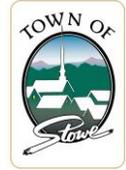


STOWE PLANNING COMMISSION
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Tom Jackman, Planning Director
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253-2705



August 28, 2020

Honorable Tom Stevens, Chair
House General, Housing and Military Affairs Committee

RE: Town of Stowe Comments on S.237

Dear Representative Stevens and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Stowe Planning Commission and the Town of Stowe, I would like to express our concerns regarding S.237 as introduced. Most importantly, we strongly oppose the provision that would mandate that all zoning districts served by municipal water and sewer allow one-eighth acre lots.

This provision obviously does not contemplate a sewer service district the size of Stowe's. Extending over 8 miles from Stowe's Lower Village to Stowe Mountain Resort (SMR) and including the Trapp Family Lodge (TFL) property, Stowe's sewer service district consists of approximately 6,400 acres and includes 13 different zoning districts ranging in minimum lot sizes of one-quarter acre to five acres.

Several years ago, the Lamoille County Planning Commission conducted a parcel-based buildout analysis of Stowe's sewer service district which resulted in a maximum potential buildout of 2,175 residential units. If the district is mandated to allow one-eighth acre lots, we would be looking at a maximum potential buildout of over 51,000 units. We would essentially have to consolidate portions of 13 zoning district into one large one-size-fits-all district, which would totally subvert 50 years of thoughtful land use planning.

In a resort community like Stowe, higher density does not necessarily result in lower housing costs. This would be particularly true for SMR and TFL, where increased density may result in more high-priced second homes or short-term rentals. Stowe is already facing increased development pressure now that SMR's ski operations are owned by Vail Resorts. This proposed drastic increase in density could create a development frenzy that would overload Stowe's public infrastructure, as well as adversely impacting Stowe's scenic beauty and historic character. In addition to increasing the traffic issues that we are already facing; Stowe's wastewater and water systems would not be able to accommodate a dramatic increase in development. This may also be true for other municipalities and warrants further study before the mandated one-eighth acre lot size becomes law.

We would like to remind the Committee of the following stated planning goals of Title 24, Chapter 117, §4302, which were informed by Act 200:

§4302(b)(2) To encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process, and **to assure that decisions shall be made at the most local level possible** commensurate with their impact.

§4302 (c) (A) Intensive residential development should be encouraged primarily in **areas related to community centers, and strip development along highways should be discouraged.**

§4302 (c) (B) Economic growth **should be encouraged in locally designated growth areas, employed to revitalize existing village and urban centers,** or both, and should be encouraged in growth centers designated under chapter 76A of this title.

Our recommendation is that the one-eighth acre mandate be limited to:

- Designated Downtowns
- Designated Village Centers
- Growth Centers
- New Town Centers
- Neighborhood Development Areas

I have attached a map illustrating the size and scope of Stowe's Sewer Service District.

Thank you for considering our concerns and we would be happy to provide testimony to the Committee.

Sincerely,



Tom Jackman
Stowe Planning Director

CC: Stowe Selectboard
Charles Safford, Town Manager
Mila Lonetto, Chair, Stowe Planning Commission
Representative Heidi Scheuermann
Karen Horn, Vermont League of Cities & Towns
Tasha Wallis, Lamoille County Planning Commission