

Morristown/Morrisville Planning Council
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Meeting Minutes of Tuesday 25 January 2022

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

Council Members absent: Steven Foster

Guests present: Conservation Commission Chair Ron Stancliff, Engineer Tyler Mumley, Graham Mink, Jamie Brewster, Lyndon Burkholder, and Dan McLaughlin

Staff: Planning Director Todd Thomas

Call to Order: Chair Hancock called the meeting to order in the Community Room of the Old Tegu Theatre at approximately 5:02 P.M.

Prior meeting minutes – Member Van Anda moved to approved the January 11th meeting minutes. A vote of 4-0 affirmed the motion.

Discuss: Morrisville/Morristown 2020-2030 Town Plan – Planning Director Thomas walked Planning Council Members through minor changes made to the Town Plan at the most recent Selectboard and Village Trustee meetings. The Council did not comment on the new Town Plan changes. Mr. Thomas explained that if the Selectboard did not make any additional Town Plan changes at its upcoming February 7th meeting, he could warn final Town Plan hearings in March, resulting in final Town Plan approval votes in April.

Discuss: Subdivision sketch plan approval changes – The Council, along with Graham Mink, and Engineer Tyler Mumley, had no comments regarding proposed changes to the portion of the Zoning Bylaws that regulate subdivision sketch plan approval. Mr. Thomas said these changes would be included as part of the larger fall zoning change process.

Discuss: Change Business Services Definition – The Council reviewed the proposed revision to the Business Services definition that was first discussed in 2020 with Lyndon Burkholder of Green Mountain Trailers. Certain Council Members expressed concern that the proposed zoning change could lead to unintended consequences, especially in Airport Industrial Zone #5. An Amazon fulfillment center, and business to business retail, specifically in the building trades, were discussed as possible future land uses in IND Zone #5 (particularly if the definition change was approved). Member Van Anda questioned if building trade businesses that had a retail component, like plumbing and electric supply companies, would be a positive or negative by the airport. Member Snipp said he was not comfortable with the proposed business to business retail exemption in this area. Graham Mink said that allowing business to business retail uses would improve the character of this area. Chair Hancock said his focus was avoiding any zoning change in this area that would create large paved areas, especially for exterior displays for automobile and heavy equipment sales. It was decided that Garret Hirschak, who recently took a large ownership stake in this area, should be invited to an upcoming Planning Council meeting to discuss a common vision for this area prior to any zoning change discussions taking place. Mr. Thomas said he would extend this invitation as requested.

Discuss: New zoning to protect contributing structures in the Historic District – Mr. Thomas provided a report that detailed how local zoning can foster historic preservation. Of the options presented, Mr. Thomas recommended that the Council adopt a 6-month demolition delay zoning bylaw for contributing structures in the Morrisville Historic District. Member Snipp said he was worried about adding any type of regulation that may discourage someone from buying and redeveloping the unoccupied Norm's Furniture Building on Portland Street. Member Goldstein also said he does not like the idea of saddling developers with a 6-month delay. He instead suggested putting more teeth in the existing Historic Preservation Criteria found in §207 of the Zoning Bylaws. Developer Graham Mink said he was opposed to a demo delay bylaw, and cautioned Council Members that adding more architectural detail requirements to new downtown buildings would only make housing less affordable and less available (as the increased building costs would either be passed along to future tenants, or some projects with thin margins would not be built). Chair Hancock agreed to that the §207 Historic Preservation Criteria should be enhanced to prescribe architectural elements like rake trim, corner board widths, full length windows, and roof returns on gable ends. Mr. Mink said that if such requirements are added, there must be a descriptive and definitive list in the Zoning Bylaws so there was no interpretation required. He added that he very much valued that certainty that Morrisville's succinct zoning provides, which is not the case in neighboring communities like Hyde Park or Stowe. Mr. Thomas said that he would add proposed revisions to §207 Historic Preservation Criteria to the next Planning Council agenda.

Discuss: Add Historic Preservation Criteria to more of Bridge Street – The Council discussed expanding the area for the existing Historic Preservation Criteria to include the section of Bridge Street between the Truck Route and Route 100. Chair Hancock said that expanding the Historic Preservation Criteria to this area is warranted, as he was disappointed with all the vinyl siding on the new buildings on the Truck Route end of Bridge Street. The rest of the Council Members agreed by consensus to extend the Historic Preservation Criteria so it was required on the section of Bridge Street between the Truck Route on the west, and Portland Street on the east. It was also decided that vinyl siding should no longer be allowed on the front facades of new buildings in the §207 Historic Preservation Criteria.

Discuss: Filling gaps in Jersey Heights sidewalk that will be constructed in 2022 – Member Goldstein asked the Planning Council to take the initiative to plan for and fund the construction of infill sections of sidewalk on Jersey Heights and LaPorte Road that would be left between developer constructed sections of sidewalk that will take place in the summer of 2022. It was agreed that the previous B Street to BJAMS sidewalk cost estimate would be updated to subtract the to-be developer constructed sections of this sidewalk, and to add inflation since 2017. Graham Mink offered to match a Town contribution of \$1,000 towards the \$2,000 cost of having Engineer Tyler Mumley update his old cost estimate. Mr. Thomas said he would talk to the Town Administrator about the needed funding tomorrow, and add this topic to the next Planning Council agenda.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM, submitted by Todd Thomas, Planning Director