

**Town of Hinesburg**  
**Planning Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**January 10, 2024**  
*Approved January 24, 2024*

**Members Present:** Becky Alford, Lenore Budd, Nicholas Chlumecky (via Zoom), John Kiedaisch (via Zoom), John Little, Denver Wilson

**Members Absent:** James Donegan, Barbara Forauer, Alison Lesure

**Staff:** Alex Weinhausen (Director of Planning & Zoning)

**Public Present via Zoom:** None

Denver W. **called the meeting to order at approximately 7:04 PM**

**1. Agenda Changes:** None.

**2. Public Comments for non-agenda Items:** None.

**3. Minutes from November 8, 2023 and December 13, 2023 meetings:**

Lenore B. **made a motion, seconded by John K., to approve the minutes from the 11/8/23 meeting as amended. The motion passed 6-0.**

Denver W. **made a motion, seconded by Nick C., to approve the minutes from the 12/13/23 meeting as amended. The motion passed 6-0.**

**4. Town Plan Update:**

**a. Overview of existing Town Plan:**

Alex W. explained that the last major review and update of the Town Plan was done in 2017, however, there was a revision in 2021 to the energy chapter. Alex W. said the existing Town Plan is broken into sections which include: demographics & housing; land use; economic development; natural resources; community facilities; transportation; energy; and cultural resources. He noted that one of the formatting changes made in 2017 was to include action items at the beginning of the plan, rather than burying them in individual chapters.

Lenore B. asked if the survey (soliciting public feedback about Town Plan) was live, and Alex confirmed it was and that he would begin advertising it to the public the next day. Lenore asked whether any current members of the Planning Commission (PC) were present during the last Town Plan review and Alex said that John K., Barbara F., and James Donegan (longest serving Commissioner) were all on the PC at the time the last Town Plan was adopted. Lenore also said she reviewed the Vermont State Statutes and was surprised that there were few guidelines for how municipalities should format their town plans. Alex said that the Town Plan is required to address certain elements but the State Statute doesn't lay out how to do so, or provide a comprehensive list. Alex explained that the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) provides assistance to towns by reviewing plans and determining whether they meet the regulatory requirements. Alex also said the CCRPC is going to begin an early review of the current

Town Plan and will work with the Planning Commission (PC) to provide feedback for the next update. Alex said that the PC in 2017 completely reworked the design of the Town Plan, but there is flexibility for what the next version looks like and what topics are covered. Becky A. asked how the HOME Act might influence the Town Plan, and Alex said that it primarily impacts zoning regulations, however, it should be addressed in the housing section of the Plan. Alex added that the Home Act requires regional planning commissions to take data from the State's Housing Needs Assessment and come up with regional housing targets (how much new housing needs to be created) which should also be included in the Town Plan.

Denver W. asked what prompts a revision of a Town Plan and Alex said the State Statute says that municipal plans need to be comprehensively looked at every eight years or more frequently. Denver asked what the PC will do with the public survey feedback and Alex said the PC should focus on the issues that the community feels are important since the last time the community was surveyed was 10 years ago. Alex added that he isn't expecting specific action items from the survey, more so general themes like the Town needs more sidewalks, or concerns regarding property taxes. Alex explained that there are sections in the Town Plan that probably won't change much between the last plan and the new one (i.e., geology of Hinesburg, wildlife habitat). Alex also said that priorities may have changed over the past 10 years, or there could be new/better data to inform the Town Plan but it doesn't need to be reinvented, rather a focus on action items to achieve new goals. John K. noted the importance of addressing issues or problems that perhaps didn't exist at the time of the last revision, as well as focusing on ways that the Plan could be improved upon.

Alex explained the purpose of the Town Plan is to provide a comprehensive vision for the community, and it enables the Town to change our land-use regulations. He also said that he uses it for grant writing as a way to prioritize projects that the community deems important. The Town Plan is also used in the Act 250 (statewide development review system for large developments) and Section 248 (development review system for utility projects) processes, and whether a project is consistent with the vision for the community as expressed in the Plan. The action items in the Town Plan also help provide direction for the volunteer town committees (i.e., conservation, affordable housing, etc.).

