farm buildings in the CB, HDR, MDR & MOR Zones. Mr. Griswold said that he wanted to market this tax break to seniors (who typically do not bring school-age children with them) to move to and retire in this community. It was clarified that seniors who built in these areas would already be eligible for this tax exemption. Graham Mink suggested that this tax exemption should be extended out into the Low Density Residential Zone.

Member Hancock said that the exemption was intended to encourage infill housing in the core of the Village. He added that it would be a hard-sell politically to have some of the taxes of the new expensive homes, as an example, in the Beacon Hill neighborhood, being paid by the owners of more modest homes in the village. The Council decided to add a discussion of §32 VSA §3836 on the next Council agenda.

Discuss: Letter regarding Equipment Tax vs. 1% Rooms & Meals Tax – The Council discussed the machinery and equipment tax letter that Mr. Thomas wrote per last meeting's discussion. Graham Mink, looking at the list of businesses paying this tax, said that there were a lot of out-of-town businesses paying the most money to the town due to this tax. Chair Griswold discussed the potential of replacing the machinery and equipment tax with the 1% rooms and meals tax. Upon a motion made by Member Streets, the Council directed Mr. Thomas to send this the machinery and equipment tax letter to the Selectboard. The motion was affirmed by a vote of 6-0.

Discuss: Two-Family Homes in the Low Density Residential Zone – The Council discussed if the Dwelling-Unit Two-Family use was desired in the Low Density Residential (LDR) Zone. Graham Mink recommended that duplexes remain allowed in the LDR Zone. Member Hancock said that he is supportive of duplexes anywhere in town. Rob Bomer said that he lives in the LDR Zone and that he supports duplexes being built in his neighborhood. Bob Heanue said that he also supports duplexes, but he thought where he lived on Route 100 should not be in the LDR Zone. He added that his land is surrounded by duplexes and commercial zones and that he said his neighborhood, if kept residential, should at least be zoned Medium or High Density Residential. It was decided that the underlying zoning of this area would be added to the next meeting agenda.

Discuss: Next meeting April 9th with Selectboard, not April 17th – It was decided that the next Council meeting would be April 9th for a joint meeting with the Selectboard regarding the business and equipment tax. The April 17th Council meeting is cancelled. Carryover agenda items from this meeting would be discussed at the May 1st meeting.

Approve prior meeting minutes – Member Snipp moved to approve the March 20th meeting minutes. The motion was affirmed by a vote of 5-0-1 with Member Hancock abstaining.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

– submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director