

**Town of Hinesburg  
Planning Commission  
February 12, 2020  
Approved February 26, 2020**

Members Present: Maggie Gordon, John Kiedaisch, Barbara Forauer, Dennis Place, Denver Wilson, and Dan Myhre; James Donegan entered the meeting a bit late.

Members Absent: Rolf Kielman, Marie Gardner

Public Present: Michael Bissonette, Carl Bohlen, Catherine Goldsmith

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

Maggie G. chaired the meeting, which was called to order at 7:01 PM.

**Agenda Changes:** None.

**Public Comments for Non-Agenda Items:** None.

**Public Hearing – Water/Wastewater Allocation Scoring System:**

Maggie G. opened the hearing. Alex W. provided an overview of the water/wastewater allocation scoring system. Two years ago, the Select Board appointed an ad hoc committee, which was charged with reviewing the current allocation system and looking for a way to improve it. They reviewed how other towns deal with allocation issues. The committee met for 6-9 months, then submitted recommendations. They proposed a new model inspired by what Williston does. The system would be based on a competitive system where projects would be scored; the project with the best score would get their allocation. The Planning Commission discussed and fine-tuned the scoring system, which is now before you for public hearing. There are other portions of this project that are still to be accomplished (zoning regulations). Currently, allocation is given out by the Select Board after conceptual review. Under this new proposal, the Select Board would give out a certain amount of money for allocation and once a year, and once a year, the Development Review Board would score all projects then give out allocation based on scores.

Alex W. mentioned that the scoring model is based on six categories. This scoring system only applies to the area within the municipal water/sewer area (the village area and Richmond Rd. up to Iroquois Manufacturing). This system would fall within zoning regulations. The six categories are: public infrastructure, jobs, housing needs, stormwater treatment (above and beyond state and town requirements), desired location/redeveloping an existing site vs. new greenfield/innovation, and energy

efficiency. Maximum points between the six categories is 100 points, and there's a maximum number of points you can earn in any one category.

Dan M. asked if we require projects to have a minimum score. Alex W. described that there is a minimum number of points, so that in years there is only one project, they will be encouraged to be the best project they can be. Dennis P. asked about how the competition would work; Alex W. described that second-place projects may only get a portion of their allocation. There are still steps that need to happen to make the full system work; this hearing is just for the scoring system portion of the project.

Dennis P. asked about if this would make developers wait a long time (a year) for review. Alex W. said this is possible (depends on timing of application), but we could amend this if we want to (allow multiple reviews per year, etc.).

Dan M. said he wonders about the need for this in Hinesburg right now (given how few applications we might have). Alex W. said we could have several in a year (we recently saw three sizable allocations in the same year), but there would be years we may not have any, or may have one. Dennis P. asked about extension of water/wastewater allocation – it is granted for 3 years, and possibly extended by Select Board.

John K. asked about the allocation under affordable housing. They reviewed the scoring system.

Dennis P. asked about what living wage is. Alex W. replied that the number used here is for a single person household (\$18.09/hr.). He will get back to the Commission on why it is different from the housing wage listed elsewhere.

Barbara F. responded to Dan M.'s question by saying that it is good to have in place, even if we don't use it in the next few years.

John K. asked why we are proposing it now. Alex W. replied that Andrea M. advocated for it when she was on the Select Board. The Board felt it was worth exploring, so they requested the Planning Commission to vet the scoring system.

Alex W. said they received one message from Nancy Dunlap, who commented that she found the system confusing and overly complex, and was wondering if it applied to everyone in town. She worried it might keep businesses out by making costs higher.

Peter Erb, who was a member of the Water/Wastewater Committee, sent an email endorsing the plans.

Carl Bohlen, who was a member of the Water/Wastewater Committee, said regarding affordable housing, Hinesburg was previously getting very little affordable housing using inclusionary zoning (1 for every 10). Williston was using this system to increase affordable housing, which our housing needs

assessment has been showing as important twice (10 years apart). We have a shortage of water, so it is worth defining some factors to make projects better. He suggested there should be a way to have a business get on a faster track. There should be a way for developers to know what they could do to get bonus points. We don't want to slow down businesses from building. Also, the DRB needs to know how to score these. He encouraged the Commission to look at it and try to finish out the project/process.

Dennis P. was concerned that developments could be built, and still not have affordable housing. Alex W. suggested they could change inclusionary zoning to address this. Alex W. agreed, and added that because this is an a la carte system, it is possible that any project doesn't address some of the categories (stormwater, affordable housing, etc).

John K. said the residential housing category requires a monitoring activity (that rent meets the certain level). Who monitors if rent increases or tenant's income increases? Alex W. said it is his department that should be doing this; he said he'd like to do this once a year. He mentioned that the Select Board has a special category for allocation; they agreed in the past that they should allow some of this to go to a development that had significant affordable housing.

Mike B. said it could stymie economic growth, so he'd agree with breaking out the commercial category. He asked how many towns have this type of system. Alex W. said only one does (Williston) – most either don't have the growth, or the limits to water/wastewater that we do. Some don't know what they have for water/wastewater capacity.

Catherine Goldsmith said that she wrote to Alex W. saying the town should have something like this years ago. It is a way for the town to get the features and development it wants. She is supportive of the concept.

