

## **Form Based Code Committee**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**December 3rd, 2014**

**DRAFT**

Committee members in attendance: Scott Meyer, Jollie Parker, Walter Pomroy, Ingrid Nuse, Kyle Nuse, Mark Nielsen, Kyle Hill, Glenn Callahan.

Other attendees: Charles Gallanter, Eric Nuse, Paul Dreher, Lea Kilvadyova.

Paul reviewed the working draft of the form based code map created by the Committee at the last meeting. The map shows three districts. Village Store Front, Village Mixed Use and Village Neighborhood. Paul reviewed basic coding principles that could define each particular district. The principles included built-to-lines, lot size and lot coverage, window glazing, and frequency of entrances to buildings.

Having reviewed the proposed map, Paul said that there were a couple of areas he would like to discuss further as he was not sure what the community's future aspirations for those areas might be.

The first area was the Manchester Lumber and Parker & Stearns complex. Paul said that this area has a totally different fabric than the other areas we had discussed so far. Walter pointed out that in Town/Village plans this area is the only area described as "industrial". Paul said that the topic to discuss is whether we want to leave the area as is, code it for a different fabric in the future, or not code it at all. Paul said that nothing we would do would zone this complex out of existence. Walter asked whether, if coded, potential expansions to the existing complex would be subject to the new rules. Paul said that this falls under non-conformity standards that he would like to discuss later. A question was raised about Newport's actions toward the zoning of Poulin Grain. Paul said that the community decided to leave it alone. They did so because Poulin Grain is the largest electric customer, an economic driver and a tax payer in the community. Glenn thought that generally, it is a good idea to have an industrially zoned area in order to make sure that future industry locates where we want to see it and where it does not conflict with residential properties. Lea asked whether - when we get to addressing street standards - we will consider needs of bicyclists and pedestrians in this area since the area is at the junction with the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail. Paul said that street standards can do a lot of heavy lifting as Johnson evolves.

The second area that Paul sought to clarify was on Route 15 from the Main Street Bridge west. This area is a hodgepodge that includes public buildings, businesses and private residences. Paul remarked that this area feels like a beginning of suburban sprawl and is the kind of area where we might like to think of repairing its fabric by applying form based code standards. Paul thought that if developmental pressures in Johnson were going to occur they would occur along Route 15 and particularly in this area. He said that the developmental pressure is a good reason for being aspirational about what we might like to see in this area. Walter said that for him addressing the future of the Route 15 corridor outside of the downtown area is the hardest part of the

process. What do we want the corridor to become? Lea said that the residencies on the west end of the Village are likely in the flood plain and that may influence our aspirations for the area. Paul said that he would like to get flood plain maps from Lamoille County Planning and impose them on the form based code maps. Also, it would be good to have information about the layout of the municipal water and sewer system.

Next, Paul reviewed potential scenarios for expansions of non-conforming buildings. He showed several scenarios showing potential additions an existing business might like to build. He explained that, depending on where on the lot the addition was proposed and how it related to the streetscape, the project would either be allowed or not. Walter remarked that we have a perfect example of a project that would not be allowed under the scenarios presented by Paul. The project is the addition to the Fisher Auto Parts building. The addition was built at the back end of the lot and allows the expansion of the parking lot at the street front of the property. In Walter's view, parking at the front of a lot really detracts from the streetscape. He also said that he doesn't want to "control" growth but he does want to make it look good. Having the parking in the rear would definitely enhance the downtown's streetscape. Glenn and Walter had a discussion about what would happen if, for example, Tractor Supply, wanted to move to town. Walter said that what troubles him about the Tractor Supply in Morrisville is the prominence of parking at the front of the lot. Glenn wondered whether, as part of our process, it is our role to protect and enhance opportunities for our local independent businesses. Paul said that there are tools that could help control the type of business development. Lot size and lot coverage is one such tool. In Winooski, where Paul works right now, they adopted a maximum footprint for a building in the downtown area. The dimensions that Winooski adopted would likely not attract Tractor Supply.

Jollie asked if Paul sees opposition from people to form based code rules. Paul said that sometimes he does. He said that, in his view, the biggest difference in terms of people's perception of zoning is whether a town had zoning prior to developing form based code standards or they had no zoning at all. Jollie also asked whether Paul has encountered resistance from businesses toward the code. Paul said, yes and no. An example of a yes would be a business that has all its plumbing, water supply, electric supply, etc. at the back of the lot. In this case, it would be quite expensive for the business to reroute their services to the front of the lot to conform to the code. Paul said that a way to address this is to include language in the code that would allow a non-conforming expansion of a business that had all its services at the back of the lot. Jollie asked if there is anything in form based code that can control how owner does the upkeep of his/her building. Paul said typically, it is not zoning but an ordinance that deals with upkeep issues.

### *Next Steps*

Paul said that our next steps will be to work on the map a little bit more and then move onto looking at the streets and how they fit into the map. He asked the attendees to divide in small groups, take another look at the map of the proposed village districts, and if desired, make changes to the proposal.

When the small groups completed their work, they reported to the entire group. For the next meeting, Paul will incorporate the suggestions into the map.

Next meeting will be on December 17<sup>th</sup>.

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Minutes taken by: Lea Kilvadyova