

August 28, 2019

Dear members of the East Montpelier Selectboard,

Re: Your two very good questions to the PC on the draft land use regulations –
What was wrong with the existing [zoning] districts?
Which [rezoning] items are statutory requirements?

There are no statutory requirements that require the proposed rezoning.
And the draft regulations for EM Center aren't consistent with our Town Plan.

For commercial and residential growth, our Town Plan identifies growth zones, and recommends that residential development be concentrated North Montpelier, East Montpelier Village, and Gallison Hill – the areas specifically identified for residential growth (p.99). Map 8 of the Plan illustrates these designated areas for residential growth. Goal 8.2 of the Plan speaks to residential development for these identified growth zones (p.101).

East Montpelier Center is not in an identified growth zone, nor designated for residential growth. There's no basis to rezone the Center into the residential growth area district designed for the designated growth areas identified in the Town Plan.

The Plan advocates protecting bucolic settlements and scenic resources (p.125); calls EM Center “strongly integrated with its agricultural surroundings” (p.124); and classifies as a scenic resource the area of Center Road between Barnes Road and Dodge Road (p.126). The draft rules allow dense infill development that would dramatically alter the nature and character of the EM Center neighborhood: permit ½-acre lots and multi-structure projects, and reduce setbacks to as little as 12 feet; conditionally permit Home Business use that “may alter the residential character of the property” and Inns which “may include a restaurant, bar, event facility, spa, or fitness club, and offer [these] services to the general public” (+ roadside signage).

Town zoning must arise from, and rest on and within, parameters of a town plan. This is a basic legal requirement – not only a land use planning preferred method. Rezoning the Center hamlet into the proposed RES 2 district of the growth zones which form the rest of RES 2 is outside of key provisions in the EM Town Plan.

Responsible land use planning protects and enhances significant town assets. The rezoning rules for EM Center jeopardize irreplaceable town features. As to EM Center, the draft regs run counter to core objectives in the Town Plan. Resultingly, EM Center may not be included in the RES 2 district.

Why sacrifice this long established rural neighborhood?

Sincerely,
Kirby Scarborough, 1465 Center Road

cc: Members of the East Montpelier Planning Commission