

**Approved  
Minutes  
Hartford Planning Commission Workshop  
January 27, 2022**

**THIS MEETING WAS CONDUCTED IN COMPLIANCE WITH  
THE VERMONT OPEN MEETING LAW  
WITH ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION**

**Present:** Bruce Riddle, John Reid, Toby Dayman, Robin Adair Logan, Dillon Bianchi, John Heath, Colin Butler, Kim Souza, Selectboard Liaison, Jo-Ann Ells, Zoning Administrator and Matt Osborn, Planner

**Others Present:** Ken Braverman, Heidi Duto, Nate Stearns, Bill Kelsey, Andrew Winter,

**1. Sketch Plan Review by Ken Braverman for a multi-unit housing project on the corner of Prospect Street and Maple Street in White River Junction in the CB-2 zoning district.**

Ken Braverman introduced himself and reviewed a power point presentation outlining his firm's plans to construct a multi-family dwelling on the corner of Maple Street and Prospect Street. The presentation included the following:

- Overview of The Braverman Company
- General information about the site
- 43 units were proposed including studios, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units
- The building would be 5 stories high (the first level would be parking)
- 57 parking spaces would be provided (½ covered)
- Conceptual site plans
- Examples of some of the firm's residential projects

John Reid expressed enthusiasm about the project. He noted that a recent project at 101 Maple Street was approved with reduced on-site parking given the proximity to public parking spaces on Prospect Street.

Dillon Bianchi asked about the reduced number of parking spaces. Jo-Ann Ells noted that the applicant would need to provide justification as outlined in the Zoning Regulations.

Toby Dayman asked if parking spaces would be assigned. Ken Braverman stated that he has assigned parking spaces for some projects but not all and it was something that would be discussed. Toby Dayman noted he was a little nervous about reduced parking noting that the municipal parking in the downtown is not close by. He asked if the property was in the Design Review District. Jo-Ann Ells stated that it is not in the Design Review District. Toby Dayman commented that he hoped the design was not too industrial.

Colin Butler noted that he was encouraged by the application. He asked about affordability. Ken Braverman explained that providing affordable housing was one of the firm's goals. He noted that given the increased cost of construction, this would depend on funding opportunities which are being explored.

Colin Butler stated that he was concerned with the proposed reduced number of parking spaces and noted that he is not in favor of allowing the project to rely on public parking spaces.

John Heath also expressed concerns with parking and asked the applicant to address this in the rental agreements. He asked about stormwater. Ken Braverman stated that stormwater would be treated on-site. John Heath asked that the applicant soften the visual impact of the building with landscaping and consider a mixed-use building.

Robin Adair Logan stated that she agreed with John Heath and that the project need to be designed to adequately handle stormwater.

Bruce Riddle stated that he was glad to see a mix of unit types and that it would be nice to see some affordable units. He noted that the property is a gateway to the town and hoped the architecture would reflect the style of New England. He noted that the applicant should research the ability of using parking on the adjacent commercial lots at night.

## **2. Discussion of Possible Zoning District Change R-1M, Taj-E-India, to allow food Assembly/catering, Sykes Mountain Avenue, White River Junction.**

Jo-Ann Ells explained that the owner of Taj-E-India has a permit for a Home Business for catering and takeout. As a Home Business, he is required to live on-site, and the number of outside employees is restricted to a maximum of three (his current permit is for one outside employee).

He would like to eliminate the requirement that he live on site and to permit 3 people not living on site to work there.

To eliminate the requirement that he live on site, the uses in the zoning district would need to be amended to include food assembly/catering and the definition of food assembly/catering would need to be amended to allow take out.

She asked the Planning Commission for feedback.

Bruce Riddle stated he was comfortable with the proposal as the area is very commercial.

John Reid voiced general support but was concerned with parking.

Dillion Bianchi stated that he was concerned with parking and circulation.

Toby Dayman agreed that parking and circulation was a concern and questioned if the added use made sense in other R-1M zoning districts.

