

PLANNING COMMISSION
Draft Minutes
November 1, 2017

Members Present: Sally Miller, Sam Segal, Susan Boston, Michael Pacht, Jeff Bendis, Eric Goldberg, Sara Stadler
Members Absent: None
Others Present: David Beilman, Anita Clark, Vassie Sinopoulos, Laurie Marshall, Dean Marshall, Michael Brands

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

After a lengthy discussion, the minutes of the October 4, 2017 meeting were approved as submitted.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. 200 Westerdale Road

Mr. Beilman, an architect representing the Mr. & Mrs. O'Connell - owners of 200 Westerdale Road, asked the PC to rezone an 8.09 acre parcel. A map of the proposed zoning was shown. The entire parcel is currently zoned Residential Five Acre (R5). The owners would like to convert the lower southernmost three acre portion of the lot to Residential One Acre (R1). The remainder of the lot, 5.01 acres, would retain the R5 zoning.

The property had three residential buildings on the site. Recent permits to rebuild the three residences have been granted by TDRB. The residences are non-conforming uses.

One of the three buildings is also a non-conforming structure, a carriage house located within the Town highway right-of-way.

The request would allow all three homes to be brought into conformance. Selling each home with a legal parcel would be beneficial.

The neighborhood west of the area is zoned R1. The land to the east, the Town garage, is zoned Community, is also a one acre zone. The land south of the parcel is zoned Business Service / Light Industrial which is also a one acre zone.

The PC noted that during the Town Zoning rewrite this spring, there was significant resistance to rezoning the parcel in question. The PC asked Mr. Beilman to verify neighborhood support for the proposed rezoning. Mr. Beilman should send a map of the proposed zoning to the neighbors so they will have a good understanding of the proposal.

Once Mr. Beilman can verify support for the request, the PC will consider scheduling a public hearing for the requested zoning change.

B. East End Plan Review

The Town Planner noted a large poster size version of the East End Illustrative Redevelopment Plan has been placed on the Planning and Zoning Office wall. The plan has generated a lot of discussion which is the intent. Chair Miller stated that a report has been written to accompany the plan. The report is currently being edited, but should be released shortly.

C. Village Zoning Rewrite

The PC continued their discussion of the Village Zoning Regulations rewrite. The Town Planner distributed proposed language for both Multi-family Housing and Stormwater.

1. Multi-family Housing

Multi-family housing has become an issue with neighborhoods due to a recent request on Lincoln Street.

A group of Lincoln Street neighbors, Ms. Sinopoulos, Ms. Clarke, Ms. Marshall, and Mr. Marshall, addressed the PC with concerns of the negative impacts multi-family housing can place on a residential neighborhood.

Chair Miller thanked the group of residents for sharing their thoughts with the PC. A review of a proposed new section on multi-family housing is on tonight's agenda.

The Town Planner noted that "dwelling, multi-family" is defined in the regulations as a building with more than two residential units. The PC noted the number of dwellings per parcel should be addressed, not just per building.

A copy of the proposed regulation will be sent to the neighbors. The section being reviewed is a first draft and was written for discussion purposes.

Ms. Clark, Stanton Street resident, noted her street and Lincoln Street are both narrow streets without sidewalks. Pedestrian conflict is a major worry. Increased automobile traffic on the narrow streets will create a negative impact to the neighborhood. The area is also very steep which leads to stormwater issues.

Woodstock does need additional housing. The Town Plan supports the creation of additional housing. The key is to balance the need for housing yet preserve the residential

character of the various neighborhoods.

Pedestrian circulation also needs to be added to the list of review items. The footprint of a building should be sized to match other buildings in the neighborhood.

Ms. Sinopoulos asked if the zoning density could be changed. Currently all of Lincoln Street is designated Residential High Density, which allows 8 units per acre. There are numerous large lots on the street. Current zoning could create far more housing than the area can handle.

The Town Planner showed the tax maps of Lincoln Street which note the various acreages. There are ten lots in the neighborhood with an acre or more. One three-acre lot could yield up to 24 units.

Chair Miller did not really want to open up the rezoning issue, as it can become very complicated with many interests to overcome.

Mr. Segal noted that the current zoning does allow subdivision which could create more lots. A restriction to the creation of a lot is the steepness of the land which makes driveway access impossible. Driveways are required to be less than 10%.

The Town Planner suggested setting a limit of two additional dwellings in certain zones. This would allow up to 4 units per parcel and prevent over development of residential areas. Commercially zoned lands are generally off of larger streets and could have a more open multi-family dwelling calculation based on each zone's allowed density.

Chair Miller noted the limitation as proposed could prevent one from developing multiple units in a manner that conforms to the property and has a positive impact on neighborhood character. Each project is site specific with varying impacts, due to topography, access and location of units.

Another approach is to create overlay zones whereby certain areas would be allowed as many units as the parcel could handle. Parcels with frontage on Route 4, such as those shown on the East End Illustrative Redevelopment Plan, are a prime example.

The PC agreed the desired method is to write regulations that create good housing, yet do not overburden a neighborhood. Housing needs to be compatible with existing development design standards and neighborhood character.

Chair Miller suggested members drive around to various towns that may have good examples of multi-family housing that fits a neighborhood. The town of Hanover was suggested. A local example is the Hawthorn Hill complex located at the top of Linden Hill.

