

Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
June 14, 2023
Approved June 28, 2023

Members Present: Dan Baldwin, Lenore Budd, Nicholas Chlumecky (via Zoom), James Donegan, Barbara Forauer (via Zoom), John Kiedaisch, Alison Lesure, Denver Wilson

Members Absent: *Marie Gardner has resigned from the commission.

Staff: Alex Weinhagen (Director of Planning & Zoning)

Public Present (In person): Kevin McDonald, Jeff French, Joe Iadanza, Robert Mello, Priscilla Reidinger, Andrea Morgante, Pat & Dean Laforce, Jennifer Decker, Dave & Kathy Newton, John Little, Matt Giroux, Howard Russell, George Dameron, Bill Marks, Meg Handler, Anne Donegan, Merrily Lovell, Rolf Kielman.

Public Present (via Zoom): Anne Sullivan, Richard Bailey, Drew Lepple, Marianna Holzer, Janet Francis, Annamarie Cioffari, Jean Kiedaisch, Kate Schubart, Michael & Lori Hennessey, Margaret McNurlan, Tyler Sparks, Diane Kingston, Tobi Schulman, Kate Kelley, Phil Pouech, Lia Cravedi, Tony St. Hilaire, Maggie Gordon, Patti Drew, Joe Laster.

Denver W. called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 PM.

1. Agenda Changes:

None.

2. Public Comment for Non-agenda Items:

None.

3. Minutes from May 24, 2023 meeting:

Denver W. **made a motion, seconded by** Alison L., **to approve the minutes from the 5/24/23 meeting with the proposed changes. The motion passed 7-0**, with John K. abstaining.

4. Public Hearing – Proposed Revisions to the Zoning & Subdivision Regulations

a. Presentation – overview of proposed changes to Rural Residential 1:

Alex W. said the Hinesburg Town Plan is the driving force behind these proposed changes, and noted a specific action item in the Town Plan for the Planning Commission (PC) to assess and revise zoning for the Rural Residential 1 (RR1) district to reinforce the rural character of the area, particularly the northern and southern portions of the district. The proposed revision to the RR1 zoning district is to divide it into three new zoning districts (Residential 3, Residential 4, Rural 1) to better reflect different land forms, patterns of development, and land use priorities.

- Residential 3 (Res-3) - Prioritize housing diversity to address Town and State housing goals. *Development potential one acre per home – e.g., a 24-acre parcel could have up to 24 homes.*
- Residential 4 (Res-4) - Prioritize residential development that identifies natural and cultural resources, providing a transition between the more rural areas and more densely developed areas. *Development potential – three acres per home – e.g., a 24-acre parcel could have up to eight homes.*
- Rural 1 (Rur-1) - Prioritize ecosystem services and limiting impacts on the natural landscape while retaining development potential that aligns with the adjacent Agricultural (AG) and Rural Residential 2 (RR2) zoning districts. Create consistent zoning expectations and regulations among Hinesburg’s rural zoning districts. *Development potential – 10/12/15 acres per home*

based on quality of public road providing access. Same system used in the other two rural districts (AG & RR2) - e.g., a 24-acre parcel served by a paved or gravel road could have up to two homes.

b. Public comments and questions:

- Ray Nails – Advocated for a path on Richmond Road, as there are many people who walk, run or bike along the road. He noted it's dangerous and should be addressed. Merrily L. noted that the Selectboard is actively pursuing funding to put in a sidewalk along Richmond Road.
- George Dameron – Asked how the district lines were drawn and Denver W. provided insight into the process the Planning Commission (PC) used to determine district line changes (i.e., current development patterns, the town plan, and in general parcel lines).
- Kevin McDonald – Noted that his property is divided by the proposed district changes, and suggested using roads as dividing lines. Noted his disapproval of the proposal, and stated the land should just be left as it is. At a later point in the meeting Kevin asked how landowners would be compensated for the loss of development potential from their land.
- Pat & Dean LaForce - Asked whether the Town has taken into consideration the impact these changes will have on land value and taxes for homeowners. Pat noted they pay very high taxes, and just having the option to develop the land is important (and not necessarily something they would even do). Alex W. noted because their property is separated by Lavigne Hill, each of the parcels have subdivision potential. Dean noted they don't want to develop each parcel, and would like to keep as much open as possible, but with these changes it doesn't seem like they will be able to do that. Alex W. said he would be happy to talk off-line with the LaForce's to discuss further options for their land. There was general discussion about Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) as a possible option.
- John Little – Asked if it was possible to include zoning for children or grandchildren, to keep family units together.
- Tony St. Hilaire – Stated he has not been in favor of these proposed changes from the beginning. He believes the 3-acre zoning works fine. He is not in favor of adding more development in the Res 3 area. He believes the PC is more interested in looking after the land/environment, and not landowners.
- Joe Iadanza – Thanked the PC for the work they have done thus far. He asked if the minimum lot size of 0.5-acres is appropriate or should it be changed based on experience using it in the AG district (i.e., possibly lower/smaller). He encouraged the PC to consider the area along Pond Road near Lake Iroquois differently than the rest of Res-4, for example a separate or overlay district, in order to address water quality issues and erosion. He noted that the Res-3 district extends east of Iroquois Manufacturing, including areas that are served by municipal water but not municipal wastewater, and he recommended that area have a different development density allowance and not allow multiunit structures beyond a duplex. Joe also noted a wildlife corridor runs across Richmond Road in the Res-3 district and that the conservation design standards don't apply in this district. He recommended adding a "light version" of the design standards for Res-3. Specifically, consideration of wildlife corridors – e.g., the mapped corridor, streams, topography, etc.

