

Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
March 8, 2023
Approved March 22, 2023

Members Present: Barbara Forauer, John Kiedaisch, Alison Lesure, Denver Wilson, James Donegan (via Zoom).

Members Absent: Dan Baldwin, Lenore Budd, Nicholas Chlumecky, Marie Gardner.

Also: Alex Weinhausen (Director of Planning & Zoning).

Public Present (via Zoom): None

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

1. Agenda Changes

None.

2. Public Comment for Non-agenda Items

None.

3. Minutes of February 22, 2023 meetings

No updates needed.

Denver W. **made a motion, seconded by** Alison L., **to approve the minutes of 2/22/23 as written. The motion passed 5-0.**

4. Bylaw Modernization for Housing – Preview & Primer

Alex W. shared that Hinesburg was awarded a bylaw modernization grant (for FY2022) from the state, with the objective to review and improve zoning regulations to incentivize the creation of housing in the village growth area, especially multi-unit dwellings. Alex W. put out a Request for Proposal (RFP), and a VT-based planning firm, Place Sense, was selected to work on the project. Alex W. noted the consultants from Place Sense will attend the Planning Commission (PC) meetings scheduled on 3/22/23, 4/26/23, and 5/10/23 to review what improvements/updates can be made to current zoning regulations (relative to housing), get feedback from the PC regarding any potential changes to the regs, and ultimately produce (over the course of several meetings) a final report to share with the public at a hearing in June 2023.

Alex W. shared that the state worked with a consultant, The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), and they came up with Vermont specific best practices for zoning, especially in growth areas, to allow for housing. The report that CNU published provided a “menu”, detailing different ways zoning regulations could be updated (both large and small). Alex W. reiterated that as a policy board, the PC has the authority to determine what changes/updates (if any) are proposed for Hinesburg. Alex W. said he hopes the result of this project is to provide Hinesburg with an improved set of zoning regulations, and that those updates meet the grant requirements to get the entire grant amount.

Alex W. said that in order to avoid paying a 10% match (for a 20k grant), there are required outcomes that must be met, some of those being: a development density that will support at least 4 units per acre in the growth area (village growth area); reduction of non-conformities by having zoning regulations that don't disallow the current pattern of development; and parking requirements.

Alex W. shared that Place Sense has already done a technical review of Hinesburg's zoning regulations in preparation for the upcoming review sessions with the PC, and a good amount of the recommendations come from the report that CNU produced – focusing on legalizing the existing development patterns, allowing for more in-fill and re-development projects (particularly of large single-family homes), and also increasing density. Alex W. noted that Hinesburg has been good at incentivizing the type of development that most benefits the community. Alex W. said that in 2017 the Affordable Housing Committee (AHC) conducted a housing needs assessment that highlighted the different types of housing Hinesburg was in need of (senior housing, smaller housing options, and more accessible housing/single-level), and the PC should keep this in mind while working on this project. Alex W. suggested the PC keep in mind the context and applicability of zoning updates, not just in the village growth area but town-wide. Alex W. thought it was interesting to read the feedback from Place Sense regarding Hinesburg's zoning regs, and to see how they have been added to over the last 50 years in a piece-meal way, rather than a total overhaul to bring them into the 21st century.

John K. noted that the CNU supports making small changes instead of massive changes, as a philosophy and that helps to keep the process more effective and manageable. Alex W. said that the technical review had so many suggestions for improvements, it would probably make sense to come up with a list of priorities and address those over time. Alex W. added that he hopes the PC will work to keep the changes in digestible sections, rather than huge sweeping changes.

Alison L. asked if the AHC or the DRB will be involved in the review process and give their input. Alex W. said the AHC will be involved in the review process, and he will invite the DRB to participate as well. Denver W. thought there were good suggestions in the CNU packet that are relevant to a lot of what the PC has been talking about.

5. Other Business:

Alex W. noted that the Town of Charlotte sent a notice of public hearing regarding cannabis land-use regulations.

Alex W. reviewed the election results, and noted that the position of Town Clerk/Treasurer will continue to be elected and not appointed.

Denver W. **adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:50 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Danielle Peterson, Planning & Zoning Administrative Assistant