

PLANNING COMMISSION
Draft Minutes
June 1, 2016

Members Present: Sally Miller, Susan Boston, Lowell Gray, Sam Segal, Jeff Bendis
Members Absent: Nick Scheu, Keri Cole,
Others Present: Gray Perkins, Michael Brands

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the May 9, 2016 meeting were approved as submitted.

III. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Town Zoning Article 300 - Density Calculation Amendment

The PC held a public hearing for the proposed amendments to the Town Zoning Regulations. The regulations in Article 300 dealing with residential density calculations were clarified. In a recent hearing before the TDRB, the TDRB noted this section of the regulations was unclear and they asked for an amendment to clarify exactly how many residential units are allowed per acre.

After a review of the amendment at the May 24, 2016 TDRB meeting, the Town Planner was asked to restate the proposed amendment for additional clarity. The Town Planner added parentheses to the “per unit” text that would separate them from the “per multi-family”.

In reading the text, the PC asked that the “for more than _ units be rewritten to address each district correctly. The text stated one more unit per district than was intended, 3 instead of 2.

There were no comments received from the public concerning the proposed amendment.

After discussion, the PC unanimously approved the amendment with the addition of the parentheses and the clarification of the number per units figure.

The Town Planner will pass the approval of the amendments on to the Selectboard to schedule a final hearing. The Selectboard meets on July 19, 2016 at which time the hearing could be held.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Town Plan Update

The Town Planner noted a public hearing is to be held on Thursday June 9, 2016 at 7:30 pm for adoption of the 2016 Town Plan. Two additions to the plan are proposed. One is a simple single page description of the Village Designation. The second is a 9-page Flood Resiliency chapter.

Mr. Bendis reviewed the Flood Resiliency chapter and suggested a number of minor edits. The Town Planner and Mr. Bendis reviewed the edits with the PC. All of the edits were either grammatical or clarification changes. There were no substantial changes made to the intent of the document. After discussion, the PC agreed to a majority of the proposed edits and asked the Town Planner to prepare an updated document for the June 9, 2016 public hearing.

B. Town Zoning Regulations

1. Map Changes

Gray Perkins, owner of the residential structure located directly south of the South Woodstock Country Store asked the PC to rezone his property from Residential Low Density to Hamlet Commercial. The Country Store which he used to own is also zoned Hamlet Commercial.

The Town Planner reviewed the differences between the two districts. The main difference is the Hamlet Commercial allows two commercial uses, an office and a general store. General store is defined in the regulations.

Mr. Perkins reviewed a survey of his property which showed the shared driveway right-of-way with the general store and the parking area that is also shared with the store. The current use is a small residence. Attorneys, over the years, have asked to rent the space as an office. His intent would be to rent the space either as a real estate office or attorney office.

The neighboring property, in addition to the store, has a post office on the first floor and two apartments on the second floor.

Mr. Gray's lot had been part of the store's lot fifty years ago. The house was built in the 1960's for the store manager.

The PC reviewed the zoning map of South Woodstock. There are very few commercial properties within the hamlet area. The majority of the hamlet is zoned Residential Medium Density.

Mr. Gray was thanked for his presentation. The PC will decide the issue at a later meeting. Members were asked to visit the area and to visualize the potential uses.

Chair Miller questioned what impact a larger general store would have on the hamlet should the two lots be merged. When making changes, the PC has to think about all the potential possibilities.

Mr. Eckler, a realtor, proposed changing the zoning of the Stott property which is directly west of the Town Garage in West Woodstock from Residential Five Acre to Residential Low Density. He was unable to attend and asked to meet with the PC in July. The PC reviewed a zoning map of the West Woodstock area.

The Town Planner suggested rezoning the Halle/Barry and Adams properties from Business Service/Light Industrial to Residential Low Density both which carry a half acre requirement per residential unit. Neither property has a commercial use nor would it be beneficial to the Town to have a commercial use on a back road like Westerdale Road.

The Amero property on Route 4 and Wyman Lane used to have a small general store and is zoned Hamlet Commercial. The Town Planner suggested that since the store has been closed for a number of years it may be more appropriate to change the zoning to Residential Medium Density (RMD). The neighboring properties on Route 4 are zoned RMD.

The Town Planner suggested that the Residential Office (RO) zone be added to the list of commercial zones that allows Multiple Low Occupancy Apartments (MLOA). The MLOA allows up to 4 small apartments with a total of no more than 6 bedrooms to be placed within existing buildings. This has worked well in West Woodstock where three properties have been developed as such. There is a strong need for this type of apartment.

A property owner in Taftsville on Route 4 has a request before the TDRB for 2 additional apartments. Per zoning requirements he is only allowed two units due to the lot size. He currently has 3 apartments. The RO includes approximately 12 properties along Route 4 and near the bridge. The other RO district in the town is a single property district in South Woodstock, the tack shop.

A potential situation may arise in West Woodstock near the Bridgewater line. A restaurant is for sale in a Residential One Acre (R1) district. Next door to this is a motel also in the same R1 district. Both uses have been grandfathered as both predate zoning regulations. The issue is the restaurant could take more than a year to sell. If so, it may lose its grandfathered status. The building would be very difficult to convert to a single family home as allowed in the R1 district. To change this to a more commercial zone may attract more commercial uses which are not compatible with the area. The PC was asked to drive Route 4 to look at all the commercial uses and how they impact on their immediate neighborhood.

The PC will reflect on the proposed changes and review at a future meeting.

2. 2015 State Flood Hazard/River Corridor

This section would replace the current flood hazard regulations in Section 405. The River Corridor is a new regulation suggested by the State. The proposal will be reviewed at the July 6, 2016 meeting.

IV. OPEN DISCUSSION - None

V. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is June 9, 2016, with the sole purpose of holding a public hearing for the 2016 Town Plan. The next regular meeting will be July 6, 2016.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town/Village Planner