



TOWN OF WILLISTON
Planning Commission Minutes
January 21, 2014 - 7:00 P.M.

Williston Fire Department Meeting Room

MEMBERS PRESENT: JAKE MATHON, TOM WALSH, SHANNON HILTNER, MICHAEL ALVANOS, KEVIN BATSON; KEN BELLIVEAU AND MATT BOULANGER PLANNING STAFF

MATT BOULANGER

1) CALL TO ORDER

Jake Mathon called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM.

2) S. BROWNELL RD/ WILLISTON ROAD LAND USE STUDY

Ken Belliveau explained that the Planning Commission had had several meetings regarding the zoning designations in the South Brownell/ Williston Road area. Belliveau reviewed the history of the project, including the discussion of the area that was adopted in the 2011-2016 Comprehensive Plan. Belliveau thanked all of the meeting attendees for coming out to discuss the matter.

Belliveau reviewed the study area, which encompasses properties with frontage on Williston Road from Harvest Lane West to the South Burlington border (zoned industrial and residential) and properties that are currently zoned Residential along South Brownell Road.

Belliveau reviewed the proposed new zone “Gateway West” proposed for the properties fronting on Williston Road. The draft language would allow additional allowed commercial uses and would add medium-density residential uses (five units/acre) in the “Gateway West” zone. Belliveau also distributed proposed language that would allow some commercial uses along South Brownell Road where the current allowed use is only residential. Under the proposed language, commercial uses would only be able to be established after review by the Development Review Board (DRB). The allowed commercial uses would be generally office uses, like a doctors, dentists, or lawyers.

Tim McKenzie of South Burlington Realty asked what the overall goal of the project. Belliveau explained that examining allowed uses in this area came from language in the Town Plan. McKenzie asked about industrial uses that are currently allowed. Belliveau said that the proposed Gateway West district would not allow uses that are drastically different from how the South Burlington Realty properties in the area are currently developed.

Sue Greer asked what would prevent uses along Brownell Road from adversely impacting residential uses. Belliveau explained that the uses that would be allowed would only be allowed in existing houses converted to office space.

David Steady asked if adjacent property owners would be notified if a house on S. Brownell Road was proposed to be converted. Belliveau explained the Discretionary Permit process, including the notification of abutters.

Michael Alvanos asked about adding residential density to the South Brownell Road area in addition to allowing commercial uses. Belliveau said that the staff could look into that.

Eve Dubois asked about the contiguity of the Residential Zoning District (RZD) where it crosses Williston Road and if the Gateway West zone would divide the RZD. Belliveau confirmed that it would. Eve DuBois asked about unimproved lots along South Brownell Road and how they would be reviewed. Belliveau said that the way the language is currently drafted, only existing residences could be converted to office space. A vacant lot could only be developed for residential uses.

Elizabeth Hill commented that she would like to see the trucks along South Brownell Road slow down and that there is other high-speed traffic on the road already. Hill said that she would rather see residential uses in the area due to the traffic caused by commercial uses.

Belliveau said that in the long term, he would like to see a connection through the Robear property studied, because such a connection could take some of the industrial traffic off of South Brownell Road.

David Steady asked if there were two proposals on the table. Belliveau said that the Gateway West and the Brownell overlay are two separate proposals. Both proposals, either proposal, or neither proposal could be adopted. David Steady said that he was in support of the Gateway West proposal, but not in favor of allowing any commercial uses any further down South Brownell Road.

Ladd O'Brien, owner of the convenience store on the corner of North Brownell and Williston Road said that he was in favor of the Gateway West proposal.

Eve DuBois asked what is considered a viable size for a residential neighborhood. Belliveau said that while there is no single standard, everything in Vermont is on a smaller scale than almost anything else in the country. Belliveau said that the residential properties along South Brownell Road and Kirby Lane are likely large enough to be a viable residential neighborhood. Eve Dubois asked about the forest cover on the Robear property.

Eugene O'Brien said that he is not in favor of commercial development coming down South Brownell Road. Ladd O'Brien asked if there was a possibility of surveying all of the residents of South Brownell Road. Belliveau said that there could be a survey sent out to all of the residents.

Jake Mathon asked about the restriction on existing structures and said he wanted to make sure the audience was aware that the proposed changes were limited to allowing the commercial conversion of existing houses.

Darlene Isham asked about how commercial development of the properties fronting Williston Road (currently in the RZD) would impact the residential use of properties off Williston

Road (like Lois Lane). Belliveau explained the development review process, including the review of projects under traffic generation and parking requirements.

Kevin Batson asked about parking on the front lawns of converted houses along Brownell Road. Belliveau said that parking would likely have to be to the rear of structures due to the front-yard setbacks in the area.

Eve Dubois said that the buffering between residential and industrial properties in the Brownell Road is substantial, but not necessarily pleasant. Dubois said that there might not be room for much of a buffer between residential and industrial properties that might be zoned into the Gateway West. Belliveau said that the proposed allowed uses for Gateway West would not include the heavy industrial uses such as automotive uses. Dubois asked if any of the Robear property was being used for industrial purposes and if it could be rezoned for residential purposes. Belliveau said that given the proximity to the airport and the road network in the area, it would be unlikely the Robear property could be developed for residential purposes.

Nancy Seavey asked about traffic and if there was a plan for the increase in traffic on North and South Brownell Roads that might result from a zoning change. Belliveau discussed recent efforts to plan for and manage traffic in the area, including the Circumferential Highway Alternatives process.

Cindy Provost said that along Williston Road from North Brownell Road to Overhead Door would allow large industrial buildings adjacent to the rear, residential properties.

Kevin Batson said that he felt that Taft Corners and the Growth Center already provide for commercial development and that the Gateway West proposal could encourage “strip” development.

Nancy Seavey said that the commission should consider quality of life issues for people living in the neighborhood.

Sue Greer asked when something might be in front of the Selectboard. Belliveau outlined the adoption process.

Belliveau clarified the request from the Planning Commission for a survey. There will be a question about allowing commercial uses in the South Brownell Area and a question about whether the Gateway West Zone should extend eastward past North/South Brownell Road.

On a motion made by Kevin Batson and seconded Tom Walsh by the commission voted 5-0 to approve the minutes from January 7, 2014 with the following changes.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00.