

Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
February 14, 2024

Approved February 28, 2024

Members Present: Barbara Forauer, Lenore Budd, John Kiedaisch (via Zoom), Alison Lesure, Denver Wilson

Members Absent: Becky Alford, Nicholas Chlumecky, James Donegan, John Little

Staff: Alex Weinhausen (Director of Planning & Zoning)

Public Present via Zoom: Margaret McNurlan (via Zoom)

Denver W. **called the meeting to order at approximately 7:05 PM**

1. Agenda Changes: None.

2. Public Comments for non-agenda Items: None.

3. Minutes from January 24, 2024 meeting:

There was not a quorum at this meeting therefore a vote will be taken at the next meeting.

4. Bylaw Modernization for Housing – Zoning Revisions:

a. Discuss development density for multi-unit housing – uniform or graduated:

Alex W. reminded the Commissioners that at their last meeting he presented them with a consolidated draft of the Bylaw Modernization zoning revisions and there was additional discussion about what needed more follow-up or tweaking. Alex W. noted that a suggestion made by Margaret M. to highlight (in yellow) the substantive changes was helpful. Alex W. was able to speak with the consultants about the Commissioners' questions, as well as some of his own (more technical questions).

Alex W. said the proposal currently has a graduated system where multi-unit projects end up having a different density allowance, depending on whether the project is in the Village Zoning District or in one of the other village growth areas, like the Village Northeast or Northwest. Alex W. noted that the development density is the same across all these districts (Village, Residential 1, Village Northeast, etc.) for single-units or detached homes. Alex W. said that when the consultants drafted the proposal, they were trying to reflect the current zoning which is a graduated system for all types of development (i.e., single-unit, duplexes, or multi-unit) with the density decreasing outward from the village center. Alex W. added that the HOME Act (passed last year) requires municipalities to treat duplexes the same as detached, single-unit homes, so the lot area requirement and density has to be the same. Alex W. also said that the legislature is discussing a follow-up to the HOME Act that could end up being even more prescriptive about how many units per acre a municipality would have to allow and on what size lots, especially for multi-unit development. Alex W. said there was no clear recommendation from the consultant, only options for how to accomplish the town's goal. Alex W. noted that Hinesburg's Village is a small slice of the town and the only growth area, and he doesn't see a great difference in terms of

the built form within the different Village districts. Alex W. said that in his opinion that there could be uniform density and lot allowances to allow opportunity across the board, without changing the aesthetics and form/function of buildings within the Village. He said the proposal does eliminate the a-la-carte density bonuses that are in the regulations now, and also noted that the legislature mandated that projects which are 20% affordable housing or include 5 units of affordable housing (whichever is greater) are entitled to a 40% density bonus, so whatever density we set for regular market-rate development will always have this bonus built in that we don't control. Lenore B. asked if there had been a discussion about combining the village districts (to make fewer) and Alex said there had been at one point, but because this task was already complicated, the Commission had decided to punt that discussion to a later date. Alex said the point of the Bylaw Modernization project is to make the Town regulations less complicated so that housing is easier to accomplish and to meet the State statute.

Barbara F. confirmed these density changes being discussed would only apply in the Village Growth area, and Alex confirmed that was the case except for the HOME Act requiring duplexes being treated the same as single-unit homes. Barbara F. also asked about the capacity to provide water and sewer to some of these areas, and Alex W. said the potential buildout within the water and sewer areas is a limited by the Town's ability to support the growth. Lenore B. added it's one thing to allow more density if there's water available and Alex W agreed that allowance is a key factor when deciding what actually gets built. He said Hinesburg has some limiting factors when considering further development, such as water and wastewater capacity, ability (or inability) to absorb increased traffic flow, and school capacity. Lenore B. asked how these changes will impact the work the Planning & Zoning department does, and Alex W. said that by making the regulations easier to understand and the density consistent across the growth area makes it easier for everyone. Alex W. reiterated that the Village Growth Area is very small and is naturally constrained in most directions out of town (by floodplain, wetland, large-scale agriculture, etc.).

