



Affordable Housing Committee

Town of Hinesburg

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Meeting Minutes – April 24, 2024 In-person and Zoom Meeting – 6:30 PM (Town Hall Third Floor Conference Room) DRAFT – SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Committee Members Present: Carl Bohlen, Dave Nagel, Beth Whitlock, Xander Patterson, Andy Miller, Rocky Martin, and Dale Wernhoff

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:10 PM.

Additions/Deletions to Agenda: There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

Town Plan Update Discussion: Tonight, we discussed action items for the Town Plan update. We need to get our recommendations to the Hinesburg Planning Commission (HPC) by the end of June.

Can we do something to encourage smaller homes? Xander wonders if we could have the base density of inclusionary zoning predicated on the total square footage of the units instead of the total number of units. Andy thought it was a nice idea, but he wasn't sure how it could be implemented. Carl suggested a modified version where if the units are under certain square footage, you get a density bonus, and smaller units are less costly in many ways. Xander countered that we don't want smaller four-bedroom units, we want more units overall. Beth feels right now we are getting the extremes in housing (McMansions and one-bedroom apartments) but nothing for the missing middle. Rocky believes we should just say we want smaller units and then let the HPC figure it out. Carl agreed with Rocky; let the town figure out how to implement our suggestions. Carl asked if we should keep this item on our agenda and we agreed we should. In closing, Dave stated we must figure out how all these pieces of the puzzle fit together.

Beth suggested we should investigate if we have building lot size restrictions. Carl asked if Hinesburg has a minimum lot size. Beth wasn't sure. She said that most municipalities require lots to have a certain percentage of open space. Andy asked if Hinesburg had a set percentage, but no one was sure. Carl pointed out that lot size and coverage are related to density.

Andy wondered if a duplex would trigger more regulations. Beth and Dale believed it would. Carl pondered if we should mention this to the town, but Andy felt they must have thought of this.

Dave expanded on what he said earlier, stating that he doesn't think revising the zoning regulations can be done by a piecemeal approach. We need to look at the whole picture and what we want to achieve, how to get there, and how to remove the impediments. Dale agreed, saying we should get basic recommendations to the HPC and let them run with it.

Andy feels we should incentivize density, which would fit in with the action discussed previously. Carl stated that matches with the 2023 Housing Needs Assessment (HNA). We can provide general themes for what we want to achieve and let Alex (Weinhagen, Director of Planning and Zoning for Hinesburg) write the language. We all decided that everything discussed thus far tonight would be an action item under goal 2.4 of the current Town Plan.

Carl said the only topic that isn't currently an action item is a housing trust fund. Andy feels that is critical to address. Xander reiterated we shouldn't get caught up in the fine print, but just give general recommendations, and we all agreed.

The next topic is economic development. Carl asked if there is anything we want to have under housing that is tied to economic development. One possibility is to develop housing for employees of local businesses. Dale asked if there were any regulations against employer-owned housing. Andy said if the employer owns it, then they can rent it to employees, but no public funds can be involved. Dave stated that most employers in town would require only a small handful of units. Andy mentioned that NRG Systems, one of the town's largest employers, is mostly working remotely right now. We decided to keep this as an action item, so it stays on people's minds.

Back to the housing trust fund. Andy said establishing one, no matter how small, would be good. Beth knows someone who has started Winooski's housing trust fund and has been giving workshops to housing committees on how they established theirs. Xander said that housing trust funds came up at the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) meeting he attended last week (more on that below). Xander mentioned we had provided funds for Kelley's Field Senior Housing and that got a positive response from those in attendance.

Carl asked if we should add a goal or action plan to formally continue with updates to the HNA. The CCRPC did the latest update in 2023 and they will do periodic updates for no charge. Dale thought it would be good to keep it updated instead of letting it lapse, and everyone agreed.

Carl asked if net-zero housing, or climate change/flooding are issues we want to have in the town plan. The flooding issue has directly impacted the Act 250 approval of Hinesburg Center Phase 2 (HCP2), west of Kinney Drugs. Dale said we should keep it on our minds because the flooding is only going to get worse. Dave said we don't want people living in houses that will end up being underwater so we should stay on top of that, but he didn't think we should propose net-zero housing. It's a nice idea but it's going to have a cost element and may not make a home affordable. We all agreed. Carl asked if we should cross-pollinate with the Energy Committee on this issue.

Next up was Airbnbs. Carl doesn't think potential housing changing to an Airbnb is an issue in Hinesburg but didn't know if our town plan should address them. Dale wondered if anyone knew what the market was for Airbnbs in this area. Xander had family visiting for the eclipse this month and there were very few in town. Dave said that if somebody owns their own home and wants to have an Airbnb then we shouldn't get involved in regulating that. We all agreed to remove this from our list.

Carl mentioned another issue is targeting the number of homes that are to be built in the town and what percentage should be perpetually affordable. Andy thinks we should let the CCRPC cover this because the funds aren't there to achieve it. Both Carl and Dale agreed.

The next topic is addressing the missing middle. Carl asked if we felt there should be something in the town plan that addresses this. Andy feels we're getting there from other avenues such as density, home size, and affordability. Beth mentioned earlier we're getting the extremes in housing, but Andy said right now there are no subsidies that would help provide the mid-size units we'd like. Carl thinks since the phrase "missing middle" is relatively new, we should try to incorporate it into the town plan just so it remains a talking point.

