

Minutes: Marlboro Planning Commission Public Hearing about Town Plan, November 16, 2021

In attendance: Staley McDermet, Mary Sargent, Tim Segar, Edie Mas, Jennifer Girouard, William Shakespeare, Matt Tell, Donald Sherefkin

Members of the public attended via Zoom and in-person.

Meeting opened at 5:05pm

Discussion

Tim provides an overview of the process that led to this town plan draft and asked that people introduce themselves and be specific in their comments.

Transportation

Public comments include:

- Encouraging the addition of bike lanes on route 9 and making language in plan stronger to support that.
- Concern that in addition to Route 9, dirt roads are difficult for biking

Discussion of forest blocks and Conservation land

Public comments include:

- Discussion on whether there has been current pushback on the new forest blocks component of the plan
 - Planning response: it was anticipated but not heard yet
- Questions on if encouraging cluster development, would there be an issue with the 500ft conservation district set back from the road
 - Planning response: the 500ft comes from zoning so it is reflected in planning maps. If someone wanted to do cluster, it would go to the DRB to assess whether it would go into fragile or wetland area. The key issue is identifying protected areas in terms of Act 250 where the state would look at the town plan and this is a way to protect huge developments.
- Concerns about regulation and whether if something is not explicitly exempted than it ends up being discouraged.

- Discussion of risks around future affordability of the town if there is an increased desire for land and builds which drive up property taxes.
 - Planning response and discussion: New regulations from the state have changed guidelines so there is no limitation in the use of 2 acres for building which could open up the possibility of cluster housing. It doesn't change acreage requirements but can encourage different uses.
 - Discussion that for some of these issues the town does not have a body to enforce regulations and the closest body is the DRB.

Discussion on Village Center

- Public comment that this is a positive development as it is more coherent than patchwork approach of before. Wants to know if the town center is new
 - Planning response and discussion: The zoning created the town center and we put in a larger village district to include the school in order to lower the speed limit. There was a grant completed to outline ways to provide septic in that village area. There is a plan in the town office that could be acted on or voted on if the town would like to move forward on it. One way to accomplish that could be to use grant money to hire a coordinator to help with these larger projects. The town plan is useful for this purpose as application for funds should relate to priorities laid out in town plan.

Discussion on Energy:

- Public comment asking about the emphasis on solar
 - Planning response and discussion: The wind survey did not produce results that were encouraging for wind potential. The wind map was not as rich as the solar map and was mostly limited to Hogback
- Public comment expressing concern about solar installations that have just a solar field and herbicide grass but could they have a dual-use as a pollinator habitat
 - Planning response and discussion: it is unlikely we would have large scale installations and the biggest impediment is transmission lines and access to power.

Discussion on role of Town plan and housing

- Public comment on a potential contradiction between affordability and the proposed regulation on rentals. Specifically the action step on regulating rentals seems to be in conflict with the town plan's discussion of valuing ingenuity in housing. If this is meant to address AirBnB then the regulations should be specific about that.

- Planning response and discussion: There is a concern about AirBnB as other town's have struggled with it and there is a need for oversight and safety.
- Public comment about whether it could focus on temporary or short-term rentals and define it a particular way (such as three nights)
 - Planning response and discussion: Reminder that the town plan does not regulate and it is mentioned in the plan to say that there could potentially be regulations. These are action steps as a list for people in the future to consider. It identifies potential issues and some may need to be discussed and worked out at the state level. The public makes a good point to remind us of the history and value of ingenuity in creating a homestead and we can find a way to consider that in the town plan.

Discussion on Town Center: Parking

- Public comment asking about the center of town and the issue of traffic and speed on south road as well as parking in the center of town. What is available and what recommendations or projects for parking in the center of town.
 - Planning response and discussion: This is an issue before the Selectboard. And in responding to the question of whether the town center is historic and if that is a factor, the historic district relates more to zoning and is not part of the town plan.

Discussion on Campus and Action Steps

- Public comment asking how action steps and visions for the future will be communicated to the Music Festival now that they are taking over the Marlboro campus.
 - Planning response: We do need to have discussions with the Music Festival going forward.

Additional comments should go to tsegar@marlboro.edu

Meeting adjourned at 6:35pm