

**Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission
August 28, 2019
Approved September 11, 2019**

Members Present: Dan Myhre, Maggie Gordon, Joe Iadanza, John Kiedaisch, Barbara Forauer, Marie Gardner, Rolf Kielman, James Donegan

Members Absent: Dennis Place

Public Present: Steve Giroux, Matt Giroux, John Little, Mary Jo Brace

Also Present: Alex Weinhagen (Director of Planning & Zoning), Kate Kelly (Recording Secretary)

Maggie G. chaired the meeting, which was called to order at 7:00 PM.

Agenda Changes: Dan Myhre mentioned that he has the Winooski codes to review. Maggie G. replied it should go under design standards.

Public Comments for Non-Agenda Items: None.

Village Core Redevelopment Ideas

Rolf K. displayed some suggestions about making a village center. As we expand the village growth district, how do we create a place that feels like the heart of Hinesburg? He was interested in results of form-based codes, and other communities we've seen.

Rolf K. displayed a map of the area from Hinesburg Community School/Papa Nick's to Kinney Drugs. That distance is about 4,300 feet/16 minutes walk. We have been talking about expanding this area, and making bicycle and pedestrian movement easier. He displayed the draft official map, and displayed the geographic center of town.

Rolf K. then displayed Bristol's downtown = 1000 feet/4 minutes walk, and Church Street, Burlington = 1500 feet/6 minutes. He then compared to Vergennes (~1000 feet), and discussed the building styles, sizes, height. He discussed how bicycles aren't addressed there, and displayed photos of some of the buildings in Vergennes.

Rolf K. then displayed the center of Hinesburg, which is 1000 feet from Commerce Street to Mechanicsville Road. He looked at historic patterns in Hinesburg, and displayed some historic photos, including Lantman's, and the west side of 116 with Italianate buildings (popular in 1880-1890). He

wondered what would happen if we replicate that in some fashion, so building takes up some percentage of the frontage.

He displayed some structures his firm had worked on to make an adjoining building match in a historic context. He then displayed a more modern structure inserted between historic structures.

He displayed the area in Hinesburg again between Mechanicsville and Commerce St. – how could this parcel evolve? He displayed an example scenario, where he set the buildings back from the street somewhat; about same as Aubuchon mall, which he turned and added stories to. He displayed an alley/connection to Mechanicsville, and through to Commerce St. These are permeable buildings (gaps between buildings with potential for second or third floors to be contiguous). There is a narrow service lane out front, potentially with bike path.

Rolf K. then displayed a profile of the travel path along 116; with parallel parking on west side, bike path on east, landscaped service lane. There is more here than just trafficked pathways for vehicles. The space between the upper stories and 116 would make you feel comfortable to live there.

He then displayed a different scenario with angled parking along the east side of 116, parallel parking on other side of street, and no service lane in front of building. The area behind has space for 140 cars. Scale is similar, but could potentially have ground level residences for the elderly. He suggested that DarkStar should be closer to road.

Rolf K. then displayed the street profile, with angled parking (he mentioned reverse angled parking in Austin TX where you go past the spot and back in, which gives greater safety coming out of spot).

He then discussed how we don't need to be afraid of contemporary language or styles – mandating styles may not be anything we want to do. He displayed some contemporary buildings. He felt we could tackle form-based code.

Alex W. suggested that examining this example of an area for redevelopment might give the Commission an idea of how the zoning could allow for this type of use.

John K. suggested bringing these ideas around on Commerce St. as well; this could be a quieter area that has offices, residential, etc. Alex W. said that Burlington has had similar discussions about Pine St. (adding residential may inject something the commercial area can't come back from). Maggie G. asked if we want the design standards to apply to all areas, or if we will continue to have discrete zoning areas.

Marie G. suggested looking at the section in the zoning regarding historic building removal. They discussed historic buildings in town and areas that might need different zones.

Joe I. commented on the distances; it makes him wonder about some of the previous conversations they've had about Village NW.

Barbara F. mentioned that she liked the first example Rolf K. showed, with the service road; Joe I. said it would be busy and could create issues getting on and off 116/pedestrian issues. Rolf K. replied that he was trying to pull people back from 116; John K. said he could see it as service vehicles. Joe I. said he preferred the on-street diagonal parking. Joe I. liked the differentiation between the east and west side of 116, with business makeup on the west side (as we are unlikely to improve pedestrian access on that side of the street).

