

**Planning & Zoning Commission
Regulations Committee - Village District Sub-Committee
Minutes –March 15, 2010**

Present: Torrance Downes, Janet Edgerton, Nancy Fischbach, Peter Howard, Cathie Jefferson

Absent: Jane Samuels

The Village District Sub-Committee meeting convened at 3:30 pm in the small meeting room at Town Hall.

Nancy reviewed the comments/suggestions received after the first focus group. Comments were similar and were: coloring maps for clarity and showing existing commercial zone area; clarify the role of design review, especially as to residential, outline the benefits and limitations of zoning proposed, better describe types of businesses proposed for mixed and residential, and clarify difference between Village and Historic districts.

Nancy presented the table she drafted comparing Village and Historic districts. It was okayed by the committee to use at the next focus groups.

Peter introduced language which proposed special permit for removal or addition of a 1000 SF or greater structure. Discussion ensued as to demolition delay and how to effect it and whether a Village district under the enabling statute had “power” to prevent a demolition. A review of the statute showed that such protection is not afforded by a Village district and Cathie explained that an ordinance is what is generally used.

The committee discussed the exclusion of residential from design review. The statute was checked and it was clarified that review is required for “new construction and substantial reconstruction” regardless of the use. Consideration was given as to what “substantial” was, and it was agreed that 50% of total floor area would be preferable to 50% of assessed value or, as it is used in the flood regulations, 50% of construction cost. It was agreed that some type of bulk measurement would be used for the trigger and that items like siding, color and materials and windows would be excluded unless it was a part of “substantial” or new construction. There was recognition, however, that a small change could conceivably have a large impact on character, but that the guidelines for residential should be particularly general in nature.

It was agreed that P&Z should have some input to guide the Architectural Review Board and its guidelines. The guidelines might address design which is sharply variant from the neighborhood, the extremes, designs on the fringe. P&Z and DAB should be able to reach consensus on the guidelines.

Next the committee reviewed the Advantages/Disadvantages table. They discussed that property values would be increased in the commercial village area due to enhanced appearance that would attract business and customers, much as Main Street of Essex does. Values in Mixed Village would benefit from the same thing, plus there would be the added benefit of an additional income source and would increase the pool of buyers. Residential Village would benefit from enhanced appearance. Changes were made and the committee will review it and get back to Nancy as soon as possible for final revisions in preparation of March 22 focus group.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Fischbach

03/16/10