



MILTON PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Type:..... Regular
Date:..... Tuesday, November 17, 2015
Time:..... 6:00 p.m.
Place:..... Municipal Building Community Room
Address:..... 43 Bombardier Road, Milton, Vermont 05468-3205
Contact:..... (802) 893-1186
Website:..... miltonvt.org

1 **1. CALL TO ORDER**

2 The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

3
4 **2. ATTENDANCE**

5 **Members Present:** Lori Donna, Chair; Julie Rutz, Vice-Chair; Henry Bonges; Tony Micklus, Clerk; John
6 Lindsay

7 **Members Absent:** none

8 **Staff Present:** Jacob Hemmerick, Planning Director; Brandy Saxton, PlaceSense consultant, joined the
9 meeting at 6:30 p.m.

10 **Public Present:** none

11
12 **3. AGENDA REVIEW**

- 13 • The Chair proposed adding to the Agenda a discussion of the Interim Zoning Hearing that took
14 place before the Selectboard on November 16, 2015.

15
16 **4. PUBLIC FORUM**

- 17 • None.

18
19 **5. STAFF UPDATE**

- 20 • Staff gave a brief update of activities and the following topics were briefly discussed:
- 21 ▪ Staff has attended various meetings including Hazard Mitigation, Milton-Colchester Rotary,
22 the VT Development Conference, and the VT Council on Rural Development Economy
23 Summit.
 - 24 ▪ The Zoning Administrator is back from new-parent leave and currently working part-time.
 - 25 ▪ The Milton 4D project will hold a third public outreach meeting on Wednesday, November
26 18, 2015, at which conceptual designs for the downtown corridor will be presented.
 - 27 ▪ The Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) adopted their Legislative Policy, and the
28 Staff Update contains a link for further information.
 - 29 ▪ Upcoming changes from the Department of Agriculture, such as the Required Agricultural
30 Practices (RAPs) that are scheduled to be in effect July 1, 2016.
 - 31 ▪ Pending Act 250 applications.
 - 32 ▪ DRB activity and decisions.

33
34 **6. BUSINESS**

- 35 • **6(A). Downtown Business District**

36
37 **Density**

38 Staff recapped the discussions that have been held so far and provided a Memo detailing where the
39 Commission stands in the process. Residential densities remain a point of interest and dominated
40 the discussion. At the Commission's last meeting, there were concerns about a concept density of

1 29 units per acre. Staff noted that the Environmental Court-approved project under construction on
2 Centre Drive has a density of 45 units per acre, estimating that this occurred prior to density being
3 included in the Zoning Regulations, which is still true of multi-family in the M1/M2 today (if not
4 for Interim). Commissioners relayed concerns that they've received from the community that the
5 project is too big for Milton, and there was general agreement that 45 units per acre would be too
6 high. Rutz stated that M1/M2 densities need to be addressed in order to specify allowable
7 densities in those zones, and the Commission generally agreed.
8

9 **Residential/Commercial Mix**

10 The Chair mentioned that the community has clearly conveyed to her its desire for more
11 commercial development in the downtown district and Saxton suggested that one way to achieve
12 this is to simply rule out any first-floor residential use. Staff added, however, that the construction
13 of the dynamic, walk-able downtown is unlikely to occur in today's market without a compelling
14 residential component above a commercial-first floor. The Commission acknowledged that high-
15 quality, mixed-use could reduce financial risk to developers, with residential in such high demand.
16

17 **Ground Floor Height**

18 A brief discussion was held over the possibility of requiring the height of the ground floor to be
19 greater than the height of the floors above, as is customary in older downtown buildings. The
20 Commission agreed that there is merit to this, especially where it functions to insulate and
21 soundproof the commercial use from the residential use, and vice-versa. This approach would
22 emphasize the commercial aspect of a building while de-emphasizing the residential aspect.
23