James D. asked how these plans jive with the landowner's ideas. Steve G. replied that any zoning regulations would restrict their use, which could make the land unusable/unsellable if it doesn't meet regulations. John L. said if they want small places to come in, if they have to pay for all this, they won't be able to afford it. He said he didn't feel people would just walk around there. Matt G. asked why located at these two dots; he felt there's nothing there that would make you want to be there. Why not use from Commerce St. up to CVU Road (where it's more open). John L. mentioned S. Burlington found an area where it's green and trees and they're trying to make it a space to start new. They mentioned traffic backup issues. Steve G. said villages have developed for last hundreds of years without planning and zoning. If no one comes in with deep pockets, no one will buy it, and no one can develop it. It has worked for hundreds of years without zoning. If rules could be written so that it could be modified based on what the town wants/needs at the time that would be good.

Rolf K. replied that historically communities were more self-contained 100 years ago, and there was a common understanding about how things got made. Now, it's not just Hinesburg, there are people moving through to shop, etc. He felt some of what Steve G. had to say about flexibility is germane, but still they'd like to help guide/make a better town. Rolf K. said they had reviewed what other towns have been doing. He chose this area because it is so central to the village itself; how do we write design standards that work and don't get in peoples' craw?

Alex W. mentioned there are two reasons for this: community members have expressed concern about all the development proposed in last 5 years; they are unsure that DRB process will produce something that Hinesburg can be proud of. Also, there has been concern about good development projects not knowing if they can get through the process in a reasonable timeframe without appeals that go on for years. These standards will give the community more confidence, and allow the developer/landowner to understand what we want and their review process can be less painful.

Steve G. said several projects never get past the Zoning Department because it is written in the zoning regulations; there's no flexibility, no common sense involved. They should be able to go to the right board to get the regulations adjusted. The more regulations you put in, the more their hands are tied and they can't do anything.

Alex W. said our Planned Unit Development tries to get at that; the history of litigation in Vermont is that the courts strike down rules that aren't black and white/clear. It's a fine line to walk between flexibility and predictability. Steve G. replied that if things are too strict you can't have different ideas for development.

Joe I. said there are cases where townspeople have come to them with convincing argument, and asked if they can change the regulations; this does happen from time to time. If nothing is ever said, nothing will happen unless Zoning Board brings it before them for a housekeeping change. Steve G. suggested we make things not so restrictive.

Joe I. gave an example of when he first joined the Planning Commission: we had Village NE zoned as agricultural; NRG made a good argument for why they should have a commercial area there. Within months, they changed the zoning to allow for this. Alex W. said when Iroquois Manufacturing expanded on north side of Richmond Rd., they wanted a small zoning change, and they were able to tack this on to ongoing changes. Marie G. said other towns do housekeeping changes more often than we do.

Alex W. said the beauty of the form-based code is that we don't restrict the uses of the building, just prescribe the shell of the building, and allow the market to determine what should be in that building. Alex W. said there is still traditional zoning, but form-based code determines how that should be built.

John K. said there's no reason that what Rolf K. displayed has to happen all at one time; rules should allow for incremental growth. The market and landowners would make the decision about when things happen. Discussion like this should happen.

John Little said it feels very targeted to this exact location. He doesn't feel this is the best location. Alex W. said the reason is the proximity/center of village as it builds out. It is also prime for redevelopment: buildings that aren't being used and space out front. John Little and Matt G. asked what would happen if they ended up with two large commercial buildings there. Matt G. felt the Commission doesn't like what the Giroux's have there and this is their way to correct it. He suggested using Charlotte Rd. and other green field development. Alex W. replied we will never get away from this being Main St., and businesses will want that location because it is on 116 with traffic.

Matt G. said they've tried to do things with the abandoned buildings and they've gotten nowhere with the Zoning office (re: parking/storage for construction equipment). They are concerned these standards would only apply to them. Alex W. said this is a discussion to be had about these standards being applied everywhere vs. in a smaller zone.

Maggie G. added that some people don't like the way it looks, but there are a lot of people in town who know about the origins of the town, and Giroux's symbolizes where Hinesburg got its start as Mechanicsville/a manufacturing center, and love seeing them there.

