

Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
October 11, 2023

APPROVED OCTOBER 25, 2023

Members Present: Becky Alford (arrived after approval of 9/27 meeting minutes), Lenore Budd, Nicholas Chlumecky (via Zoom), John Kiedaisch, Alison Lesure, John Little, Denver Wilson

Members Absent: James Donegan, Barbara Forauer

Staff: Alex Weinhausen (Director of Planning & Zoning)

Public Present: Jennifer Decker (via Zoom)

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

1. Agenda Changes & Public Comments for non-agenda Items:

None.

2. Minutes from September 27, 2023 meeting:

Denver W. **made a motion, seconded by John L., to approve the minutes from the 9/27/23 meeting as drafted. The motion passed 5-0-1**, with John K. abstaining. Becky A. had not yet arrived.

3. Bylaw Modernization for Housing

Continued from 8/23/23 meeting

a. Affordable housing thresholds:

Alex W. reviewed his memo dated October 4, 2023 that explained a couple of inclusionary zoning revision sticking points that came up at the August 23rd Planning Commission (PC) meeting. He then shared input from the Hinesburg Affordable Housing Committee (AHC) on these points. They recommended the following revisions to the inclusionary zoning section of the Zoning Regulations:

- Rental unit affordability level: 80% of Area Median Income (AMI). Income eligibility level: up to 100% of AMI.
- Ownership unit affordability level: 100% of AMI. Income eligibility level: up to 120% of AMI.
- The minimum percentage of affordable units should increase from the current 10% to 15%.

Denver W. noted his support of the recommendations made by the AHC. Lenore B. asked why the Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) regulations only take effect when creating 10 or more dwelling units, and wondered if lowering that number to 8 might make more sense. Alex W. explained that larger projects have greater ability to absorb the cost of units that might be priced below market rate better than smaller projects. Alex W. also noted that Hinesburg was one of the first communities to adopt inclusionary zoning, and it was modeled on those found in Burlington and it was considered controversial. Lenore B. reiterated her opinion that if affordable housing is what the Commission is working towards, why not lower the threshold for triggering inclusionary zoning from 10 units to 8 units. Alex W. will follow up with the Affordable Housing Committee (AHC) and others to get feedback on Lenore's suggestion to lower the inclusionary zoning trigger for new developments projects with 10 units to 8 units.

Jennifer Decker made some comments, including a concern about the income eligibility levels being too high, and recommendations that Planning Commission do more to help require/create housing that is affordable to lower income households. Alex W. reviewed a few examples from other municipalities with inclusionary zoning regulations or similar ordinances. The Commission discussed, and directed Alex W. to incorporate the Affordable Housing Committee's recommendations into the zoning regulation revision proposal.

b. Village area design standards applicability:

Alex W. explained that the current zoning regulations apply the village area design standards to all new development – i.e., projects requiring DRB review and projects requiring just a simple zoning permit. The project consultant (PlaceSense) recommended applying these standards only to projects requiring DRB review, to be more consistent with other municipalities. Alex W. disagreed and recommended leaving the applicability of these standards unchanged. He indicated that the PC tuned these design standards up within the last year, and the PC discussed this issue at that time and reaffirmed that these standards should apply to the construction of single unit and two-unit dwellings, which simply require a zoning permit. The PC also discussed that most of the general and street standards (referred to as site-level standards in the existing regulations) would be reviewed and decided by the DRB as part of the subdivision review for a development. Building-level standards would also be reviewed by the DRB for projects that require site plan review. However, the DRB is not involved in reviewing building design for single homes and two-unit homes, so the Zoning Administrator (ZA) must have the authority to apply those standards.

The Commission discussed and directed Alex W. to leave the applicability of these standards unchanged. The Commission discussed next steps for the bylaw modernization regulation revisions. Alex W. will get the PC a revised and complete draft at a future meeting, with the hope of going to a public hearing in January 2024.

4. Planning Commission Work Plan & Budget Review

a. Updated project list and time horizons

Alex W. reviewed the updated project list that details the PC's current projects, possible future projects based on prior discussions, and completed projects. The Commission discussed which projects should be a priority for the next 12-18 months, of note was to update the Town Plan and the resource conservation discussion. There were discussions about many ideas, some of which included; land conservation in Hinesburg; updating flood hazard modeling and regulations; collaboration with surrounding towns to create connecting commuter/recreational bike paths.

b. FY24-25 Planning & Zoning Budget

Alex W. presented the proposed Planning and Zoning Department budget. He indicated that the "Special Projects" line item includes \$3,000 to serve as local match for an annual planning grant from the State (Municipal Planning Grant program), and \$4,000 to serve as local match for the annual unified work program of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission.

c. Municipal Planning Grant – discuss possible project ideas

The PC discussed ideas for this year's State planning grant (Municipal Planning Grant program), the application deadline for which is November 1. Alex W. presented a project idea based on suggestions from Lenore B. that would focus on updated hydrological modeling for the village area based on plans for four large developments and more frequent and heavier rainfall due to climate change. The PC endorsed this project idea. Alex W. said that he will present it for Select Board approval at their October 18th meeting.

5. Other Business

- a. Planning news and announcements
- b. Notice – Town of Monkton hearing on October 17th for a Town Plan revision
- c. Agenda items for the October 25, 2023 meeting

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

Respectfully submitted,
Danielle Peterson
Planning and Zoning Administrative Assistant