

July 21, 2019

Re: the proposed Draft East Montpelier Land Use Regulations

Dear members of the East Montpelier Planning Commission:

For public health reasons, land use planners typically do not recommend small lot zoning in areas not served by utility potable water supply and sewerage service in neighborhoods of shallow dense soils atop clay, compacted shale, and ledge bases, as in East Montpelier Center, where surficial land remains soggy much of the year. The land use zones for East Montpelier's first Town Plan were drawn pursuant to a yearlong study of EM's soil types conducted at UVM; these evidence-based zones were kept intact under subsequent EM Town Plans. Since all homes in EM Center depend on drinkable well water and onsite sewer systems, the small lot rezoning proposed for EM Center does not give due consideration to soils science.

The Central Vermont Regional Plan calls for town plans to be consistent with the CV Regional Plan, which advises that designated growth areas be situated along existing regional transportation corridors, as is EM Village. Unlike EM Village, EM Center is not adjacent or proximate to regional transportation corridors. Rezoning EM Center into the EM Village and North Montpelier growth area identified in the EM Town Plan (which is silent on growth as to EM Center), is not supported by the EM Town Plan, nor by the CV Regional Plan.

EM Center is cited in the EM Town Plan for its abundance of state and federally listed historic assets, cultural heritage matters, environmental viewscapes and natural viewsheds, and forest recreation trails. EM Center is a regional attractor and tourist destination on account of its bucolic settlement and rural traits. Responsible town planning protects and enhances significant town features; the draft proposal for rezoning EM Center jeopardizes irreplaceable town assets.

Many homeowners settled in EM Center in reliance on its zoning, not despite it. Relevant here also are the permitted and conditional uses of the rezoning proposal. There is no basis revealed in the EM Town Plan for EM Center to be zoned for the expansive uses considered appropriate for designated or identified growth areas. Let's not undermine what, in EM Center, the Town of East Montpelier does have. Let's take care to fit zoning to our town, not fit the town into an unfit zoning plan.

Sincerely,

Kirby Scarborough, East Montpelier Center

Citizen of East Montpelier since 1985; past member, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission Landfill Siting Advisory Committee.