John K. said having the Giroux's perspective is helpful. Matt G. said location aside, from 3 PM to 6 PM you can't do anything on that road; you'll never get a parking spot or never get out. Joe I. said he understood the argument, but he felt Hannaford's wouldn't want it if they didn't think they'd benefit from the traffic going through. Matt G. added that he parks across the street on the east side for lunch at 1:15 PM; it takes him 5 minutes to get back across, and would be harder to pull out of a spot into that traffic.

Alex W. said George Dameron has raised similar concerns about traffic. We will always have backups during the peak hour in the evening. Alex W. said he sees their point, but agreed with Joe I. that businesses will want to be there.

Alex W. said the Commission has been talking about these standards since June, brainstorming and reviewing other towns' standards. Over the next month or two, they will draft something. Alex W. will keep them in the loop with drafts.

The Giroux's, John Little, and Mary Jo Brace left the meeting.

Architectural and Streetscape Design Standards

Dan Myhre reviewed the Winooski standards. His first reaction was that it was very detailed. He had to look through the packet few times to wrap his head around it, and it was confusing. There are different codes based on the zones or areas. This could be interesting to look at in Hinesburg. Alex W. pointed out that these zones are by street. Dan M. said there are some regulations that apply to multiple areas; some are specific to certain areas. Most relevant was the detached frontage section, which he discussed, and felt was more simple. Alex W. said this would be interesting to look at re: Village NW. Maggie G. asked if front porches are required; they are. Alex W. echoed Dan M.'s reaction that Winooski's code was dense and hard to parse, and he didn't find anything that would work in Hinesburg.

Marie G. commented that maybe everything doesn't need to look alike, to have more room for creativity. Maggie G. felt we should review if there are areas in the regulations where we are obstructing creativity.

Maggie G. hoped to segue at the next meeting from this proposal to looking specifically at the list Alex made of potential standards to make improvements. She asked if there was anything missing from the list Alex sent. They discussed the towns they reviewed, and Rolf K. felt Jericho's code was useful.

Minutes of August 14 Meeting:

Joe I. made a motion to approve the minutes of August 14, 2019 as amended, and Barbara F. seconded the motion. The Commission voted 8-0.

Other Business & Correspondence:

Kate Kelly reviewed the letter regarding stormwater planning sent by Meg Handler, Bob Hyams, and herself. Rolf K. asked about the precedent for hiring an external consultant. Alex W. said this has been done in the past, and procedurally, this would have to happen as part of DRB review (when DRB receives stormwater information, at preliminary plat review). They could then continue the review for 6-8 weeks to hire a consultant to review. Alex W. asked which applicant would trigger this; Rolf K. asked who is first in the cue (Alex W. replied it is likely Blackrock). Alex W. said that at the DRB, they have asked for an assessment of traffic to include approved projects, but this has not been done for stormwater or for a project that hasn't been approved. It would be difficult for an engineer to analyze without an approved plan. Joe I. felt it seemed that once you pull the trigger once, you have to have each applicant do this analysis.

Alex W. said that this Commission could request that the DRB listen to these recommendations. Or, the Planning Commission could be proactive and do another study ourselves, leverage those data to see what the cumulative effects are. Maggie G. said it is short-sighted to not stay on top of this, and we are all going to pay if we don't. She felt we need as clear a picture as possible. Marie G. felt the DRB is qualified to make the decision, and the Planning Commission doesn't need to make a recommendation. The Commission discussed.

Alex W. said we could pay for an expert to come up with a protocol for a new developer to plug in data, to make the process simpler. Marie G. asked if this is what we want to do. They discussed whether the Town has money to hire an engineer to do this analysis. Alex W. said they only have \$750 a year.

Joe I. said they have made recommendations before to the DRB, when they felt it was important, and it was a larger issue than the one application before them. Joe I. said he doesn't think it's unreasonable to write a recommendation letter. John K. suggested Alex W. investigate ways to get the funding; Joe I. said the funding is there, the developer may not like it, but it is through the applicant. Joe I. recommended that we write a letter; John K. agreed. Maggie asked Alex W. to draft a letter for them to review at their next meeting.

Alex W. said United Church is celebrating 100 years this year. They are discussing doing something different with the greenspace behind the church. Alex W. will be attending next week's meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Kelly, Recording Secretary