



Woodstock, Vermont

The Shire Town of Windsor County

TOWN - VILLAGE MANAGER GOVERNMENT

Town Hall • P.O. Box 488 • Woodstock, Vermont 05091 • 802/457-3456

PLANNING COMMISSION

Draft Minutes

March 6, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sally Miller, Sam Segal, Susan Boston, Michael Pacht, Eric Goldberg
MEMBERS ABSENT: Sara Stadler, Ben Jervey
OTHERS PRESENT: Isabelle Chicoine, Laura Spittle, Ellen Tully, Tracy Ostler, Sarah Lewis, Michael Brands

I. OPENING

Chair Miller opened the meeting at 7:30 pm.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The PC approved the January 2, 2019 minutes as submitted.

III. PUBLIC HEARING

A. T-4886-19 Laura Gordon Spittle

The application is for Zoning Map Amendment to change zoning designation from Residential/Office to Light Commercial/Light Industrial. The property is located at 5331 South Road and zoned Residential/Office.

Ms. Spittle is owner of a five acre parcel (33.02.21.) in South Woodstock, located on the southwest corner of Route 106 and Morgan Hill Road. The property is bordered by the Green Mountain Horse Association (GHMA) to the south and west, and the South Woodstock Fire House to the east.

A portion of the property includes a large 9000 square foot barn. This was rezoned Residential/Office in 2002. In 1990, the property was zoned Residential Five Acres. Prior to that it was zoned Village Hamlet. The portion of the property with a residential structure is currently zoned (and will remain zoned) Residential Five Acre as is GHMA.

Rezoning the barn portion of the property to Light Commercial/Light Industrial would bring the existing tack shop business (established in 1985) into compliance. The change would also allow additional retail operations to take place. The applicant's husband has a real estate office in the barn, however a large portion of the barn is unused.

The attitude regarding commercial activity in South Woodstock has changed over the years. There is a move to allow more commercially designated properties with Pritam Singh's purchase of the South Woodstock Store, Kedron Valley Inn and other South Woodstock Village properties.

All future commercial uses would require a Conditional Use permit. This would allow abutters and interested persons an opportunity to note their concerns. The property has a fairly large parking area along the rear of the barn.



The Town Planner reviewed Section 4384 (c) & 4441 criteria with the Planning Commission.

The PC agreed the proposed change would not create significant negative impacts to the community.

Chair Miller questioned whether the property is in the South Woodstock Design Review District overlay. The neighboring South Woodstock Fire Department property is. Should the Spittle property be allowed additional commercial opportunities it may be best to include it in the Design Review district.

Ms. Spittle prefers not to have her property included in the Design Review District, as she does not want additional paper work. The barn is currently well maintained. The additional commercial opportunities would provide additional revenues to assure continued maintenance.

The current parcel is a one-acre lot zone, and has been for the past 17 years. The zoning designation works for this location as commercial use is very limited in South Woodstock.

Ms. Lewis, an abutter, noted the South Woodstock valley has changed over the years. She did not have any objections and was present to get a better understanding of the request.

Ms. Tully, representing GHMA, also noted she had no objections and was present to get a better understanding of the proposal.

If the Planning Commission approves the amendment request, a public hearing would be held by the Select Board. The earliest this could occur would be at the April 16th Select Board meeting.

After additional discussion, Ms. Boston motioned with a second by Mr. Pacht to recommend approval of the zoning change from Residential/Office to Light Commercial/Light Industrial of Parcel # 33.02.21, 5331 South Road, as presented, per State Statute Title 24 Section 4441 to be heard at a later date by the Select Board.

The motion passed with a 5-0 vote.

The Town Planner will pass the request onto the Select Board to schedule a public hearing.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Short Term Rental Study Group

Ms. Chicoine, Woodstocker B&B, is part of a newly formed group to study and propose zoning changes as they relate to Short Term Rentals (STR). The group held their first meeting March 4. Five members attended. She hopes more people will become involved. They want to include a couple STR owners to get a full perspective on the issue. A few names were proposed. Ms. Chicoine will contact the Planning & Zoning Office to acquire a list of current STR permit holders.

B. Short Term Rental

Chair Miller asked the PC to consider amending the current Short Term Rental regulations, Section 526, to remove the exemption of parcels located in the Residential Five Acre Residential and Forestry zones. There are a number of homes being converted to Short Term Rental use in the R5 zone without being used as a residence. The regulations as currently written with the exemption, have no limit on Short Term Rental activities or number of rentals allowed per calendar year.

The Town Planner noted the R5 zone covers over 80% of the Town.

The PC agreed all property owners should be treated equal. The exemption as written does not treat all properties equal.

Although the Short Term Rental Study Group, mentioned above, is reviewing the issue, the PC agreed now is the time to remove the exemption as rentals are known to accelerate in the warmer months.

The Town Planner stated all existing Short Term Rentals in the Five Acre and Forestry zones would be considered grandfathered.

After a lengthy discussion, Mr. Segal motioned with a second by Mr. Pacht to remove the exemption of Residential Five Acre and Forestry zones so all Short Term Rentals would be reviewed as a Conditional Use per Section 526 A.

The motion passed with a 5-0 vote.

The Town Planner will place a warning in the Vermont Standard for a public hearing to be held April 3, 2019 per Title 24; Chapter 117, §4441.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Town Plan Rewrite

The Energy Chapter has been rewritten. Adoption is held up due to State mandates that require inclusion of Forestry/Wildlife and Capital Improvement details.

The Town Planner's draft of the Forestry/Wildlife amendment for inclusion in the Natural Elements Chapter has been reviewed by Kevin Geiger and Pete Fellows at the TRORC.

After a review of the draft, Chair Miller suggested moving the third paragraph of Forestry section to become the first paragraph as it states the issue.

The Town Planner's Capital Improvement draft was discussed with the PC. The PC agreed to place the item at the end of the plan following the Land Use section. The Town Planner will send the draft to Kevin Geiger and Peter Fellows of TRORC for review. Additional details concerning budget numbers will be added.

Mr. Goldberg and Mr. Segal presented their draft of a one page amendment for the Education Chapter. The essential message is "the Town needs a new middle/high school building".

The PC reviewed the draft and suggested a broader approach to the issue. It was also noted the existing Education Chapter is dated and should be rewritten as well. Mr. Segal and Mr. Goldberg stated they would review and make recommendations for change.

The plan should encourage research into ways the Town could fund a major building project without penalty per Act 46 "the Gold Town" standards.

Mr. Pacht felt the draft needs to be looked at as a sales document to convince the public that a new building is absolutely essential to a sustainable community.

It was noted that Jeff Bendis, former PC member, drafted a Health Chapter. This should also be added as an amendment to the Town Plan. The PC will review and edit for the next meeting. Town Planner will resend the document.

B. Village Zoning Rewrite

Due to a shortage of time there was no further discussion of the Village Zoning Regulations rewrite.

VII. NEXT MEETING

Next meeting is scheduled for April 3, 2019. The Town Planner will not be present.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town/Village Planner