



Town of Middletown
Planning Department

350 East Main Rd., Middletown RI 02842 (401) 849-4027

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
Special Meeting – Limited Business District Workshop
October 23, 2017

Board members present:

Paul Croce, Chair
Matthew Sullivan, Vice Chair
Bill Nash, Secretary
Liz Drayton
Terri Flynn
Jim Williams

Ron Wolanski, Planning Director
Rita Lavoie, Principal Planner

Members absent:

Betty Jane Owen

Mr. Croce called the meeting to order at 6pm.

The meeting began with a discussion of the results of the September 21, 2017 Limited Business District Public Hearing. Topics included forwarding to the Town Council:

- the minutes of the 9/21/17 meeting
- all written correspondence received
- any recommendations voted on by the Planning Board at tonight's meeting

The Board considered a recommendation by Mr. Wolanski for a change in the dimensional table. He suggested changing the front yard setback from 10 feet for single and two-family residences in the LB district to 25 feet, to be more in line with the R-10 zoning district, noting that it is appropriate for a business to be located close to the road, but not for homes.

Motion by Mr. Sullivan, seconded by Mr. Nash to forward a favorable recommendation to the Town Council on changing the front yard setback to 25 feet for single and two-family residences in the LB district.

There was discussion regarding:

- That a 10-foot setback in LB is appropriate for a business in order to have a store front near the road and parking in back.
- That residences should be further removed from the roadway.
- Also changing the front yard setback for multifamily residences in the LB district, as a multifamily can include as few as 3 residences.

Mr. Sullivan amended his motion to include changing single family, two-family, and multifamily residences in the LB district to a front yard setback of 25 feet.

Vote: 6-0-0

Mr. Croce invited board members to offer other changes to the dimensional requirements.

Ms. Flynn reiterated what she heard in the public hearing, she mentioned:

- Height and scale
- Views
- Maintaining light and air
- Atlantic Beach District Master Plan
- Businesses being more sensitive to neighboring residences
- Businesses not being good neighbors
- No more hotels
- Increasing Density and congestions of traffic and noise
- Need for zoning regulations to be enforced.
- Suggesting a height limit change
- Suggesting a change to fence allowances

Mr. Nash suggested that the board should not rush into making changes to zoning. He asked for closer review of the Atlantic Beach District Master Plan.

There was discussion regarding:

- What needs to be forwarded to the Town Council to fulfill their request that the Planning Board hold a public hearing regarding the LB district
- If the Planning Board could just forward concerns to the Town Council without recommendations
- A desire to recommend changes
- A desire to perform further study on changes to the zoning use and dimensional tables
- Not focusing on the Atlantic Beach District alone

Motion by Mr. Croce, seconded by Mr. Sullivan to recommend limiting building heights for all uses in the LB district to 35 feet.

There was discussion regarding:

- 35-feet not being low enough to maintain neighborhood character
- Matching the maximum height of commercial structures in the LB district with the maximum height of residential structures
- The impact of flood zone allowances on maximum height
- Further study by a committee
- Taking time to study consequences of zoning changes

Vote: 4-2-0 with Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Nash opposing

In making its recommendation the Board found that:

- The recommendation was not about preserving view shed, instead about preserving neighborhood character.

- That commercial structures should be compatible with residences in the LB district and in nearby residential districts.
- The maximum height of commercial structures in the LB district should not exceed the maximum height of residential structures.

Mr. Croce invited board members to offer other changes to the use table in the LB district.

Mr. Nash suggested forming a subcommittee to study the use table. There was discussion on procedure of forming such a subcommittee.

Motion by Mr. Nash to form a subcommittee to review uses proposed and existing, starting with the LB district as soon as the board members could convene, seconded by Mr. Sullivan. Mr. Croce appointed Mr. Nash, Ms. Flynn and Mr. Williams to the subcommittee with Mr. Nash as chair.

There was discussion regarding forwarding something on uses to the Town Council in the short term.

Vote: 6-0-0

In making its decision, the board found that the subcommittee would:

- Provide regular vetting on the use table, since uses change over time
- Provide substantial and ongoing review
- Would begin with the LB district and provide recommendations to the Town Council within a reasonable period of time
- Include the Zoning Officer in the discussion
- Call additional experts as needed

There was discussion regarding a traffic study of the Town.

- Previous traffic reports were cited including one performed by the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission.
- A desire for a cumulative traffic study was expressed.
- Mr. Wolanski advised the board that such a request would require Town Council approval for funding.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Sullivan, seconded by Ms. Drayton

Vote: 6-0-0

Meeting adjourned at 7:10pm

Respectfully submitted,

Rita Lavoie, Principal Planner