

Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
February 10, 2021

Approved February 24, 2021

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

Members Absent: Dan Myhre.

Also: Alex Weinhausen (Director of Planning & Zoning), Nina Friscia, Kate Kelly (for first portion).

Maggie G. called the meeting to order at approximately 7:04 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:

Kate Kelly (Conservation Commission Chairperson) said that the Conservation Commission is interested in helping the Planning Commission update the zoning regulations for the Rural Residential 1 district. She understands that the Planning Commission is currently discussing a work plan for new projects, and that the Conservation Commission is ready to assist if the PC chooses to work on updating the RR1 district zoning.

Architectural & Streetscape Design Standards *(continued from 12/9/20, 1/13/21, 1/27/21 meetings)*

a. Minimum frontage buildout percentage – examples and calibration

Alex W. explained that the draft design standards require that a minimum of 60% of the lot frontage be occupied by structures. Any structure within the maximum front yard setback area would be counted, including portions extending farther back on the lot. The goal is to ensure a more vibrant streetscape with buildings in proximity to the street, and more emphasis on building architecture rather than parking lots, access drives, and yard space. At the last meeting, there was discussion about whether 60% was the right number, and the need to assess the current situation for lots in the village.

John K. took on this assignment. Using online mapping (ANR Natural Resources Atlas) and Google Maps and Streetview, he assessed lot width, building width, and the resulting lot frontage buildout percentage for properties on both sides of the “Main Street” section of Route 116 – generally from Mechanicsville Road to Friendship Lane. In a couple of circumstances, he had to correct the lot width shown on the parcel mapping because of road being included in the lot (e.g., Kelley’s Field Road), but for the most part, he simply used the lot width indicated by the parcel lines. He measured the width of the principal building, and did not include accessory structures that set back (e.g., garages, barns, etc.). He also did not include extensions of the building if those extensions were set far back from the front façade.

The group reviewed a table that John K. created showing this data for each lot. Alex W. said that it looks like the average lot frontage buildout was about 40% on the west side and 30% on the east side (and north side near Papa Nicks) of Route 116. Alex W. said that given these numbers, the 60% minimum in the draft regulations might be too high. He noted that John's percentages would be slightly higher when extensions of the building setback from the road were included. He also noted that the existing village design should inform, but not necessarily dictate the design standards for new development.

James D., Marie G., Dennis P., and Denver W. agreed that the 60% minimum was too high. Denver W. suggested reducing it to 50%. Rolf K. noted that this is a minimum requirement, and that some development will go well above the minimum, particularly commercial buildings/lots when visibility is important. John K. said that the patterns of development from the past aren't always the same as new development. He noted that in newer development, access is sometimes from a side street or from the back (e.g., Kinney Drugs, Parkside Café), which allows for higher lot frontage buildout percentages.

Dennis P. said he was concerned about setting the minimum above 40%, given that some of the existing village lots are under 40%. Denver W. agreed, saying that he appreciates the development pattern in the existing village core, and feels this would be appropriate for new development as well. James D. and Rolf K. also felt that 40% would be fine.

Barbara F. asked where this standard would apply. Alex W. said that as drafted, it would apply to the entire village growth area. Maggie G. felt there was consensus to reduce the minimum to 40%. Alex W. said he would make that change. John K. advocated for including a preamble to clarify the overall vision, and to emphasize that all the design standards need to be considered in order to achieve the vision.

b. Minimum windows & doors percentage – examples and calibration

Alex W. said that at the last meeting, there was discussion about the minimum percentage of windows and doors on the front building façade. The minimum percentage was initially 30%, but was reduced to 25% per the discussion, and the examples Rolf K. presented. However, there was a desire to see more examples from existing buildings in the village.

Rolf K. evaluated four additional buildings, and presented information on these and the two discussed at the prior meeting. He said that he assessed windows and doors as a percentage of the front façade of the building, not including portions of the building that were setback substantially from the road.