Colin Butler noted that the definition of food assembly/catering would need to be clarified that cooking could occur on-site.

Robin Adair Logan stated that she was not concerned with the general concept, but has concerns with parking and circulation.

John Heath noted that he was comfortable with the concept, but concerned with parking and circulation.

### **3. Discussion of Possible Zoning District Change IC-2 Route 5/Ballardvale Drive to allow residential and mixed-use development, White River Junction: Twin Pines Housing Trust**

Planner Matt Osborn provided background information regarding straight commercial zoning districts and opportunities for mixed-use and residential development. During the 2018 community forums on the Town Plan update, there was strong support for mixed-use development and getting away from strict segregation of uses.

During the fall of 2020 after hearing from several property owners about the prospect of including mixed-use and residential for the H-C zoning district in Quechee and a section of I-C at the junction of Route 4 & 5 in White River Junction, staff held two workshops with the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission supported the concept and two community meetings were held. The public supported the proposed changes and the public hearing process was begun. The Planning Commission approved the proposed changes and the Selectboard adopted them in March, 2021.

Matt stated that staff and the Planning Commission agreed to look at other straight commercial zoning districts in Hartford for opportunities to create mixed-use and residential development. Recently, staff was contacted by the Twin Pines Housing Trust about allowing mixed-use and residential development in the I-C2 section of Route 5 across from the VA Hospital. Staff believes that the idea has merit and wants feedback from the Planning Commission.

Andrew Winter of the Twin Pines Housing Trust noted that Twin Pines is responding to housing needs in the Upper Valley and manages over 550 housing units. They recently opened Wentworth 2 on Sykes Mountain Avenue. Andrew reported that he was approached by a hotel operator about selling a hotel building near the VA Hospital to Twin Pines to convert the hotel to year-round housing units. Andrew believes the location is appropriate for mixed-use development noting that Hartford allows extended stay hotels. He would like to see mixed-use development be allowed as a conditional use in this district. The idea would be to have first floor commercial and the upper floors multi-family residential. The plan is to combine two hotel rooms into one unit and convert one of the bathrooms to a kitchen. The complete living units would be 550-580 square feet. Andrew noted that he is pleased to hear that the Town is planning to add sidewalks along Route 5.

John Reid stated that he supports mixed-use development.

Dillon Bianchi stated that he supports mixed-use development.

Toby Dayman stated that he thinks mixed-use development is a good idea and in keeping with other changes that we've made.

Colin Butler stated that he supports mixed-use development, but expressed concern about some of the uses allowed in the I-C zoning district. Matt Osborn responded that staff will work with the Planning Commission to conduct a review of the permitted and conditional uses.

John Heath noted that he supports mixed-use development and shares Colin's concern about permitted and conditional uses.

Robin Adair Logan stated that she supports mixed-use development.

Bruce Riddle thanked Andrew Winter and Bill Kelsey for attending the workshop. Matt Osborn noted that the next step would be to hold a Planning Commission workshop to address the specifics of permitted and conditional uses in a possible new zoning district.

4. **Other Business:** Chair Bruce Riddle asked Planner Matt Osborn if he had any news to report on regarding grant applications.
  - a. Vermont Municipal Planning Grant: Matt reported that the Town was awarded a \$20,000 planning grant to pay a consultant to update the housing chapter of the Town Plan including an extensive public process and working with staff and a Steering Committee. Matt noted that he is currently working on a request for proposals and the work should begin in a couple of months.
  - b. Bylaw Modernization Grant: Matt reported that the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) was awarded a grant for TRORC to work with seven towns within our region to review each town's zoning bylaws looking at ways to increase opportunities for housing. Matt stated that he is excited about the two grants and the timing since staff, Selectboard and Planning Commission all recognize that we are facing a housing crisis.
  - c. Town Plan Copy: Robin Adair Logan requested a hard copy of the Town Plan.
5. **Adjournment:** Chair Bruce Riddle thanked everyone for participating in the meeting. He stated that the meeting is adjourned at 7:22 p.m.