

Dummerston Planning Commission

1523 Middle Road, E. Dummerston, VT 05346

DATE: August 8, 2010

TO: Dummerston Selectboard

FROM: Cynthia G. Wilcox, Chair, Dummerston Planning Commission

RE: Routes 5 & 30 Commercial Corridors in 2010 Draft Town Plan

The PC met last Tuesday night in an informal workshop to try to clarify and understand among ourselves just what the issues are which are causing the unease and opposition to the proposed corridors ... and, what to do about it. After much discussion with each other and several helpful members of the public, it is clear that the loss of the rural commercial designation is of great concern; and promises of doing corridor studies before changing zoning are not enough to assuage the legitimate fears of many property owners affected by the proposed plan as is. Some of the PC members had done research, and had questions out to VLCT, Environmental Court and other places about what the impact would be of changing the land use designations in the plan before doing the studies. Many of these questions were as yet unanswered.

With this much ambiguity (and sometimes conflicting advice) out there, the seven members of the PC who were in attendance agreed by consensus to make the following recommendation to the selectboard:

It would be better to adopt the plan with the existing and well-known zoning pattern along the Rtes 5 and 30 corridors, and then consequently try to break up the commercial strips based on good information from the studies, than to start with an unknown pattern to which commercial areas will need to be added later. We all agree that the corridors need to be worked on, and the strips broken up where feasible; and we may end up with virtually the same product in either case. However, it seems to matter to a great many people which chronology is used. Therefore, we also feel we would get stronger public support for doing this if the plan were to start with what we have and know, rather than with something unknown and quite radically different. We need to point out in the text, however, that even though no actual zoning changes in these areas would happen before the studies, the maps will change as a result of the studies. Meanwhile, as we wait for the zoning update process to unfold, the current CR district will be in the plan.

The configuration preferred by the Planning Commission would be to reinstate the rural commercial districts as delineated on the current zoning map, with the exception of Sweet Tree Farm which should be in a conservation district. The text will need to be changed in places and the description of the RC district can be taken from the 2004 plan. As for the CI areas at the interstate exits, we did not discuss them; but I think all agree that they should remain there, and are probably adequately covered by the CI overlays in the 2010 plan. Maybe that could be looked at in the Rte 5 study and resolved when it comes to the zoning update.

The selectboard, if it decides to follow this recommendation, would need to hold another public hearing on this idea, and the PC stands ready to help if needed.

Thank you for your consideration of this change in strategy for adopting a Town Plan that, hopefully, is acceptable to most of the people in town. For many reasons, we need to move forward with the adoption process, and the PC feels this recommendation will help.