Xander mentioned the bulk of the CCRPC meeting addressed diversity and exclusion, and wonders if that should be addressed in the town plan. We all agreed we should mention this in some way. Carl said we could get input from the town's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Committee for the correct language to add to the town plan, and we all agreed.

CCRPC April 18 Housing Meeting Highlights: Xander gave us a report on this meeting. His biggest takeaways were the following:

- Xander was struck by how different the affordable housing issues of different towns are. For example, Winooski needs bigger affordable housing due to the size of immigrant families moving there.
- There was a lot of talk about cooperation, but it would be hard to work together because of all the different issues each town has to confront.
- The state and the regional town governments are not very sophisticated in their approach to affordable housing. It's all very new to them. When we have speakers that say Hinesburg is doing well on the subject, they are correct. Just having a committee is ahead of several towns.

Carl asked if there was any information online regarding the meeting. Xander said he believes there is, and if he gets any feedback from the meeting, he will share it with the committee.

ADU Forum Update: Rocky said Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are now under the purview of the Department of Public Safety and you do need a permit from them if you are renting it out. No permits are required if it's not going to be a rental. The biggest item is you would need a full set of plans – architectural, structural, plumbing, and electrical – showing everything. The plan set must be submitted with the permit application. The plumbing permit is based on the number of fixtures you're installing. The electrical permit is similar. The construction permit through the Vermont Department of Labor and Industry is \$8 per every \$1000 of total construction cost, so you'll need a particularly good estimate of the project. Hinesburg Zoning Administrator Jim Jarvis didn't know this was in effect but will be checking into it. Andy asked if these were new requirements, and Rocky said yes, since July 2023. Andy guessed this would add \$5000+ to the cost of an ADU. Rocky believes this is due to the increase in ADUs being rented out as Airbnbs. Rocky also said a town resident at our last forum applied for and received an ADU grant.

Working with Local Businesses Discussion: We are going to postpone this discussion to a future meeting.

Housing News Articles Updates: Our May article for the local papers regarding affordable housing will discuss mobile homes. Xander is going to author that article. It's due to be sent in on May 16th.

Green Mountain Habitat Update: Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity (GMHfH) presented to the Select Board at their meeting three weeks ago. Their goal was to secure \$30,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for their project on Mechanicsville Road. The Select Board, after some deliberation, decided to grant the project \$15,000 from the ARPA funds and \$15,000 from the town's revolving loan fund for a total of \$30,000 as requested. Carl wants to know if we should go back before the Select Board to see if all \$30,000 could come from ARPA funds, which are available for a limited time, and save the revolving loan fund for the Windy Ridge project. Xander and Dave said yes, and the rest of us agreed as well. Carl will see if we can get on the agenda for one of the Select Board's May meetings. Xander commented that from the CCRPC meeting, local funding matters. Andy said every subsidy application asks if there are town funds involved.

Planning Commission Zoning Modernization Proposal: This is an ongoing process that the HPC has been tackling for the last few months. Dale attended their last meeting. Alex believes our committee will be happy with what they are doing, but we can monitor the situation if necessary.

Review Future Guests Joining Our Meetings: In May we have Caroline Carpenter, President of the National Bank of Middlebury. She wants to attend one of our meetings to see what we're working on and if the bank can help in some manner. In June, we have Champlain Housing Trust to give us an update on Windy Ridge. Additionally, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) can attend our June meeting. There is also a town resident who works for the Franklin County Regional Planning Commission and does their ADU work, and he's willing to come to one of our meetings, possibly along with the bank since ADUs require funding. Regarding how the bank can help, Beth has heard of a program on Cape Cod where someone goes to apply for an ADU, and the town directs them to a bank that provides funding for ADUs. Rocky then reminded us that we need to wrap up our Town Plan Update recommendations before the end of June, and we'll need time to do that, and Dale agreed. We decided to leave May open for the town plan discussion and have some of these guests starting in June. A quick note, there is a meeting on May 29th regarding the town zoning changes. They may affect the Joe Laster project so we will want to track that.

Richmond Affordable Housing Committee: This is a new committee that is just starting up. They requested Carl meet with them.

Project Updates: There are no project updates, other than seeing equipment at Joe Laster's project, not hearing any information about an HCP2 appeal of the rejection of their Act 250 permit, or any news on the Act 250 permit process for Haystack Crossing (HC). Beth mentioned seeing that the town's approval of the HCP2 project hinged on a crossing being built over the stream between HCP2 and HC. The town is trying to work through the options on what to do. Dale heard that the problem was the HCP2 developer wanted to use a precast culvert, like where the stream runs under Route 116. But the state requires a clear span bridge so there is no damming effect of any floodwaters.

HAHC Membership Vacancies: Carl has a name to contact from one of the mobile home parks to potentially fill one of our two vacancies and will follow up on that.

Approve Minutes from March 27th: We reviewed the 3/27/24 minutes. Xander motioned they were to be approved and Rocky seconded. They were approved by voice vote.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:45 PM.

Next Meeting –

May 22nd – Time and topics to be determined; see agenda on the town website.

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Wernhoff
HAHC Secretary

DRAFT