

July 21, 2019

Re: Proposed East Montpelier Zoning Regulations

Dear Members of the East Montpelier Planning Commission:

I am writing to comment on the proposed zoning regulations (V. 05, 23 April 2019), as they affect East Montpelier Center (EMC).

Water Supplies and Wastewater Treatment

The impact on water resources and wastewater resources from the change to half-acre zoning in EMC proposed in the draft zoning regulations is a very serious concern. As you know, EMC does not have a public water or sewage system and much of the area has thin soil on bedrock or heavy mucky soils. The proposed reduction in lot size from 3 acres to one-half acre appears to have been made without an evaluation of EMC's capacity to support an increase in demand for water and sewage. The 2018 Town Plan notes the importance of ensuring good quality water for residents (page 79). The Town Plan also notes that the soils in many areas of town are rated as poor for wastewater treatment. "The wastewater treatment capacity of soils in town is limited by four major factors: heavy clay, high water tables, shallow depth to bedrock, steep slope and often a combination of some or all of these factors" (page 77). While the Town Plan includes a goal (6.10) to develop wastewater solutions for East Montpelier Village and North Montpelier and references potential wastewater options for the areas near U-32 and Goddard College (connecting to the Montpelier and Plainfield systems, respectively pages 77-78), it does not address wastewater solutions for EMC. Prior to proposing zoning regulations which will increase infill residential development by reducing lot size significantly and allowing multi-family housing, the capacity of EMC's water and sewage services and resources must be professionally evaluated.

Residential Growth Areas

The Town Plan focuses on increasing growth, including residential growth, in identified growth zones; and recommends that new residential development should be concentrated in East Montpelier Village or North Montpelier or Gallison Hill, the areas specifically identified areas for future residential growth (page 99). Map 8 of the Town Plan also shows the preferred areas for future residential growth -- East Montpelier Village, North Montpelier and Gallison Hill. Goal 8.2 of the town Plan recommends concentrating new residential development in East Montpelier Village or the identified growth areas (page 101). EMC is not identified by the Town Plan as a preferred area for future residential growth. Nevertheless, the draft zoning regulations place EMC, which is not an identified growth zone, in the same zoning district (RES 2) as the identified growth zones. EMC should not be included in the district with the growth zones.

Multi-family Housing

The town plan notes that developing multi-family housing requires adequate wastewater treatment and recommends multi-family housing as suitable for villages and growth areas where density is appropriate and transportation and services are available (page 98). East Montpelier Village and North Montpelier

are located on arterial roads (Route 2 and Route 14. Center Road, in EMC, with its significantly lower traffic volume (pages 63 – 65) is regularly used by walkers, bicycles, equestrians, and other recreational users, and does not have sidewalks, bike paths, or even reliable road shoulders. The draft zoning regulations would allow multi-family housing as a permitted use in EMC, although EMC is not an identified growth area, and does not have public water, public sewer, or transportation infrastructure. Multi-family housing as a proposed permitted use in EMC is not consistent with the Town Plan.

Scenic Resources

The Town Plan advocates protecting scenic resources in the town, such as historic villages that form the focal points of the rural landscape and feature many historic structures (page 125). The Town Plan identifies EMC as being quieter in character than either East Montpelier Village or North Montpelier, with the EMC hamlet strongly integrated with its agricultural surroundings (page 124). The area of Center Road between Barnes Road and Dodge Road is classified by the Town Plan as a scenic resource (page 126). Map 12 of the Town Plan (Significant Natural and Scenic Resources) identifies most of Center Road from County Road to Adamant as having scenic views, including the Barnes to Dodge Road section - an area which the draft zoning regulations propose for infill residential development at greatly increased density: the proposed RES 2 district allows multi-family dwellings and much smaller dimensional standards, than current zoning. Reducing lot size, setbacks, frontage requirements, and allowing for up to 6 residences on a 3-acre lot, up to 18 on a 9-acre lot would materially alter the nature and character of the EMC neighborhood, and dramatically impact this area that currently is very scenic and a route for tourists, bicycle tours, and public events at the Old Meeting House.

To rezone the EMC hamlet into the same zoning district as the identified growth zones which comprise the rest of the proposed RES 2 district does not reflect key stated objectives of the Town Plan.

Thank you for considering these comments. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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cc Bruce Johnson, Town and Zoning Administrator