

Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
October 25, 2023

APPROVED ON NOVEMBER 8, 2023

Members Present: Becky Alford (via Zoom), Lenore Budd, James Donegan (via Zoom), John Kiedaisch, Alison Lesure, John Little

Members Absent: Nicholas Chlumecky, Barbara Forauer, Denver Wilson

Staff: Alex Weinhagen (Director of Planning & Zoning)

Public Present: None

Lenore B. **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 October 11, 2023 meeting:

John L. **made a motion, seconded by John K., to approve the minutes from the 10/11/23 meeting as amended. The motion passed 6-0.**

4. Town Plan Update – Schedule & Process:

Alex W. explained the process of updating the Town Plan is governed by a statutory requirement, and serves as the framework for planning the future of Hinesburg, especially with regard to the decisions that will guide the Town's growth. He also noted that the Planning Commission (PC) must solicit the input and participation of members of community as part of the process. Alex W. said the Town Plan is updated every eight years, and needs to be approved by the Regional Planning Commission.

John L. asked how the maps used in the Town Plan are updated, and Alex W. explained that many of the maps come from the Regional Planning Commission or the State, and are very useful to tell a story that's easier to understand than just words. Alex W. also noted that many of the maps show features that don't need updating (i.e., flood hazard areas, streams, prime ag soils, etc.), and if a better data set has come out since a map was created, the newest information will be used. Lenore B. noted that the town committees or commissions should review the applicable maps (i.e., Trails Committee, Conservation Commission, etc.).

Alex W. said that the town regulatory documents implement the Town Plan, so if there isn't language in the plan that addresses the needed updates and revisions to those documents, there could be some legal questions as to whether we can. He added that the update of the Town Plan is a good time to look at the official town map, and the zoning and subdivision regulations.

Alison L. asked if there was any follow-up by the PC with the various committees to ensure they are working towards the goals identified in the Town Plan. Alex W. explained that during the last review period, the PC tried to involve most of the committees in drafting sections of the Town Plan, so those committees had a vested interest in the work. He added that once the Town Plan was adopted, and the committees received their action items, there could've been more regular check-ins and follow-up by the PC to make sure those action items were being addressed. Alex W. also said that it would

be helpful for a Planning Commissioner to attend a meeting for each of the Town committees during the year, to help work towards the implementation goals. John K. shared that he attended a Recreation Commission meeting and noticed they were more focused on running activities (i.e., an operational focus), rather than planning ahead for what the community may want. Alex W. said that the Recreation Commission has a good handle of what the department can provide as services to the community, and that Hinesburg really needs a Public Works Department so that there is someone who can think about all aspects of public works (i.e., sidewalks, parks, rec fields, etc.). Alison L. asked if it was possible to have a session with the Planning Commission and a representative from each of the town committees, and Alex W. said it was possible but that he's had better results going to the people you want feedback from, rather than waiting for them to come to you. Alex W. shared some information about the previous public feedback survey done with the last update to the Town Plan, and the participation rates. There was additional discussion about what sections of the community are traditionally not represented, and how to reach those different demographics. Alex W. encouraged the Commissioners to continue brainstorming ways to solicit feedback, and how to best to receive that information. There was also discussion about the timeframe the PC is working within to ensure enough time is provided to receive the public feedback and to meet the necessary deadlines.

There was general discussion about other projects the Commission has been working on, and where those projects fall on the work plan.

5. Planning Commission Work Plan (*Continued from October 11 meeting*):

Alex W. reminded the Commissioners at their last meeting they discussed applying for a municipal planning grant for a project focused on flood resilience and hydrological modeling. Alex W. said that Barbara F. asked to include river corridors as a priority project on the PC work plan. Alison L. noted a VT State land conservation bill – “30 by 30”, that sets a goal to permanently conserve 30% of all land in Vermont by 2030, be incorporated into the work plan. Lenore B. said that the conservation design standards need to be revised, specifically protection of vernal pools and the issue of primary and secondary resource protection. John L. reiterated his interest in exploring the possibility of a commuter bike path, and John K. suggested that by emphasizing the need to provide safe bike paths for students attending CVU could generate buy-in from a wider population than just Hinesburg. Becky A. said she was in support of anything that helped to promote safe paths to schools, and noted a general theme of climate resilience and what rural communities of the future look like that have a mind towards climate resilience. Alex W. said that if Hinesburg is going to work towards encouraging safe bicycle routes between towns, it should happen first in Hinesburg, and he doesn't think it current is. Lenore B. said that a goal of the Trails Committee is to work towards an interconnected network of trails, paths, etc., so it's not just the PC interested in this type of project.

Alison L. asked what happens after the PC decides on the work plan for the next 18 months and Alex W. noted the following: 30 x 30 will be part of the Town Plan with some specific action items; flood resilience and river corridors will require updating the town regulations to account for new language and being more flood resilient; and the conservation design standards should be addressed as part of the town plan, but will be an action item to update the regulations in ways that are meaningful and that people will support; and the commuter/pedestrian bike paths. John K. also noted that our infrastructure needs (i.e., unpaved roads) to be updated to reflect climate change. Lenore B. suggested that the Town Plan revision process will help to inform the PC focus and future projects, and Alison L. agreed.

6. Other Business:

a. Planning news and announcements:

Lenore B. recommended a book titled, “Poverty by America” by Matthew Desmond. Alex W. recommended a New Yorker article on the demise of San Francisco (parallels to Burlington). John K. recommended an episode of ON BEING – a discussion with author Janine Benyus about her book “Biomimicry, an Operating Manual for Earthlings.” <https://onbeing.org/programs/janine-benyus-biomimicry-an-operating-manual-for-earthlings/>.

Alex W. shared information about the ground-breaking ceremony for the addition to Kelley’s Field Senior Housing.

b. Agenda items for the November 8, 2023 meeting were discussed.

c. November 22nd and December 27th meetings are cancelled.

Lenore B. **adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:08 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Danielle Peterson
Planning and Zoning Administrative Assistant