MEETING SUMMARY

COMMITTEE TO UPDATE DENNING'S LAND USE CODES

Monday, June 16, 2008

Attendees: David Brooks; David Gilmour, Town Comprehensive Planner; Jennifer Grimes; Katherine Parr; and Kevin Smith.

Guests: There was one member of the public in attendance.

The group discussed approaches to modifying zoning. It was polled about:

- Things don't like about layout of properties
- Things that are visually unappealing
- Problems
- Things that you can't do
- Aspects of land use performance that don't work as well as they could
- If managing noise is a concern in Sundown or Claryville?
- Runoff

It reviewed goals for the zoning upgrade and discussed specific potential approaches. The code organization, layout and flow needs to be improved. It should be clearer. Mr. Brooks said that it could be simpler in some places.

Administration -- there could be improvements to land use permitting record keeping, records of decisions.

Keep in mind what effect any zoning changes have on the affordability of development for residents. The group did not seem to have problems allowing irregularly shaped lots -- but more geometric (as opposed to highly irregular) lots should be promoted. The group does not want to allow open space development.

Mr. Gilmour asked for support for small accessory apartment (garden apartments). There was not a strong consensus in favor of this approach. If it is done, it should only be for relatives of the other inhabitants of a dwelling, a limited footprint. The group did not support allowing two houses on a lot -- such as with a lot size 1.75 times the minimum lot area for the District. Ms. Parr felt these arrangements are 'unnatural', meaning difficult to apply over time. The group did like the concept of a section in zoning that codifies the minor subdivision threshold and/or definition that identifies when subdivision is applicable. Gilmour identified a 'parent parcel' example in a zoning code. Brooks asked if fees could be less for this type of case?

Setbacks -- there was some support for allowing more flexible setbacks in the front, rear or side yards.

The main impact of non-residential development in the community is visual. In the hamlets there should be careful coordination of uses. Heavier uses should not be allowed in the hamlets. In other places they should require screening.

Home Occupation -- Gilmour discussed a two tier approach. He tested comfort requiring slightly more intense uses to go through site plan or special permit review, while clear accessory uses to the residence that have little impact should be easy to advance. Permitting would involve factors like:

- Functions, relationship of accessory building to the main structure
- Clear definitions and thresholds
- Traffic generation limits
- Possibly landscape screening

Group appeared to favor allowing home occupations in conservation district.

Regarding building in viewsheds, the approach should not be too onerous, but it should promote screening, limited clearing and minimized light spillage. Maybe the siting principles could be guidelines.

Signage -- group of the opinion that the sign program works now and is followed

Wood burning furnaces -- the group noted that residents often rely on these mechanisms. There were differences of opinions on the degree that the use/smoke emissions should be regulated for their impact on neighbors. One approach could be a greater setback than the general bulk standards. The group wants more information.

The telecommunications law was worked on extensively when it was adopted; does not appear to need work.

Accessory Buildings -- one specific concern regarding how the zoning works was on lots with multiple non-residential structures, including multiple accessory structures. There a cases with multiple outbuildings, which started out as temporary structures, and may or may not be accessory to the principal structure. These may not have been reviewed. There should be a site plan review process. There needs to be guidance and controls in zoning. There shouldn't be too many "shacks" allowed on lots. There should also be a minimum size residential zoning standard. These uses are too intense and there is a detrimental effect upon adjacent properties. They should be screened from the road.

Floodplain management – the group will discuss this topic at a future meeting. There is process underway to update the maps in the region.

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