

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
PO Box 748 / Morrisville, VT 05661
Phone (802) 888-6373

Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 19 March 2019

Council Members Present: Joshua Goldstein, Linda Greaves, Etienne Hancock, and Tom Snipp

Council Members Absent: Allen Van Anda, and Steven Foster

Guests: Bob Heanue, Dan McLaughlin, 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 Old Tegu Theatre, 43 Portland Street, at approximately 6:05 P.M.

Prior meeting minutes – Member Goldstein moved to approve the March 5th meeting minutes. The motion was affirmed by a vote of 4-0.

Discuss: Reorganization – The Council conducted its annual post Town Meeting discussion about reorganizing officer positions. The Council, by consensus, decided to retain Member Hancock as Chair and Member Snipp as Vice Chair.

Discuss: Revised map splitting the Mixed Office Residential Zone between High Density & Medium Density residential zones – Planning Director Thomas provided the Council with the requested map that split the Mixed Office Residential Zone into two residential zones. He said that, as requested, the High Density Residential Zone was extended to the bottom of the hill on Park Street and the tail of the former Mixed Office Residential Zone was merged into the adjacent Medium Density Residential Zone. Conservation Commission Chairman Ron Stancliff said that he was opposed to new growth until a renewable power source could be developed. Member Goldstein said that allowing for new housing was needed to keep accelerating housing costs in check. Chair Hancock said that this proposal was very responsible, by adding new housing opportunities in the core of the village while utilizing existing water and sewer lines. The Council, by consensus, accepted the revised zone boundaries shown

Discuss: Buildout analysis for adding the LDR Zone along the Village's southern border – Mr. Thomas presented a map to the Council that squared off the southern border of the village by expanding the LDR Zone thereto. Mr. Thomas explained that this zone expansion, over generations, could create as many as 315 new building sites for single family homes. The Council decided that the area east of Cottage Street was more rural and should retain the density of the Rural Residential Agricultural Zone. The Council agreed that offering a higher and better use to the Route 100 area just south of the Village line might create some redevelopment interest in places like the vacant multi-family across from the bulk fuel facility or at the adjacent junkyard. The Council, by consensus, said this proposal should be warned as part of the upcoming zoning change.

Discuss: Buildout analysis for adding the (LDR) Zone to Pinewood Estates, Needles Eye, and Cadys Falls – Mr. Thomas and the Council discussed the buildout analysis that examined the impacts of allowing greater residential density for single-family homes in the North End of town, from Pinewood Estates, through the Needles Eye, and down to Cadys Falls. The Council was somewhat hesitant to put too much developable land on the market at once, and decided that it would like to see new housing growth focused in the aforementioned Route 100 junkyard area just south of the Village boundary line. Mr. Thomas was instructed to add this North End of town (Pinewood Estates, through the Needles Eye, and down to Cadys Falls) to the Town Plan to be evaluated at a later date for a density increase. The Council made the statement for the Town Plan that this was a preferable area to add density when needed during the next 30 years because it was largely served by Village water.

Discuss: Are area minimums necessary in the Central Business Zone – The Council discussed smart growth principles and if residential density caps are really necessary in the Central Business Zone. Mr. Thomas said that most parcels in the downtown were really limited in development size by parking availability and the existing 50 foot building height. Mr. Thomas added that the current 9 unit residential maximum at a property like the Nepveu Building did provide a disincentive to developers, as those developers look for a 20 unit yield to make a downtown redevelopment project cash-flow. The Council, by consensus, decided that there was not a reason why the town should be capping downtown residential density at 5 units per each 0.10 acre lot (which is the predominant lot size in the downtown). Mr. Thomas said that the requirement for 780 ft² of land area per each residential unit in the downtown would be removed via the next zoning change. The Council thought a 500 ft² minimum of living area size per apartment should take the place of this requirement. Mr. Thomas said that this would also be included within the next zoning change.

Discuss: Allowing porches and decks in front setbacks – The Council discussed some New Urbanist ideas, such as the desire to have front porches close to sidewalks as a way to engender more conversation amongst neighbors and create a stronger community. The Council was open to allowing porches or decks in or in a portion of a front setback. It was discussed that these front porches should not be allowed to have knee walls or framing for windows to prevent them from being closed as inside living space over the years. Mr. Thomas said that he would provide a proposal for such at a future Council meeting.

Agenda addendum: Design criteria – Member Goldstein said that he wanted to make sure that the section of Jersey Heights that was slated to be added to the High Density Residential Zone was going to be benefitted by high quality development. As such, it was decided that Jersey Heights should be added as one the streets regulated by section 207 of the zoning bylaws that required Historic Preservation Criteria. Mr. Thomas confirmed for Mr. Heanue that these regulation would not apply to frontage on new side streets. It was agreed that this change would be included in the next zoning update and that additional design criteria changes may be discussed at the next Council meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director