- Jennifer Decker – Agreed with a lot of what she has heard so far regarding the proposed changes. She believes growth is not inevitable, and she feels the main exception made should be for affordable housing. Noted climate refugees and the need for more housing. She suggested smaller homes. We all need access to nature to nurture our souls. Tiny homes and ADUs are appealing as creative housing options. Not enough quality public housing. Keep as much nature as we can, and housing should be fair accessible and affordable housing.
- Ellen Talbert (via Zoom Chat) – Asked a specific question regarding her property on Richmond Road.
- Jeff French – Asked for clarification on the area of Res-4 within Rural 1 (the donut hole). Denver W. explained the rationale behind the small Res-4 section within Rural 1.
- Andrea Morgante – Said it's important to consider the ability of the town to maintain the roads and infrastructure in these areas.
- Kate Kelley – On behalf of the Conservation Committee (CC), strongly supports the changes being proposed. She noted several specific recommendations from the CC that are detailed in the letter that was submitted prior to the public hearing.
- Rolf Kielman – Asked if there are substantial differences between the proposed Rural-1 district and the existing AG and RR2 districts. There was general discussion about the differences and similarities between those districts. Rolf added that zoning regulations are already complicated, so if the districts are essentially the same, why not call them the same. Rolf added that he could tell this process has been stressful, as indicated by Alex's hairdo.
- Howard Russell – Asked for examples of how climate change impacts, mitigation and adaption were factored into the regulation changes. Alison L. provided some background to how those were considered in the proposal.
- Bill Marks – Noted that our understanding of climate change has come a long way since the creation of RR2, and thought core forest and wildlife habitats be raised to primary resources. He also suggested that density should be calculated on developable land (excluding steep slopes and wetlands) and thinks both RR2 and RR1 should be changed to reflect.
- Tobi Schulman – Appreciates the work the PC has done to move these changes forward. She noted the importance of protection of the existing wildlife corridors in Res-3.
- Kate Schubart (via Zoom Chat): Asked for clarification about accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Alex W. noted the State allows for ADUs with liberal size requirements.
- John Little – Asked how many vernal pools are in Hinesburg and are they mapped. Alex W. said vernal pools are small, ephemeral wetlands, and hard to document. A wetland consultant would need to be brought in to make an assessment. John said following the State regulations for wetlands makes sense, but not extra rules beyond those applied by the state.
- Meg Handler – Strongly supports the work the PC has done. She noted three concerns: the area of Pond Road above Lake Iroquois and issues with water quality (steep slopes and type of soil) and water run-off issues; interior Forest blocks should be moved to a primary resource, not secondary; and preparation for non-human climate refugees and wildlife connectivity is vital for biodiversity.
- Bob Mello – Asked for clarification regarding minimum lot size and acreage required in the proposed districts. Alex W. said the proposal establishes a maximum development

density that determines how many lots a person can create. The lot size can be somewhat flexible, based on what works for the landowner.

- c. Alex W. noted comments were received ahead of the public hearing from: Frank Babbott, Phil Pouech & Lia Cravedi, Peter Erb, Jeff French, Kate Kelley, Jean Isham, Connie Kendall, Pat Mainer, John Penoyar, Charlene Van Sleet, Johanna White, Joe Bissonette, Tony St. Hilaire, Joe Laster.
- d. Next steps:
 - Continue the public hearing to June 28th to allow for additional feedback. The June 28th meeting will be a discussion of revisions based on feedback and comments.

5. Other Business

- a. News, announcements, correspondence, etc.
 - b. Marie Gardner resigned from PC and there is now a vacancy on the Commission.

Denver W. **adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:01 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Danielle Peterson, Planning & Zoning Administrative Assistant