

MORRISTOWN/MORRISVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION
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Meeting Minutes of February 19, 2013

Present: Etienne Hancock, Reeves Larson, John Meyer (Chair), Mark Struhsacker & Tom Snipp

Members Absent: Paul Griswold & Max Paine

Staff: Todd Thomas, Zoning Administrator & Planner

Guests: Sam Guy of Guy's Farm and Yard and Mark Cote of Blow & Cote

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

Approve prior meeting minutes – Member Struhsacker moved to approve the February 5th meeting minutes. A vote of 4-0-1 affirmed, with Member Meyer abstaining.

Discussion: Request by Sam Guy for Message Board – Sam Guy of Guy's Farm and Yard on Portland Street appeared before the board requesting a zoning change to allow a message board with changeable letters mounted on the façade of his building. Mr. Guy said that he believed the message board was needed to draw attention to his place of business due to competition arriving from Tractor Supply Company. Zoning Administrator Thomas said that such a message board was currently not allowed by zoning because it would be internally illuminated and the signage would be animated. Mr. Guy said that he was open to having community messages shown on his proposed message board in addition to sale items and other store promotions. He added that the message board would be turned off at night. Member Struhsacker said that changing zoning to allow for such a message board was a slippery slope because other businesses would then want similar message boards. Mr. Guy responded that these electronic message boards should only be allowed in the downtown CB Zone. Member Snipp noted that the Citgo on Vermont Route 15W had an electronic message board, as did the Bijou Theater. Mr. Thomas said that he was unaware of the message board on the Citgo sign, but assumed it was grandfathered. He added that he was aware of the Bijou's new electronic message board, but was yet to receive a complaint about it. Member Snipp and Member Larson said that it was not fair that some businesses had this kind of signage when Mr. Guy was taking the correct route in requesting it. Mr. Thomas said he would send a letter to the Bijou Theater asking that its new electronic message board be removed within the next week or two. Member Hancock spoke to his concerns about the intensity of the lighting on any message board. He said that while he was not opposed in principle to this message board, he did not want to see downtown Morrisville ending up looking like Las Vegas. Member Hancock suggested that if the illumination of the electronic message board looks more like an iPad or a Kindle and the signage thereon changed infrequently, then he may be more willing to allow it. The Commission discussed this request further after Mr. Guy's departure and decided that a picture of the proposed sign, its size and a brief written detail of how it would be animated and lit was needed to discuss the request further. Mr. Thomas said that he would reach out to Mr. Guy for this information.

Discussion: Marc Cote regarding potential zoning change – Mark Cote of Blow & Cote appeared before the Commission to ask if there was any interest in adding commercial zoning to the east of Lanphear Farm on Vermont Route 15E. He said that he was aware of the Commission's recent decision to extend the commercial zoning to the farm and he would like to see this zoning extended to two parcels he was interested in purchasing that are east of the farm. Mr. Cote identified the two parcels in question. Member Meyer said that he prefers to add business zoning to this section of Town rather than to the southern section of Vermont Route 100. The Commission discussed that extending commercial zoning east on Vermont Route 15E would split the Lanphear Farm parcel and therefore make the entire 96 acre parcel commercially zoned, which was not desired just to add commercial zoning to the 1.6 acre parcel that Mr. Cote was considering purchasing. The Commission was, however, more open to adding industrial zoning to the larger Grimes parcel that Mr. Cote was consider purchasing by Garfield road. The Commission agreed that such a proposal may have merit, but questioned how to get infrastructure to that area. The Commission asked Mr. Thomas to work with Mr. Cote about developing the idea of adding industrial zoning to the Grimes parcel.

Mr. Cote also said that he owns 318 Cadys Falls Road and cannot develop it because of the Business Enterprise Zone's Class 1 development restriction. Mr. Thomas said that there were no plans to extend the needed municipal sewer and water infrastructure to this section of Cadys Falls Road because crossing Ryder Brook with such infrastructure was simply not feasible. Member Meyer and Member Hancock agreed that the Class 1 development restriction should be removed from the parcels to the west of Ryder Brook. Mr. Thomas added that he would adjust the sewer service management area accordingly as well. Mr. Thomas said that he would provide the commission with zoning language at its next hearing that accomplished both goals.

Discussion: Capital Chapter of Town Plan –Mr. Thomas presented the Commission with the draft capital chapter of the Town Plan that was requested at the previous meeting. Mr. Thomas added that the Village Trustees requested that their portion of this chapter be strengthened. The Commission agreed by consensus that they liked the proposed chapter and it was ready to be included in the Town Plan.

Discussion: Review Town Plan and Schedule Hearings – Mr. Thomas said that he could not schedule the Town Plan hearings yet because the Selectboard had requested working sessions on the document with him on Monday, March 4 and a joint meeting with the Planning Commission for the same purpose on Tuesday, March 19.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:45 PM – submitted by Todd Thomas, ZA