

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 4 February 2020

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

Council Members Absent: None

Guests: John McQueen, Dan McLaughlin, Bob Heanue, Paul Griswold, and Chair of the Conservation Commission Ron Stancliff

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: Chair Hancock called the meeting to order in the Community Meeting Room of the Old Tegu Theatre, 43 Portland Street, at approximately 6:00 P.M.

Prior meeting minutes – Member Goldstein moved to approve the January 21st meeting minutes. A vote of 5-0 affirmed the motion.

Discuss: Meet with School Board and Town Plan Education Chapter – Neither a School Board Member, nor a representative from the Supervisory Union, was able to attend this evening's meeting as requested. The Council decided to table this discussion, and table finalizing the Education Chapter of the Town Plan, until the School Board replied with a date when they could attend a Council meeting.

Discuss: Conservation Commission Density Exclusion Request – Chairman Ron Stancliff appeared before the Council to present a zoning change request on behalf of the Conservation Commission that would significantly alter how density is calculated for zoning purposes. The proposal would require a site plan to locate and size certain natural resources, including mapped wetlands, aquifers, deer-yards, prime agricultural soils, slopes greater than 25%, and the 100 year flood plain. Under this proposal, the total area of these natural resources would be subtracted from the parcel's gross land area to yield a developable acreage and resultant density (depending on the zone). Mr. Stancliff added that the goal of this proposal is to reduce zoning density throughout the town, thereby lessening demands for public services, and fossil fuels. Chair Hancock asked Mr. Stancliff how much land in town this proposal would affect. Mr. Stancliff suggested having the Planning Director due a mapping exercise to answer this question. Mr. Thomas responded that it would be difficult to accurately map the wetland piece due to the large discrepancies that exist between mapped wetlands and actual wetlands as they exist on the ground. Member Foster said that he did not support the proposal because the list of density reductions would be hard for the average property owner to understand. Mr. Thomas suggested that it would be simpler to simply reduce the overall allowed density in the particular zone rather than attempting to do so by sizing various natural features and subtracting each from the gross density of each parcel.

Discuss: Commercial Firewood Processing – The Council discussed revised zoning regulations for commercial firewood processing businesses. Mr. Thomas said that he reduced cord limit from 300 down to 150 per comments at the last Council meeting. Member Goldstein said that an allowance for 150 cords was still too much and directed Mr. Thomas to reduce said limit further, down to 100 cords annually. The Council also decided to increase the hours of operation limits from the times agreed upon at the last Council meeting to operating from 7am to 5pm Monday through Friday and from 9am to 2pm on Saturday (no Sunday or holiday activity allowed). Firewood processing, which would no longer be an allowed Home Business use post this spring's coming zoning change, would be conditionally allowed in the LDR-2, RRA, and the IND Zones. Finally, the only place where more than 100 cords of firewood can be processed commercially is in any of the Industrial Zones.

Discuss: 2020 meetings schedule, 2nd & 4th Tuesdays? – Due to the Selectboard changing its meeting schedule, the Planning Council had recently been forced to meet upstairs after various Monday holidays. To avoid further meeting room conflicts, the Council decided to change its meeting nights from the first and third Tuesdays to the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month – effective immediately. The next Planning Council meeting will take place on Tuesday February 25th at 6:00pm.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director

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