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MORRISTOWN
PLANNING COMMISSION
P.O. BOX 748
MORRISVILLE, VT 05661

Minutes of April 1, 2008
Tegu Building, Morrisville
Approved on: April 15, 2008

P.C. Members Present: Andrew Volansky; Bill Henchey, Chair; John Meyer; Lauren Traister; Max Paine;
Kelly Rogers
Absent: Steve Berson;

Also Attending: Mark Leonard; Heidi Krantz; Craig Myotte; Ron Stancliff; Bob Heanue; Bob Beeman;
Tara Beeman; Steve Rae; Dana Wildes; Melvyn Patashnick; Carol Ferrante; Roxanne Manning; Jan Roy;
Marcia Shafer; Richard & Heather Sargent; Rhoda Bedell; Leon Whitcomb; Gary Greaves; Jane Greene;
Sondra Sanborn; Henry Santhell; James & Molly Peas; Dave Yacovone; Sharon Rowell.

Recorder: Chip Sawyer, LCPC

Bill Henchey opened the meeting at 7:03 PM.

Zoning Revision Discussion: SPECIAL USE DISTRICT: consider re-drawing district boundaries to move Mansfield Avenue parcels into Low Density Residential (LDR)-1 district. Review allowable uses.

Bill Henchey requested that Mark Leonard summarize the Special Use District (SUD) as it is currently described in the town zoning.

Bill Henchey requested that Chip Sawyer read aloud a letter submitted from Marcia Shafer, against the redesignation of Mansfield Ave.

Copley CEO Melvyn Patashnick stood and requested that Mansfield Ave stay in the SUD, primarily citing the hospital's anticipated future growth needs. He expressed the intent to the hospital to remain sensitive to the needs of the residents and property owners in the SUD.

When asked specifically about planned acquisitions, Patashnick referred to the Real Estate Needs Report submitted at the meeting.

Dana Wildes cited the opportunities that the SUD represents for future elder housing needs and suggested adding acreage to the district.

Jan Roy also advised against reducing the size of the SUD.

Dick Sargent mentioned the prosthesis facility proposal that led many in the area to request removing Mansfield Ave from the SUD. He also cited the traffic-related difficulties associated with the current uses in the SUD.

Another member of the public expressed a view against mixed use in the area, specifically citing residential units proposed for above the prosthesis facility. Would prefer that the commercial uses grow separately from the residential uses.

Another member of the public reminded the audience that the prosthesis facility is no longer proposed.

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Molly Peas stated that the hospital has been a good neighbor but dislikes the traffic increase in last 3-4 years. Worried about safety of local children and bus stop at the corner.

Roxanne Manning complained that the hospital's MRI truck drives on her lawn in order to access the hospital. Also cited traffic increase and speeding concerns. Would like to see businesses locate away from the residential area. Read a letter from a neighbor that also supported the move of Mansfield Ave from the SUD.

Heather Sargent cited recent residential development in the area and stated that the area has become even more residential over time.

Steve Rae observed that there were two sides to this issue and asked if the Low Density Residential (LDR) district would be rewritten with conditional use allowing for some of the special uses that are permitted in the SUD. Mark Leonard stated that is the way the SUD is currently written already.

David Yacovone stated that the hospital's needs going forward should be considered, but developing away from the current residential properties may present the most harmonious situation.

Mark Leonard mentioned that it may be wise to see if health care services should be added as Conditional Uses to other districts in town, taking some of the pressure off of the SUD. Also stated that a partial removal of sections of Mansfield Ave from the SUD may represent a compromise.

Lauren Traister asked about the possibility of speed bumps and other traffic calming measures that could be used in the SUD. Mark Leonard stated that speed bumps are disliked by the highway dept and by ambulance drivers. Patashnick stated that the hospital is also concerned about the amount of vehicular traffic and speed.

Mark Leonard relayed the comments of Barb Stevens in support of removing Mansfield Ave from the SUD.