Lenore B. and Denver W. expressed their support in keeping the density uniform across the district for the sake of simplicity. Due to the meeting attendance, there was not a quorum so no vote could be taken and will be revisited at the next meeting. Alex W. said that he can work with the consultants to clean this section up for the public hearing and to have them prepare material that will help the general public understand the concept of residential density topic. There was discussion about how many units per acre the proposal should include, and Alex W. made the recommendation to keep it similar to what currently exists. The Commissioners agreed to update the proposal to 6-units per acre and see what the public feedback will be.

b. Review table of allowed uses:

Alex W. reviewed the substantive changes and new allowed uses with the Commissioners and noted it was an instructive tool to see how uses were allowed across the districts. Alex W. said the consultants divided the table into residential uses and non-residential uses and worked to shed the unnecessary specificity to help simplify the process. Alex W. went over some specific updates, such as the addition of a Rooming House as a conditional use; the usage of a single

dwelling (home) as a residential care home (for 8 residents or less); a residential care facility use for more than 8 residents; a transitional housing use to provide a transitional place for people exiting homelessness; and an emergency shelter use that is protected by state statute. Alex W. went on to say that the uses included in this table should be considered principal use, following the basic zoning tenet that there can be one principle use per property, unless regulations allow more. Lenore B. asked if it might make sense to include the word principle with the table for clarification and Alex W. thought that could be helpful.

Alex W. said there is a revised definition of a dwelling unit which is considered a building or portion thereof used to provide independent living facilities for one household and it must include provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation. The definition also states that the dwelling unit must be accessible from the outside (i.e., cannot pass through another dwelling unit to get to it). Alex W. added the updated definition is more consistent with statute, and it no longer refers to “family” but rather household, to reflect the different living situations of people living together these days (i.e., not nuclear families).

Alex W. reviewed the Non-residential Uses included in the proposal, and the Commissioners asked questions about the Industrial 3 & 4 districts. There was some discussion about including more detail in the definition section for some of the allowed uses. Alex W. noted that there wasn’t an allowed use for Storage Facility, and some discussion regarding the existing storage facility in town, and the best way to handle this use.

c. Consider scheduling March 27th public hearing:

The Commission instructed Alex W. to schedule a public hearing for March 27th.

5. Town Plan Update:

a. Early survey results & final push for survey responses

Alex W. said it would be really helpful if all of the Commissioners to remind their friends and family to take the survey. He shared that as of their meeting, there were 336 survey responses but not all respondents answered every question. It was noted that Front Porch Forum was where a large majority of respondents found out about the survey. There was some discussion about the demographics of the survey responders thus far, and that a majority of the respondents were long-term Hinesburg residents and over 65 years old.

b. Community forums – scheduling and topics

Alex W. said the idea was to offer a place for people to learn about a topic, have an opportunity to discuss the topic and ask questions. Alison L. wondered about providing childcare during a community forum, to encourage parents to attend. Lenore B. asked if people would actually attend these public forums, and how to reach the different demographic populations of the Town. The survey results could inform the Commission on what type of community forum might be helpful, but housing is a hot topic at the moment, or how to adapt to climate change, etc.

c. Town committee liaison assignments

Alex. W. reminded the Commissioners that they should be reaching out to the committee they are working with to talk about the Town Plan Update. Denver W. said he would like to work with the Selectboard. John K. said he attended a Conservation Commission meeting and had a good discussion and will send his notes to Alex.

6. Other Business:

a. Planning news and announcements:

Alex shared some thoughts from his recent trip to Vancouver, in terms of residential housing in a big city. A decision is anticipated from Act 250 for Hinesburg Center 2 this month. John L. reminded folks to bring their returnable cans to Bissonette Farm. Alex W. shared that Barbara F. and James D. will not be renewing their terms on the Planning Commission.

b. Agenda items for the February 28, 2024 meeting:

- Town Plan - final survey results, forum planning

Denver W. **adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:15 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Danielle Peterson
Planning and Zoning Administrative Assistant