

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council

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Meeting Minutes of February 2, 2016

Planning Council Members Present: Andrea Beeman, Etienne Hancock, Paul Griswold (Chair), Yvette Mason, Max Paine, Tom Snipp & Mark Struhsacker

Planning Council Members Absent: None

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Guests: Kevin Kelley, Laurie Cunningham, Rick Swanson, Eric Peterson, Anne Miller, Howard Cooper, Eric Dodge, Nina Church, Jonathan Sturgess, Lori Sturgess, Dawn Bullerfield, Scott Halpsa, Mike Rapoport, Bob Heanue, Lee LaBier, Ellen Waldman, Dick Kreamer, Anne Thursby, Anne, Shackett, Ricard "Buckwheat" Lowe, Scott & Holly King.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order in the Community Meeting Room of the Tegu Building at 43 Portland Street at approximately 7:05 P.M.

Agenda Addendum: Zoning discussion for homeless shelter regulations – Chair Griswold opened the evening's discussion regarding potential zoning for a homeless shelter. Zoning Administrator Thomas noted that the recent application for a homeless shelter across from Cumberland Farms had recently been withdrawn from the Development Review Board (DRB) and that there was not a homeless warming shelter being proposed in Morristown Corners. He explained that the DRB previously decided that the Group Home use was appropriate for a shelter, but he was unsure if this was technically a correct application of this use. Mr. Thomas introduced Father Rick Swanson of St. John's in the Mountains Church in Stowe. He added that Mr. Swanson was the lead for the Patchworks homeless warming shelter effort. Mr. Swanson said that he was speaking for the Patchworks group, which had a programmatic goal for daytime and overnight short-term housing for the homeless. Mr. Swanson said that a wet shelter is not being proposed. He said that Patchworks was proposing a low barrier but high expectations shelter. He added that the shelter would also act as a field office location for social worker visits to shelter guests. Mr. Swanson said that Patchworks works with the State and Capstone Community Action, focusing on creating emergency shelter for homeless singles. Mr. Swanson said that Patchworks previously looked at operating a shelter in Hyde Park and Stowe. The Hyde Park location at the sheriff's office was deemed too close the elementary school. Mr. Swanson said that he previously opened a shelter in the basement of his church in Stowe, but few came to use this service. He said he received feedback that this Mountain Road location was inaccessible to potential users of shelter. Bob Heanue responded that this location was served by the Mountain Road shuttle and was, as a result, very accessible and that maybe this failed effort showed that there was not a need for a homeless shelter. Representatives from Capstone Community Action in attendance disagreed with this assertion and noted that the State spent \$4.5 million dollars in emergency hotel stays for homeless people last year even though the legislature only approved \$2 million for this use. Mr. Swanson said that the Patchworks steering committee is made up of people from various towns in the county, including

Morrisville that understood the homeless problem here. Various audience members told Mr. Swanson that a shelter was not desired in Morrisville and that it should be located in Stowe or a town like Johnson that does not have zoning. Mr. Thomas said that his goal was to define a use for a homeless shelter and then work with Mr. Swanson and the Council to decide in what zone such a use should be allowed, if any. Audience suggestions included that any allowance for shelter should require that it be available to town and county residents only. Mr. Thomas thanked everyone for their time and comments and said he would continue to work on this issue at the next Council meeting. The Council instructed Mr. Thomas to have the Chief of Police, Kevin Kelly of CHSLV and a representative from Lamoille County Mental Health at its February 16th meeting where this discussion would be continued.

Discussion: Adding village zoning to Morristown Corners – The Council was joined by a group of Morristown Corners property owners to discuss the proposed zoning changes in their neighborhood. Mr. Thomas explained that he would like to address the incorrect large lot 2-acre zoning found in Morristown Corners, much like the Council had just accomplished with the Cadys Falls neighborhood. He explained to the audience that, like Cadys Falls, he was proposing to use the Low Density Residential Zone with Class 2 Development for Morristown Corners (yielding a 15,000 ft.² minimum lot size). He added that such a minimum lot size would make a majority of the lots in this neighborhood conform to zoning. Thomas explained that a 15,000sf lot size would create the potential for only a handful of new infill lots/houses in the neighborhood – leaving the fabric of the neighborhood largely unchanged. Mr. Thomas explained that since the last time the Council reviewed the boundaries of the proposed zone for this neighborhood, he had expanded it to include parcel 19 because Gary Bourne had just purchased the adjacent Green Top Market building at auction. Mr. Thomas recommended moving forward with the proposed zoning change because it best fixed the nonconforming small lot problem in Morristown Corners and the small amount of possible resultant new development was deemed to be ok by the neighborhood members in attendance. Member Hancock moved to approve including the new Morristown Corners zoning as proposed within the next zoning change. The motion was affirmed by a vote of 7-0.

Discussion: Review New Zoning for the Cheng Property – Mr. Thomas submitted the new Low Density Residential and Commercial Zone split of the Cheng property to the Council as requested at the prior meeting. Abutting property owners asked the Council to ensure that the residential character and views from their back yard were not spoiled by new commercial development on the Cheng property. It was explained that the section of the property that would abut them would be zoned residential and that a few dozen residential units were planned for this area.

Approve prior meeting minutes – Member Snipp moved to approve the January 5, 2016 meeting minutes. The motion was approved by a vote of 4-0-3 with Members Beeman, Hancock and Struhsacker abstaining.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM – submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director