

PLANNING COMMISSION
Draft Minutes
October 4, 2017

Members Present: Sally Miller, Sam Segal, Susan Boston, Michael Pacht, Jeff Bendis, Eric Goldberg
Members Absent: Sara Stadler
Others Present: Michael Brands

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the August 2, 2017 meeting were approved.

The minutes of the September 6, 2017 meeting were approved with minor changes.

III. OLD BUSINESS

A. Kelly Way

Mr. Bendis asked about an event that occurred over the past weekend at the Kelly Way farm site. The event was publicized on the local list serve. The proposed zoning changes to allow events at the site have not yet been finalized by the Select Board. A public hearing with the Select Board is schedule for October 17, 2018.

The Town Planner noted that the Woodstock Inn and the Kelly Way garden manager were sent a letter on the issue. The event was a small benefit for Zach's Place capped at 35 attendees.

B. Village Tree Warden's Report

The PC discussed the Village Tree Warden's Report which requested \$20,000 for 15 trees to be planted around The Green and in front of St. James Church. The request will be made to the Economic Development Commission (EDC) from their 1% rooms and meals tax fund. The PC questioned the intent of the funds and felt the trees should be part of the Town and Village annual budgets. The Town Planner noted that tree maintenance is paid for from the interest accrued of a dedicated trust fund. With the near 0% interest rates of the past few years, the fund has had a significantly reduced yield.

After a lengthy discussion of the EDC grants and trees on the Green, the PC agreed that a memo should be written to the Select Board endorsing the Tree Warden's request.

Mr. Segal motioned with a second by Mr. Pacht to have the Town Planner write the memo. The motion passed with a 5-1 vote (Mr. Bendis voted against).

The memo will be emailed to the PC before being sent.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. East End Plan - Review

Chair Miller, also Executive Director of Sustainable Woodstock, distributed paper copies of a conceptual site plan for the East End. A larger poster board size of the plan was reviewed with the PC.

The worked was prepared by Bob White, Landscape Architect from Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. The project was funded by an EDC grant and prepared under the guidance of the Sustainable Woodstock East End Group.

The project includes the following East End properties: Alsup, Village of Woodstock, JBW LLC, Woodstock Resort Corporation and the Gerrish Corporation, all of whom participated in the project. The exercise is meant to show the type of development that can be accomplished under the current Zoning Regulations.

The site map includes numerous residential housing concepts, commercial buildings and a functioning park next to the river.

Mr. Goldberg asked how would the plan become reality. He suggested using tax deferments to speed up the development process.

Tax deferments would have to be approved by the Select Board.

Chair Miller noted that the East End Group is hoping that the EDC would run with the concept and find a developer or two to pursue the intended result.

The Town Plan does support this type of plan.

The residential numbers reflect the maximum allowed by current zoning regulations.

The PC agreed that the plan needs to be shopped around.

Mr. Bendis suggested that EDC funds should be used to gather first options on effected properties.

The Town Planner felt the renderings are good at showing what can be done with these properties. Many developers feel that Woodstock is over regulated and would not allow development like this.

B. Village Zoning Rewrite Discussion

The PC did a brief review of the potential list of zoning changes that had been discussed at the September 6, 2017 meeting. The review was then continued starting with Signs. The intent of the review is to remove or advance the various items for further discussion.

Signs have always been a big topic as most businesses would like to see more signs. Whether balloons should be banned was one suggestion. TV screens placed within windows should be controlled. The current rule is if a sign is placed 12" behind the glass then no permit is required.

Noise issues are always front and center. Should residential areas or different times of the day have a different noise level applied. The current threshold is a blanket 70 db, which is fairly loud especially during the quiet of the night. The Town Planner was asked to review other municipal ordinances.

The building and property maintenance item was discussed at length. Should there be a standard of good repair. Should demolition by neglect be enforced. The key is to write an enforceable standard, with clear court proof guidelines. Holes in a roof and stone wall deterioration were mentioned. Maybe they should apply only to the Design Review District. The PC agreed the issue needs more discussion. The Town Planner should contact the State Office of Historic Preservation for applicable standards. Dave Green, Fire Chief and State Fire Marshall, can weigh in on what presents a public danger / attractive nuisance.

The PC agreed that unattended gasoline stations need to be researched thoroughly. Sunoco currently has a permit for an unattended service between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. They would like to extend this to a 24 hours/7 days a week situation.

Multi-family housing uses will require a lot of discussion. Currently they are allowed on all residential lots that have sufficient density/square footage. Creating strong regulations could limit inappropriate placement of housing. Traffic, noise, trash, stormwater controls, character of the area regulations can be enhanced. Placing multi-family housing in more appropriate areas could be accomplished via an overlay zone.

Lighting standards are well written. The increase in LED lighting may need further review. Turning off lighting when not necessary was mentioned both as a glare factor and an energy saver.

Short Term Rentals are a hot button issue. Local lodging groups do not support STRs, while the business community overall welcomes more tourists. The impact on long term rentals needs to be assessed. The State's STR report was just issued October 1, 2017. The Town Planner will send the report to the PC.

Section 703 dealing with the number of members on a Planning Commission needs to be adjusted to state either 5, 7 or 9 and not 5-9 as currently written.

Discussion followed.

The Commission discussed the control of chain stores. Due to the summer VDRB meeting with representatives of Dunkin Donuts and Sunoco, the issue is still a hot topic. While one cannot prohibit national franchises, one can have language assuring the business is compatible with the Village. Such items as signage, prohibition of take-out windows, traffic capacity can be written in. The Town Planner will look into limiting the use of franchise colors on buildings. Many national companies have their own palette of colors. The colors are considered signage in some communities.

Efficiency standards can be enhanced for new or retrofit buildings. The current State standards are bare minimum and should be much higher. Efficiency Vermont will be a good source for additional information on this.

Standards for fast food service versus slow food (typical family restaurant) may be necessary. A shortened length of time for dining creates additional traffic and neighbor impacts due to the increased faster turnover of vehicles and clients. This may create a need for more parking or additional traffic controls.

Parking standards may need to be revised downward to prevent too much surface area from being dedicated to parking needs.

A letter was received from Ana DiNatale, co-owner of the Mon Vert restaurant, requesting that the PC address riparian buffer regulations. The owners would like to place an outdoor patio area near the Kedron Brook. The area is somewhat secluded and would make a nice quiet nook along the brook, however the 100' riparian buffer prevents such a use.

E. Town Zoning Updates

A South Woodstock landowner, Pritam Singh, is purchasing numerous properties: the Country Store, the Kedron Valley Inn, the Kedron Valley Farm and some residential parcels. He may need a number of zoning changes to accommodate his plans. He wishes to have businesses that overlap on the various parcels. The hope is to supply employment for the local work force and attractions for visitors. One change would be to create an overlay zone for the 80 acre Kedron Valley Farm to add it to the newly created Integrated Agriculture zoning. The intent is to do farming related workshops, sales, and events on the farm. He would like to connect the farm uses with those of the Inn and the country store/restaurant.

V. OPEN DISCUSSION - None

VI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for November 1, 2017.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town/Village Planner