

Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
December 9, 2020
Approved January 13, 2021

Members Present: Rolf Kielman, Barbara Forauer, Marie Gardner, John Kiedaisch, Dennis Place, Denver Wilson.

Members Absent: James Donegan, Maggie Gordon, Dan Myhre.

Also: Alex Weinhagen (Director of Planning & Zoning); Amy Coonradt (Recording Secretary).

Rolf K. called the meeting to order at approximately 7:06 PM.

Meeting Procedures:

Alex W. explained the meeting was being held remotely via Zoom due to the COVID-19 state of emergency and the closure of the Town Office. He reviewed remote meeting protocols.

Agenda Changes:

None at this time.

Public Comments for Non-Agenda Items:

None at this time.

Architectural & Streetscape Design Standards

- a. Review draft illustrations provided by PlaceSense

Alex W. introduced this item, which relates to the development standards component of the Hinesburg Town Plan. The Town has been engaging with a consultant to produce sketches for design standards based on their written descriptions in the Plan, which will help give developers a sense of what the community is looking for in terms of building and streetscape design. Alex W. walked through the 8 sketches that illustrate building and site level design standards, provided a brief description of each, and solicited feedback from the Planning Commission on the sketches.

Sketch #1 depicts a building with numbered features showing some of the Town's design standards, including 60% occupation of lot frontage, articulation every 30 feet, and numbered features showing the detailing around doors, windows, and entryways. Alex W. noted that the sketch isn't a good example of the type of building that would be typical in Hinesburg. He also noted that the image quality could be improved for readability.

Sketch #2 is an example of a multifamily residential building, also with 60% lot occupancy as well as architectural and landscaping detail. Alex W. said that this was one of the consultant's initial sketches and that it had areas that needed to be improved. He noted that the front porch requirements aren't properly reflected in the sketch and that the landscaping is not realistic, particularly at the front of the property. Rolf K. said that the color change between buildings seems arbitrary. Alex W. agreed, saying that the sketch doesn't capture the intent of variation in materials and color in a way that the Town is looking for.

Sketch #3 shows a mixed-use building with a storefront design that has examples of recessed entries, a regular pattern of windows, signage frieze, and a flat roof with appropriate parapet and cornice design. Barbara F. said she preferred the black and white sketches and that the color on some of the other sketches is distracting from the design features. Rolf K. noted that towns tend to use historic architectural styles as examples for design standards and that it would be interesting to show some more contemporary building styles that aren't so illustrative of a particular period of history. Marie G. expressed concern that people may look at the sketch and assume that Hinesburg is looking for buildings in exactly this style. Alex W. agreed, saying it will be important to point out that the illustrations are meant to show design standards and features, not actual buildings. John K. said the sketches should show conceptual ideas.

Sketch #4 shows a single-family home residential development with a variety of house shapes and orientations, as well as demonstrating the open porch requirement. John K. suggested removing the bottom examples of what not to build and said the sketches should illustrate what the Town wants, not what it doesn't want. Marie G. agreed. Rolf K. said a comparison could help emphasize what the Town is looking for. He noted that even though the Town is trying to avoid uniformity in residential developments, he cited examples of neighborhoods that have uniformly-designed houses but with interesting and different decorative features and paint coloring, such as Mansfield Avenue in Burlington. Barbara F. asked whether buildings must be designed for passive solar energy and Alex W. replied that the subdivision regulations discuss solar siting but that it hasn't been a prominent element in the design standards. Rolf K., Denver W., and Dennis P. expressed dislike for the house examples, citing odd gable placement and lack of garages and driveways. Alex W. said that the sketch is only attempting to illustrate the design standards requiring a variety of building designs in a development and the requirement that new homes have porches. Denver W. suggested sending the illustrator five photographs of examples of preferred house design in Hinesburg. Alex W. will provide feedback to the consultant to mute the colors, have the dormers face the street, keep the front porch illustrated, add necessary elements such as driveways and garages, and add titles and descriptive context to the sketch.

Sketch #5 depicts a commercial building that has a similar look and feel to a typical Hinesburg building. It shows an example of a prominent entryway, detailing around windows, doors, and rooflines, and illustrates how a façade can be broken up. Commission members expressed a preference for black and white formatting in the sketches. Rolf K. said that graphic consistency between sketches is helpful, and Denver W. suggested that Sketch #5 could be a template for the other sketches in terms of format. Alex W. said that the consultant can make tweaks and adjustments to the sketches to achieve more consistency, but cannot completely redo them. He said the main focus of the sketches is to illustrate what the design standard is aiming for.

Sketch #6 pictorially demonstrates different roof pitches and which are and are not acceptable according to the design standards. Alex W. noted that the design standards require roofs to be moderately to steeply pitched. Marie G. and Denver W. suggested getting rid of the sketch, since most laypeople understand roof pitch concepts. John K. suggested simplifying the sketch by showing examples of 6:12 and 12:12 pitches.

Sketch #7 shows building height and how it is measured and also shows taller buildings with upper stories set back from the bottom two floors, a town design standard meant to prevent taller buildings from dominating the streetscape. Rolf K. said the drawings were both helpful in illustrating building height requirements. Dennis P. agreed, adding that the Town has had issues with interpreting building

height requirements in the past. Rolf K. suggested adding an asterisk to the sketch noting that the height limit is 35 feet for 3 stories and 45 feet for 4 stories (if buildings achieve density bonuses).

Sketch #8 is a plan view (oriented from above) and shows a variety of site-level features, such as a continuous sidewalk network, landscaping, 60% lot frontage occupancy, and parking arrangements. Barbara F. said she likes the simplicity of the sketch.

Sketch #9 is a streetscape sketch that tries to show different setbacks. Alex W. noted that this sketch could be elaborated upon. He said that it might be helpful to see multiple streetscape illustrations for residential, mixed, and commercial use buildings. He added that there had been prior discussion around how to design on-street parking and buffers to be mindful of snow storage and tree planting, and that additional sketches might help generate more conversation. Commissioners agreed that more examples and discussion around this topic are warranted.

In general, the Planning Commission agreed that the sketches were helpful in showing the different ways in which the design standards could be interpreted, and that they may need to revise some of the language to be more specifically-worded to avoid confusion or misinterpretation in future.

Alex W. said he will provide feedback to the consultant and make revisions to the sketches for one of the January meetings of the Planning Commission.

The following agenda items will be discussed at the next meeting:

- b. Review/discuss photo examples
- c. Discuss suggested clarifications to written standards
- d. Discuss next steps

Meeting Minutes – November 25, 2020: Denver W. **moved to approve the minutes as amended.** Barbara F. **seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0.**

The minutes were amended as follows:

- P. 2 – inserted “to” between “related” and “transferability” on line 3 of paragraph 7;
- P. 4 – struck “the” from between “with” and “Mr.” on line 4 of paragraph 3.

Other Business & Correspondence:

- a. Reminder – December 23 meeting cancelled; next meeting January 13, 2021

Alex W. welcomed any feedback on the design standards between now and the next meeting.

John K. thanked Barbara F. and Denver W. for the photographs for agenda item 4b, saying that they will be helpful for future discussion. Alex W. added that members should feel free to take more photos around town now that the snow has made it more photogenic.

Rolf K. adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:41 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Coonradt, Recording Secretary