Infill development needs to be encouraged. When the "Detached Apartment" regulations were first established in the 1990s, many new units were created above garages and accessory buildings. Previous development had been restricted to two units in the main

house. Infill development would allow housing to be spread out and not be overly dense or burdensome on certain neighborhoods.

After a lengthy discussion, the PC agreed the issue will require additional thought and research.

2. Stormwater

The stormwater section is based on the State's most recent stormwater model ordinance. The Town Planner edited the document to reflect the needs of the Village. The language is very similar to that currently placed in the Town Zoning Regulations. The Town version is slightly different as it was based on an earlier State model.

A main difference between Town and Village is the establishment of a 5,000 square foot threshold for the Village versus the Town's 10,000 square foot threshold as stated in Section 602B . The Town Planner noted the Village is more compact and dense therefore a lower threshold is warranted.

Mr. Bendis asked for a definition of terms, as a lay person may not understand the terminology.

The Town Planner noted the definitions can be added directly to the section such as is the case with the flood hazard definitions.

Mr. Segal asked that it be made clear the "retained soils best suited or infiltration" in Section 604 A.1. are to be spread out on the property and not left in a pile.

During a discussion of the proposed 5,000 square foot threshold for the Village, Mr. Segal suggested that a percentage of the property may be a better proposal. Many smaller lots may have stormwater issues that would not be captured under the 5,000 square foot threshold.

The Town Planner did not want to place a burden on smaller lots which tend to have lower cost housing. In addition, the regulations under Landscaping and Grading, control erosion and debris from entering streams, roadways and neighboring property.

After discussion, the PC agreed to keep the proposed 5,000 square foot threshold for the Village.

The PC then discussed tiny houses. The perception was that tiny houses are restricted in the Village. The Town Planner stated that the regulations do not restrict the development of tiny houses. He stated that they may not pass the design scrutiny of the Design Review District. The key is that all homes, no matter what size, require adequate sewer and water service. Case law requires that mobile homes be treated the same as a single family home and cannot be denied based on the fact that they are mobile homes. A tiny home would be similar. Woodstock does not have a minimum size regulation.

D. Enhanced Energy Town Plan Chapter

Chair Miller noted the work of the TRORC has been completed concerning the rewrite of the Town Plan's energy chapter. The PC needs to finish the rest of the chapter rewrite. A map of preferred alternative energy areas needs to be finalized. This is difficult task as the map may indicate potential areas but the neighborhood may not be supportive. Chair Miller asked that the PC devote the November 29, 2017 meeting to working on this.

IV. OPEN DISCUSSION

A. Village Tree Warden Report

The PC discussed the Village Tree Warden's Report to replant trees around the Green. At the last meeting the PC agreed to have the Town Planner write a memo to the Select Board. A draft memo was sent to members via email. After review of the initial draft, the PC agreed to place the memo on hold for further discussion.

The PC agreed that trees are very important for the sustainability of the Green. However, the money for trees and "forever" maintenance should come from the Town and Village annual budgets. The planting should not depend on the "one-time" EDC money. Tree maintenance is a municipal responsibility.

A memo from the PC should include statements from the Town Plan that show support for the project and leave it to the two executive bodies to budget appropriately.

The Town Planner stated the Tree Warden's request is part of a quarterly review of EDC funding requests. The request first needs to be approved by the EDC. The Select Board then has the authority whether or not to approve the funding. The Select Board review would not occur until early next year.

After further discussion, Mr. Segal motioned with a second by Mr. Pacht to have the Town Planner write a memo endorsing the maintenance of Village trees based on Town Plan recommendations. The motion passed with a 7-0 vote.

B. Other Projects

Chair Miller asked for PC volunteers to work on a number of goals/projects.

The Sustainable Woodstock Energy Committee is working on the Enhanced Energy chapter rewrite, but does not have the same direction as the PC. It would help the process to have a liaison from the PC to work with the committee.

Workforce housing and more affordable dwellings are a major need in Woodstock. Earlier this summer a group had started working on the subject but have not met since. Ms. Boston is willing to work with the group should they meet again.

Another important goal supported by the Town Plan which was brought forward by the 2005 Community Visioning project is that of health and wellness. The initiative has

strong support from the Ottauquechee Health Center. Lynn Peterson, a retired doctor and member of the OHC board, has been working on this. Mr. Bendis stated he would be interested in working on this project.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development guided the 2005 Community Visioning program. A nonprofit, Sustainable Woodstock, was created as a result the 2005 process. Four areas of activity were chosen at the end of the process, community identity, trails, town/village merger and the East End. The Vermont Council on Rural Development is willing to do a refresher project with Town/Village of Woodstock.

C. Design Review Concerns

Mr. Bendis, Chair of the Village Design Review Board, noted that the board has a number of concerns mainly focused on color.

Mr. Bendis showed the PC a photograph of a recently painted brick home located on Central Street. The home jumps out as it is flanked by two “naturally colored” brick homes. The painted brick is not compatible with Village architecture. However, the current regulations allow brick to be painted. The DR board asked that the PC consider amending the regulations to prohibit the painting of brick structures.

Mr. Bendis noted that the Village has been very lucky with colors of buildings over the years. Every once in a while a home/business owner will paint a building an overly bright or attention getting color. The prime example is the Woodstocker B&B which is located at the west end of the Village and was painted a bright yellow. The DR is concerned with bad color choices and asked the Town Planner to research historic color palettes such as those used in Saratoga New York.

VI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for November 29, 2017.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town/Village Planner