Carl Bohlen said one of the major things stymying economic development is the lack of affordable housing; Vermont Smoke & Cure's employees can't find affordable housing. Catherine G. said she has a 2-bedroom apartment (800 sq. ft. that's affordable), and she gets huge response when it is up for rent. Dennis P. said these big projects shouldn't have a choice but to put in affordable housing. Catherine G. said she doesn't like how big projects segment housing (large houses in one spot, affordable housing in another); she'd like to see them mixed in. Alex W. said this is covered in inclusionary zoning, but isn't here.

Maggie G. asked how next steps would work. Alex W. said this would constitute a zoning regulation change; they would forward this to the Select Board for a zoning change. The Select Board would then wait to hold their public hearing until they figure out the additional details. John K. talked about if we need a different system for the two projects. The Commission felt they would like to review this. Dan M. said he'd like to learn more about how this might stymie economic development (businesses coming in). Alex W. said it could be a matter of reviewing more frequently; or we could mirror the Williston system and take businesses out of the scoring system. We mentioned this may not make a big

difference, because we will get more residential than commercial applications/development. Maggie G. suggested making a sub-committee to address this. Alex W. mentioned that scoring at the conceptual level review would be easier with residential uses than with non-residential, so maybe separating them like Williston does could be easier, as long as the Select Board is savvy enough to withhold capacity for commercial uses. Denver W. said the scoring system could be a valuable thing for the Select Board to have regardless. He asked if it is worth presenting now; Alex W. said he felt it would be better to give it to them with some structure behind it. There will be a lot of work at the Select Board level.

Maggie G. suggested a three member committee to fast track some changes. They could open it up again to extend the invitation to the previous water/wastewater committee, to come back with some of these issues addressed.

Carl B. said he doesn't recommend jettisoning economic development entirely, but rather to meet more frequently perhaps. He'd be willing to come back to help.

Denver W. replied to Dennis P.'s earlier comment about "a place we really want". The scoring system should show this, so perhaps apply an upper threshold (if you exceed this you can fast track the project). Alex W. said Williston does this, and the question is who does the scoring and when. Denver W. asked if you could task the applicant with scoring themselves. Alex W. replied that the way it usually works is the applicant makes their case, staff provides recommendations, and the DRB decides the score.

Mike B. said he is thinking more about a service industry business (hair salon, not NRG). They discussed the allocation for businesses (15 gallons per day per employee, as opposed to a single family home, which is 350 gallons/day). Smaller businesses would fall under 1,000 gallons a day, so would be able to opt out of this system.

Regarding the sub-committee, Dan M. was happy to join. Alex W. will reach out to former water/wastewater allocation committee to see if they are willing to return for a couple meetings.

Mike B. and Carl B. left the meeting.

Maggie G. closed the hearing. She welcomed Denver Wilson as the new Planning Commission member.

#### **Architectural & Streetscape Design Standards:**

Alex W. said he had fleshed out two of the eleven categories, and at the last meeting they only made it through the first one. Tonight, they will review the second one (permeability). They also reviewed rear parking standards (no change) and street grid.

Maggie G. wondered how to clarify the wording "facing the street"; how do we avoid the error of having the building facing one street (not the one people would be walking on)? John K. was concerned about

having two different entrances (the one you drive to vs. the one you walk by). Alex W. said this is more about the public experience (walking down the street), not the customer experience (driving in/parking in the back). Barbara F. mentioned the presentation Rolf K. made, with the gap in between buildings and parking in the back, and how appealing this was.

Dan M. asked in windows section about where the 20 feet came from. Maggie G. said she took it from Brattleboro regulations. They discussed Kinney Drugs and the permeability on that building by viewing it on Google Maps Streetview. John K. suggested that we want to see into the building, what they are selling, etc. Alex W. said there is an issue with usage of buildings (retail vs. office space vs. fire station etc.). They discussed if it's important to be able to see in vs. just have windows. They felt 20 feet is too much. Denver W. felt Kinney Drugs isn't uninviting. Alex W. said aesthetically the hardware store lot isn't pleasing, and would not want to replicate. Denver W. was concerned about this making it difficult for developers; Alex W. and John K. felt this was ok, as other towns have similar restrictions and helps developers know what the town is looking for. The Commission mentioned Blue Cottage and Dee PT with many windows.

Catherine Goldsmith, as a member of the Village Steering Committee, wanted to visit to see the process and where they are. She will report back; the Committee has a landscape architect and an architect with planning background on it, and they could get involved.

Alex W. recommended a walk around Commerce St. and behind Kinney's to review before next meeting.

#### **Minutes of January 22 Meeting:**

John K. made a small change. Barbara F. **made a motion to approve the minutes of January 22, 2020 as amended**, and James D. **seconded the motion**. The Commission **voted 7-0**.

#### **Other Business & Correspondence:**

Alex W. announced that the Select Board adopted the Official Map and zoning changes (green space) after the second public hearing, so that will go into effect in a couple weeks.

Barbara F. asked if the Commission could do community dinner in June (June 26) again; they agreed.

John K. asked about the Richmond Rd. intersection traffic study. Alex W. said they're interested to hear about people's experience at the intersection and held some public meetings, so now consultants are working on a series of alternatives for possible improvement ideas. The money for this came from Regional Planning Commission funds for transportation projects. A little over a year ago, the Select Board was interested in seeing a sidewalk along the Richmond Rd. corridor, so they were interested in exploring the terminus of this sidewalk. John K. said he'd like to see this studied as not just a traffic

project, but a wider scale study. Alex W. replied a discussion about what the neighbors would like there would be a separate project (it is on the Planning Commission's docket).

The meeting adjourned at 9:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kate Kelly, Recording Secretary