



Town of Mount Holly Planning Commission

Town Office & Remote Electronic – Special Work Meeting Minutes

Wednesday June 1, 2022

7:00 P.M.

Commission Members Present: Jon McCann (Chair), Jim Seward (Vice Chair), Brigid Sullivan, Andrew Seward, Andrew Schulz

Also Present: Renee Sarmiento (Clerk), Stephen Michel, Christine Boudreau, David Johnson

1. Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.
2. No changes to agenda.
3. Town Plan Revisions
 - a. Housing Plan
 - i. Chair referenced the Census numbers compiled by Commissioner Andrew Seward and shared at a previous meeting.
 - ii. Commissioner Andrew Seward stated he was supposed to talk with David Johnson about non-resident housing and median home prices. Found out Census may not have very accurate information (errors may be as much as 25-50%). Desire to look into the number of rental units available and whether they are short vs long term rentals.
 - iii. Chair asked about the language in the 2018 Town Plan saying “over 50% of the housing is seasonal home stock”. Unanimously agreed that this statement was incorrect or misleading since “seasonal” dwellings are, by state definitions, unable to be occupied year-round and include camps and cottages. Desire to correct the statement in the Plan and find a reasonably accurate number for the percentage of non-resident occupied dwellings. Commissioner Andrew Seward offered to meet with David Johnson.
 - iv. Commissioner Sullivan asked if we could identify non-resident occupied dwellings from tax bills. Mr. Johnson stated they would need to declare their homestead, and that some individuals might not file for various reasons. The tax bill is mailed based on declaration to the state. Commissioner Sullivan concluded that you would have to go through the property tax list and count addresses (Mount Holly addresses vs non-Mount Holly addresses). Commissioner Sullivan suggested sampling information, and Commissioner Andrew Seward suggested sorting the data electronically in an Excel spreadsheet.
 - v. Further discussion about ways to determine the numbers of resident vs. second home owners. Mr. Johnson stated there used to be residential categories and vacation categories in the grand list but they no longer have that. Mr. Johnson looked up there are 971 tax bills for places that can be lived in year-round (includes 2nd homes), 47 seasonal tax bills, 14 commercial properties, 1 industrial (Deco manufacturing), 2 utilities.
 - vi. Mr. Johnson stated that in 2019 there were 952 tax bills for places that can be lived year-round compared to 971 in 2022.
 - vii. Chair referenced that for the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan the team looked at the number of new E911 addresses each year to approximate the rate of new development.

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- viii. Discussion about categories of properties.
- ix. Chair asked Mr. Johnson about other complications of using the grand list to understand housing usage - multiple dwellings per parcel, and combining multiple properties into a SPAN. Mr. Johnson stated that there are cases with multiple dwellings and properties on one tax bill and adjacent properties with the same owner will be merged into a new single record and assigned a new SPAN. May make it difficult to understand the number of parcels with dwellings from the List.
- x. Commission Sullivan asked about second units such as a mother-in-law apartment. Is that one dwelling? Mr. Johnson stated that if it is attached to the house, then yes, it is on one tax bill unit.
- xi. The Chair spoke about how the multiple units or multiple dwellings per bill/parcel further complicates calculating a median dwelling or home value from the Grand List. Mr. Johnson agreed. The Chair asked if there is anything to identify multi dwellings rather than the description field. Mr. Johnson responded that there is not. Mr. Johnson stated he doesn't think there are very many places – some places they suspect but have no proof.
- xii. Grand list entries have a parcel ID and a SPAN. The Chair spoke about how on our physical copies of tax maps you can see dashed lines or dotted lines for the internal boundaries between lots (or “inactive parcels”), and asked if this was in any way represented on the grand list? Mr. Johnson replied that it is not and those lots do not have their own parcel identifier. Mr. Johnson added that subdivisions do not have parcel identifiers until they are sold off. The Chair asked where the “inactive parcel” status and information is kept. Mr. Johnson stated there is a list. When parcel ID becomes active the same parcel ID is reactivated, but typically will get a new span number
- xiii. More discussion regarding accuracy of the Census data.
- xiv. The Chair revisited the subject of individuals not declaring Homestead status. The Chair asked if it is true that the Homestead tax rate is higher than the non, and if this may contribute to people not declaring. Mr. Johnson stated the rate has been higher for 8-10 years. It was most recently only a difference of two cents. Penalty for not declaring homestead when it is your home. The Chair asked why the Homestead tax is higher. Mr. Johnson stated this is due to the cost of education tax.
- xv. The Chair asked if there is anything that can be done to provide incentive/relief to live here. For example, impact fees for non-residents to offset cost to local residents? Chair asked if this has been considered. Mr. Johnson stated it has not and he doesn't believe it would be fair. (Postscript: non-homestead parcels are not equivalent to “non-resident” ownership.)
- xvi. Commissioner Schulz asked if it would be possible to distribute a brief survey to the town to gather some of the information we would like to have. Commissioner Sullivan thought we would be lucky to get over a 10% response rate from a survey and the accuracy of the resulting data would not be better than what we have from the Census already. Commissioner Andrew Seward agreed.

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- xvii. Commissioner Andrew Seward stated he could look at other town plans and find out where they got their information, but he believed it came from the Census.
 - xviii. Chair asked if anyone had ideas on how to get rental information other than from the census. Commissioner Andrew Seward suggested talking to the rental/real estate agency. Discussion about how this may not be accurate as they would only know about properties going through their agency.
 - xix. Commissioner Sullivan suggested using descriptive language without using numbers in the town plan. Commissioner Andrew Seward agreed descriptive language could be used to describe current housing situation and increase in numbers of Airbnb rentals.
 - xx. Commissioner Schulz stated the assumption that the Planning Commission wants to be able to track data over time and see what the trends are and how things are changing over time and not to simply get a snapshot of today. Commissioner Schulz confirmed with Planning Commission members that this was correct, and went on to say that while there are things that could be done to make current data more accurate, if the Commission really wants to compare we would need to repeat steps every year or every so many years in order to really make sure comparing like data. Commissioner Schulz expressed concern that the Planning Commission is putting in a lot of effort on one-time basis doesn't work unless successors are willing to do this again to maintain the same sampling/methodology at that time. Suggested using the data we have which is the census. Commissioner Andrew Seward and Commissioner Sullivan agreed.
 - xxi. The Chair spoke about looking at property transfers/housing starts which may not have a great handle on. Housing construction – BCR's and new 911 addresses are two ways to capture this. The state maintains a list of new 911 addresses.
 - xxii. Current year's Grand List is not completed yet.
 - b. Flood Resilience Plan: not addressed during meeting due to time
4. Public Comments: none
5. Upcoming meetings
- a. Regular meeting – June 15th, 7:00 pm (3rd Wednesday)
 - b. Special Meeting – July 6th, 7:00pm – Flood Resilience plan
6. Meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm

For the Commission,
Renee Sarmento, Clerk

In draft form until approved on July 20th, 2022