

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 23 March 2021

Council Members present: Allen Van Anda, Joshua Goldstein, Etienne Hancock (Chair), and Tom Snipp

Council Members absent: Steven Foster

Guests present: Selectwoman Judy Bickford, Village Trustee Bob Heanue, Jess Graham, Stephen Jennings, Brian Levin from Lamoille County Planning Commission, and Conservation Commission Members Ron Stancliff, Kristen Connolly, & Jenifer Andrews

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: Chair Hancock called the meeting to order electronically via Zoom at approximately 5:05 P.M.

Prior meeting minutes – Member Snipp moved to approve the March 9th minutes. A vote of 3-0 affirmed the motion, with Member Goldstein arriving just after the vote.

Discuss: Intersection of Congress St & Cherry Ave – Mr. Thomas walked the Council through a menu of proposals in the meeting package that were intended to improve the safety of the intersection of Congress Street & Cherry Avenue. He also discussed recent outreach and resultant conversations he had with the property owners that were in-close proximity to this intersection. The Council discussed the proposals in the meeting package, and other traffic calming solutions, such as bump-outs. Chair Hancock said that his mother's house fronted on this intersection, and that speeding in this area has historically been rampant, and the safety concerns being expressed were very real. He added that a letter should be sent to the Selectboard addressing these concerns, and the suggested intersection and sidewalk improvements contained in Mr. Thomas' staff report. Mr. Thomas said he would draft such a letter for Council review at the next meeting.

Discuss: Alternative means to regulate steep slopes – Mr. Thomas provided a zoning proposal that required the conversion of 2,500 ft² of slopes of 25% or more to comply with the VT Low Risk Site Handbook for Erosion Control. He explained that this proposal would be applicable during site plan approval, and for DRB review of major subdivisions. Conservation Commission Ron Stancliff spoke instead in favor of banning development on slopes of 30% or more. Mr. Thomas explained that a much less draconian steep slope regulation was rejected unanimously by both the Selectboard and the Village Trustees over the winter. When Mr. Stancliff persisted, Member Van Anda encouraged him to be more pragmatic about his desires for steep slope protection by speaking instead to the Selectboard and Village Trustees, who were the bodies that voted against last year's proposed steep slope protections (that the Planning Council unanimously voted for). Jenifer Andrews and Kristen Connolly said they would also like to see habitat protection prioritized in these areas.

Continued Public Hearing: Town Plan comments – Planning Director Thomas resumed the continued public hearing for the proposed Morrisville/Morristown 2020-

2030 Town Plan by walking the Council through minor changes he made last week to the Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan language, as the update to that plan had just been put out to bid by the Selectboard. The Council then discussed additional language request changes from the Village Trustees. Mr. Thomas said that the Village Trustees directed the Council to delete the recently revised language in the Town Plan supporting a methane / anaerobic digester, language supporting further merger of the town & village, and language supporting a town acquisition of Village water and sewer services. Chair Hancock suggested following the Trustee's directive and striking the language now. Member Van Anda said that the Council should not preemptively be taking important objectives out of the Town Plan just because one of the two Legislative Bodies disagrees with said language. He said that doing so short-circuits the debate the two Boards will need to have to approve the new Town Plan. Jenifer Andrews agreed. Selectwoman Bickford also agreed and said that this language should not be taken out of the Town Plan without the Selectboard weighing in. Member Snipp said that although he is a Village Trustee, that he could not speak for that Board. He suggested that all parties might benefit by simply reading the Trustees recent meeting minutes. Member Van Anda said that he had read the meeting minutes, but no rationale for these decisions was included therein. Member Van Anda moved to keep the language supporting the digester in the Town Plan. A vote of 4-0 affirmed the motion. Member Van Anda moved to keep the language supporting the further merger of the town & village in the Town Plan. The motion failed to carry by a vote of 1-3 (Member Van Anda was the vote in the affirmative). Mr. Thomas said that the language suggesting a statutory joint planning commission would remain in the plan, but merger suggestions about larger local government functions would be deleted. Member Van Anda moved to keep the language supporting the Town potentially acquiring village water and sewer services in the Town Plan. A vote of 3-1 affirmed the motion, with Snipp in opposition. At the close of the meeting, Conservation Commission Members Andrews & Connolly said that received a letter from Staci Pomeroy regarding wetland and river protection that they would like to present at the next Town Planning hearing. Mr. Thomas suggested submitting this letter to the Council so they could review it, and that this letter would be the first Town Plan discussion at the April 13th Planning Council meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director