Sondra Sanborn asked if health services were being considered added to other districts because the hospital has run out of room to grow. Mark Leonard stated that many health care facility proposals are asking to be located in other areas of town, unrelated to the hospital.

Steve Rae asked those present to consider the desires of the entire town as well as those directly impacted by a zoning change but not stating an opinion either way on the issue.

Zoning Revision Discussion: LOW/MEDIUM/ HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL: review minimum lot size, area per family/unit.

Mark Leonard explained the districts in question and the current lot size / units per acre regulations.

An audience member requested that the Planning Commission go out and look at the character of some of these neighborhoods before making any decisions. Bill Henchey agreed and said that he had been out to many of the areas in question.

Dana Wildes stated that efforts to increase density too often do not take into account the effects on adjacent landowners and the character of the neighborhood. Opined that a gradual density shift outward from the center of the village would be a better option.

Sharon Rowell asked what the State's priorities are in these areas. Chip Sawyer explained the State vision of growth centers surrounded by rural landscape and cited the examples of the Downtown and Growth Center Programs. Mark Leonard added that denser development is often seen as a way to produce more housing.

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Max Paine asked what the tax base implications of these issues are. Mark Leonard explained that he had heard that the Town's grand list is growing but not quite as fast as the Town's expenses are.

Steve Rae mentioned that some studies show that increased development result in increased taxes per resident, but much of this can change town-to-town.

Sondra Sanborn reiterated the request that the Planning Commission tour areas before making decisions. Often densities are not used to full extent and doing so would be against the character of a neighborhood. She requested that regulated densities be adjusted to currently utilized densities.

David Yacovone added that, in a subdivision, he elected not to utilize the full density. He also mentioned that the manner in which lots are laid out and developed is also an important factor. Location of units on lots and in relation to each other can make a visual difference.

Mark Leonard cited the Brooklyn Heights Condos as an example that "looks nice" but also takes advantage of full densities.

Sawyer mentioned that the Planning Commission may want to explore the use of visuals to complement the public discussion on these topics.

Tara Beeman, a local realtor, asked if anyone know about what rate the town was growing.

Bob Beeman made the statement that Maple Street seemed much more dense than what is actually allowed in the MDR.

Lauren Traister added that it was valuable for people to come and state their opinions on such issues as where they would or would not like to see more or less density. This sentiment was echoed by Max Paine.

Sondra Sanborn mentioned that some lots may have covenants on their deeds and asked if the town boards are required to consider such covenants when enforcing regulations.

Sharon Rowell asked what the sewage issues were associated with increased densities.

Bill Henchey mentioned the added factor of ownership versus rental on the character of properties.

Henchey thanked all for expressing their opinions and said that the public will be kept apprised of any proposed changes made to the zoning.

Discussion Of Sewer Plant Expansion and Town Sewer Service Area

Craig Myotte gave an update on the state of the Village Act 250 application for sewer expansion. Asked for guidance on how the Planning Commission would like to proceed with the discussion.

At this point there is no expectation stated by the District Commission concerning when and how the conversation should take place. Sawyer stated that such expectations may be part of an eventual ruling.

However, Wildes added, the Trustees are unlikely to go ahead with construction until they know what their service area is.

Henchey said that the first step may be to get the Planning Commission, Selectboard and Village Trustees together to discuss the process and then take it to the public for comment.

Craig Myotte said that the Village would convene the three-board meeting.

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Downtown Traffic Opportunities Study Consultant Selection.

Sawyer presented a staff review of the two bids received to perform this study. Bidders will be asked to save the date of 5/6. Planning Commissioners will read the bids and discuss further on 4/15. Sawyer and Krantz will pursue inclusion of other stakeholders.

Services of Smart Growth Collaborative

It was agreed that LCPC's Bill Rossmassler should prepare a proposal of what services the Smart Growth Collaborative may be able to provide.

Approval of Minutes

Lauren Traister made a motion to accept the minutes of the 03/18/08 Planning Commission meeting. Max Paine seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Submitted by: Chip Sawyer, recorder.