Becky A. spoke about the need for a variety of public outreach options to help reach a larger audience, and she thought that it was important to revisit that notion frequently, especially when talking about the Town Plan update. Becky added that being creative and diverse with public outreach will help to create buy-in from committees and community members. There was some additional discussion about how public feedback is received, tracked, and shared (outside of the survey results) and how that information could be better organized.

Nick C. said it can be easy to become paralyzed by having too much information. Alex said having and following a schedule will help to facilitate receiving and compiling the data.

Alex reviewed the action items from the previous Town Plan and whether those goals were met and how.

**b. Issue areas to focus on:**

Lenore B. shared four areas that are important to her to focus on in the new Town Plan: housing; flood resilience; conservation of natural systems/ecosystem function; the idea of and sensitivity to affordable government.

John L. shared that he is interested in focusing on: flooding; the possibility of land buy-back for areas that cannot be developed; making development a priority (or making development easier) in areas of municipal water and sewer. John L. asked if Alex thought there were things missing from the Town Plan when he (Alex) would write grants and Alex said he would need to think about that. Alex added that if we know there are going to be projects that the community wants to pursue over the next 10 years that will require grant funding, there needs to be something in the plan that addresses those. John L. also said increased pedestrian safety should be a focus.

Denver W. said addressing the influx of new residents to Hinesburg is going to be important and Becky A. agreed, especially since Vermont is one of the most climate resilient states. She added that thinking more about what diversity of affordable housing is going to be key. Denver also brought up crime in relation to healthy and safety becoming an increasing concern of folks.

John K. said any focus on preservation of natural habitat is very important, as well as our response to climate change with regard to road structure (hillside dirt roads).

Nick C. said paying attention to infrastructure and how people move through the Town, particularly in the Village Growth Area was important to him.

Becky A. asked if health and safety was a section, and if it wasn't, perhaps it could be added to another section. She also mentioned a focus on becoming less car-dependent. Becky A. mentioned third spaces are lacking in the community. Becky added that collaborating with the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) committee is going to be really important.

**c. Chapter Assignments:**

The chapters that were included in the last Town Plan were Housing, Land-use, Economic Development, Natural Resources, Community Facilities, Transportation, Energy, and Cultural Resources. Alex W. noted that there are several Town Committees that correlate with the chapters, so if a person were to "adopt" a chapter it might make sense for that person to also liaise with the respective Town Committee. Denver W. thought it might make sense for this to be pushed to another meeting, especially for the folks who were not at the meeting.

**d. Town Committee liaison assignments:**

Lenore expressed her interest in working with the Trails Committee, and thought it made sense

for her to focus on the transportation and recreation chapters. Becky A. agreed to work with the DEIB Committee as a liaison but also would like to be involved in the housing chapter work. John K. would like to work with the Conservation Commission as a liaison, and he asked how the work done by the Cemetery Commission would be incorporated into the Town plan, and Alex said in the Community Facilities chapter. Alex W. added that if John K. was interested in reaching out to the Cemetery Commission, he would be welcome to do so.

**e. Discussion items for January 24<sup>th</sup> meeting:**

The discussion will continue about chapter assignments and the bylaw modernization revisions need to be reviewed. Alex said the Commissioners should reach out to the Town Committee they plan to work with for the Town Plan review.

Lenore B. said it was important to have individuals who speak at PC meetings to identify themselves and what capacity they are attending (i.e., member of a committee, general public, etc.), especially for people who are participating via Zoom. Alex, Denver and Lenore resolved to help ensure this happens. Lenore also wondered whether having a name plate might also make sense. Alex said it might make sense to include a photo of each Commissioner on the Town website for public reference.

**5. Other Business:**

**a. Planning news and announcements:**

- Municipal planning grant awarded – hydrological study planned
- Route 116, Patrick Brook culvert replacement – planning study

**b. Agenda items for the January 24, 2024 meeting:**

- Bylaw modernization regulation revisions – consolidated draft.
- Discuss Town Plan update

Denver W. **adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:54 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Danielle Peterson  
Planning and Zoning Administrative Assistant