24 **Dimensional Standards/Density Nexus**

25 There was some discussion on density calculations versus dimensional standards and whether or
26 not the two are, or can be, related. Lindsay expressed concern over how tall a building could
27 potentially be under current Zoning Regulations, and wondered about the impact a tall building
28 might have on scenic view-sheds. Staff advised that dimensional standards and view-shed
29 protection are typically treated separately by plans and regulations, although height maximums
30 can closely correlate. Rutz asked for Staff's opinion on height limits. Saxton advised that 40-45'
31 would be a reasonable height, certainly more so than the current limit of 70'. In general, the
32 Commissioners agreed that 45' felt right for the Town. The Commission discussed what should be
33 included and/or excluded in the height calculation for example: eaves, cupolas, solar panels,
34 church spires, and clock towers.
35

36 Saxton stated that footprints interplay closely with density, noting a typical Vermont downtown
37 building is 4,000-5,000 square feet, with some larger "landmark" or corner buildings reaching 6,000
38 square feet, and older schools or major community facilities topping out around 10,000-12,000
39 square feet. In general, a typical downtown building is much smaller than most people perceive.
40 Saxton advised that a residential building can normally use about 70-80% of its total floor space
41 (once utility areas, hallways and other common areas are subtracted). Micklus suggested 6,000
42 square feet as a baseline number to work with. Using a hypothetical scenario of a 6,000 square foot
43 building with 3 stories of residential units ranging in size from 500-1,000 square feet, Saxton
44 calculated that the building would hold 12-24 residential units. The Commission generally liked
45 this range, though some felt it could be slightly higher and others, while not objecting to the
46 density, preferred a 3-story building to the 4-story example.
47

48 **Parking**

1 Parking was also discussed. All agreed that ground-level parking on the street front is not
2 desirable and in conflict with the goal to have street front commercial. The possibility of first-floor
3 parking in the back or on the sides of a building was considered. Underground parking was
4 mentioned and Saxton advised that it's difficult to require, as a lot depends on topography and
5 ground conditions. Additionally, an incentive to build underground parking already exists, since
6 locating the under-building parking decreases lot coverage. Finally, on-street parking was briefly
7 mentioned and ruled out for the time being.
8

9 Saxton said she had enough info to re-work the language and present it to the Commission the next
10 time she meets with them.
11

12 The second action topic, the introduction of draft site planning standards language, was briefly
13 discussed. Due to time constraints, the topic could not be discussed at length, so Staff requested
14 that the PC read this for continued discussion at the next meeting.
15

16 • **6(B). Meeting Schedule**

17 The Commissioners agreed to meet at 6:00 p.m. through February. The Chair advised that she
18 cannot make the scheduled meeting of December 15, 2015. The meeting was rescheduled to
19 December 16, 2015 and Staff will confirm the date and time with Saxton.
20

21 Staff advised that the Selectboard invited the Planning Commission to a site visit for an Interim
22 Zoning application for 444 US Route 7 South on Saturday, December 5, 2015. Hemmerick will
23 confirm the time.
24

25 **7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

26 **7(A). Minutes of October 6, 2015**

27 MOTION by Bonges to APPROVE the Minutes as written; SECOND by Rutz. Unanimously
28 APPROVED.

29 **7(B). Minutes of October 20, 2015**

30 MOTION by Bonges to APPROVE the Minutes as written; SECOND by Rutz. Unanimously
31 APPROVED.
32

33 **8. AGENDA ADDITION - INTERIM ZONING**

34 Bonges expressed several concerns over the Interim Zoning application, specifically that it will not
35 meet the standards that are being discussed right now by the Planning Commission or the goals of
36 the Milton 4D project (Defining Downtown from the Diner to the Dam). The Commissioners all
37 agreed that a memo should be prepared that explains the work that the Planning Commission has
38 been doing and the direction in which they are heading. Staff will draft a memo for review at their
39 next meeting on December 1, 2015.
40

41 **9. ADJOURNED**

42 MOTION by Rutz to adjourn at 8:03 p.m., SECOND by Micklus. Unanimously APPROVED.
43

44 Minutes approved by the Commission this _____ day of _____, 2015.
45
46
47

48 _____
Lori Donna, Chair

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2 Draft Filed by Staff with the Town Clerk this 20th day of November, 2015
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4 Final Filed with the Town Clerk this _____ day of _____, 2015