

SUMMARY OF TOWN PLAN PUBLIC FORUM - 3/10/2003

“DEFINING HINESBURG’S VILLAGE”

The public forum was held at Hinesburg Town Hall from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. on March 10, 2003. The forum began with desserts, drinks, and public viewing of 8 exhibits located around the room. Each exhibit was staffed by a member of the Planning Commission or other Hinesburg official. The following is a list of the exhibits:

- Community Survey Results - John Mace
- Current Town Plan, Objectives/Goals – John Mace
- Route 116 Scoping Study - Andrea Morgante
- Sewer Service Area Study - Rocky Martin
- Current Village Area and 1993 Village Growth Study - George Bedard
- Recreation Path Project - Jeanne Wilson
- West Side Road Feasibility Study - John Buckingham
- Recreational Opportunities - Beth Sengle

Jean Isham, Planning Commission Chair, opened the public forum at 7:20 p.m. with introductory comments. She was followed by Planning Commissioner Fred Haulenbeek who gave a 10-minute presentation on current issues facing the Village. The meeting then turned to public input. Approximately 90 Hinesburg residents and other interested parties were in attendance.

David Spitz, Planning Consultant, acted as meeting facilitator. Alex Weinhagen, Town Planner, and Joe Iadanza, Planning Commissioner, recorded comments from the public on flip charts. Public comments, organized by topic, are summarized below. The recorders were able to include many but not all public comments.

Route 116/Traffic

- Pedestrian
 - o There are issues related to traffic speed and pedestrian safety
 - o Need safer street crossings – at the school and at Lantman’s; they must be visible
 - o Even when some cars stop for pedestrians, other cars pass them
 - o There is a lack of sidewalks at the south end of the Village
 - o A big problem for the Village is the inability to walk from point A to point B
- Intersections
 - o Traffic signals are needed at Firehouse Plaza and Lantman’s IGA
 - o Consider roundabouts at problem intersections
 - o Roundabouts must consider truck movements
 - o Traffic signals will require continuous expense for maintenance
- Where will people access Route 116; how/where will they merge
- Future growth will increase through-traffic in the Village
- Slowing down through-traffic will be difficult due to more traffic
- How much control does the Town have on Route 116 (vs. the State)?
- Meet traffic issues head-on; don’t be afraid to consider alternative transit options
- Follow the Bristol example for balanced growth on Route 116 with pull-in parking and sidewalks
- Look at Warren and Vergennes for good bypass examples – limited access design by the State

West Side Road

- Is it even possible given site limitations – soils, wetlands, floodplain
- Design it as a real bypass of Route 116
- Use West Side Road as a bypass instead of Route 116 traffic calming
- You can’t solve bypass/traffic issues and serve more village-style mixed-use development at the same time; prevent it from being a bypass to meet village goals
- A West Side Road would decrease traffic on Route 116 by creating a street network with multiple options
- Connecting the West Side Road to Falls Road is a concern due to safety/traffic; a connection to Commerce Street is OK
- I do not want to see sudden development – the “popcorn effect” – on the west side

Other Village Growth Locations

- New development south of the Village may impact traffic in front of Hinesburg Central School
- More development south of the Village may help by moving the gateway to the Village away from Hinesburg Central School
- Accommodate growth by increasing density along Mechanicsville Road

Growth

- Growth is a given; the question is where do we want it to go
- Growth is tied to sewer treatment plant capacity, or the lack thereof
- Is growth a good idea; is it just pressure from Burlington?
- Growth makes no sense unless it reduces the tax burden
- Commercial
 - o Will additional commercial development be helpful to the tax base?
 - o Commercial uses need choice of where to grow; existing options are exhausted
 - o Be selective about commercial/industrial growth – especially related to traffic impacts
 - o We need more energy in designing commercial development, encourage trees and landscaping
 - o Center commercial development on Route 116, less on West Side Road
 - o The feeling that expansion can't happen causes businesses to move, resulting in more town-to-town traffic
- We need a Natural Resource Inventory to understand limitations to growth
- We need to assess infill and greater density in the current Village
- The Town should consider seeking "Downtown Designation"
- We need to identify the Town's core values as they relate to the village within a rural community; these values will guide us in planning and implementation
- Remember the reasons we live in Hinesburg vs. other more developed Chittenden County communities
- We don't have to look like Williston - be more like Vergennes; enforce speed limits
- Plan to grow; don't just grow
- Small is better than big, both for businesses and for housing development

Design/Aesthetics

- Growth in the Village is OK, but we must plan the aesthetics of growth - including the aesthetics of walking around the Village
- Think about setting residential uses behind commercial uses along Route 116
- Think about establishing design standards for the Village
- The Gateway concept could be valuable
- Encourage more trees and less pavement for runoff reduction and other benefits – are there standards available to encourage this?

Infrastructure

- We need to focus growth in the Village, including recreation paths
- We need to support Village infrastructure improvements to focus growth in the Village and better preserve rural areas

Miscellaneous

- Be careful with survey interpretations; answers may change after more information at the public forums
- What are the core values of this town?
- I located in Hinesburg for its character, knowing it wasn't Williston
- I like living in the Village, walking to the post office, stores, etc.
- The most frequently mentioned business that people want is a pharmacy

The public forum ended at 9:00 p.m. David Spitz and Alex Weinhagen thanked all participants and asked people to come to the next public forums:

- Hinesburg's Rural Areas – March 25th, Town Hall
- Managing Growth and Development – April 8th, Community Alliance Church
- Bringing It All Together – April 29th, Community Alliance Church

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