- Twice as Nice: 34%
- Parkside Café (both street sides): estimated 40%+
- Animal Hospital: 40% - not counting low roof as part of the façade
- National Bank of Middlebury: 18%
- Public House: 15%
- Single-family home (Farmall Drive area): 15% - not counting setback garage portion of facade

Maggie G. noted that with the single-family home, she has a hard time imagining how additional windows could be added to boost the percentage. She said that setting this minimum at 25% seems too high. Rolf K. agreed, and suggested that 15% may be the right number. Barbara F. suggested 20%. Dennis P. asked if we should have different numbers for commercial and residential buildings. James D.

said 15% at most, perhaps even lower, for example 12%. Dennis P., Marie G., John K., and Denver W. all indicated that they were comfortable with 15%. Alex W. said he would make that change.

c. Review revised illustrations

Alex W. showed the revised illustrations prepared by PlaceSense pursuant to the Commission's discussion at the December 9 meeting.

- Sketch 1 – eliminated
- Sketch 2 – eliminated
- Sketch 3 – commercial building architectural details – no changes requested from initial version, but will need to amend the notes on the minimum percentage of windows/doors per tonight's discussion.
- Sketch 4 – residential building pattern/variety – substantial revisions to focus on positive examples, add driveways and garages, mute colors.
- Sketch 5 – commercial building with front porch – no changes requested from initial version, but will need to amend the notes on the minimum percentage of windows/doors per tonight's discussion.
- Sketch 6 – roof pitch – substantial revisions to simplify the graphic. John K. recommended adding text to clarify that a 6:12 roof pitch is the minimum.
- Sketch 7 – building height – no changes requested from initial version except to add text for height limits.
- Sketch 8 – site layout – no changes requested from initial version; however, give tonight's discussion Alex W. will get a new version of this illustration so that one of the two lots shows the 40% minimum lot frontage buildout.
- Sketch 9 – streetscape, mixed use – minor changes made
- Sketch 10 – streetscape, residential – new illustration, similar to the mixed-use streetscape but without on-street parking.
- Sketch 11 – streetscape, commercial – new illustration, similar to the mixed-use streetscape but with on-street parking on both sides, and no greenbelt between the curb and the sidewalk (i.e., street trees planted outside of the right of way on private property).

The Commission discussed streetscapes, greenbelt placement, and on-street parking. Barbara F. asked if the Town would be responsible for street tree maintenance if street trees were planted outside of the right of way. Alex W. said the landowner would be responsible if the tree was on their property, outside of the street right of way, presumably as part of an approved landscaping plan.

d. Schedule for community outreach and public hearing

Alex W. suggested seeking input on the draft standards from the Development Review Board, architects, developers, possibly the Village Steering Committee (if they are still meeting), and the community at large. John K. suggested that the design standards and the illustrations be formatted into a document to make it easier for community members to understand. Alex W. agreed. Maggie G. and Rolf K. suggested not bothering with a track changes version of the current regulations, as that would likely

prove confusing. Instead, Rolf K. suggested minor formatting to indicate which of the standards in the eight-page document are new.

Alex W. said it would take him some time to format the document, before it could be shared more widely. He asked for suggestions on when the Commission would like to shoot for a public hearing. Barbara F. suggested the end of March. Alex W. said this would be ambitious given the lead time for putting a legal notice in the newspaper, and the need to update and then circulate the document. However, he appreciated having a goal to shoot for.

Meeting Minutes – January 27, 2021: Maggie G. moved to approve the minutes as drafted. Denver W. seconded the motion. The motion passed 8-0.

Other Business & Correspondence:

- a. **Legal review – Contractor Yard regulation revisions:** Alex W. shared input on the draft regulations from Town counsel (Brian Monaghan). Mr. Monaghan gave generally positive feedback. He provided a track changes document with some minor grammatical changes. He identified two items for more significant changes. The first dealing with a requirement that there be no change to the character of the residential area. In this case, he said this is an unreasonable standard, and suggested using the “no undue adverse impact” standard that is recognized both in State Statute and in case law. The second dealing with a requirement that neighbors on a shared private road provide written approval for use of the private road for a proposed contractors yard. He felt this gets the Town unnecessarily involved in private road agreements. He suggested simply deleting this requirement, and allowing any neighbor concerns to be raised as part of the public hearing process, with private property use agreements left to the various private parties. With that said, he provided some revised language if the Commission wants to retain this in some form. Alex W. will forward this input to the Commission for discussion at the February 24 meeting, in the hopes that revisions can be made, and we can begin public outreach, and set a goal for a public hearing schedule.
- b. **Impending vacancies – finding PC candidates:** Maggie G. noted that the Commission currently has one vacancy to fill (Dan Myhre’s position), and that there will be two more vacancies in March when both Maggie G. and Dennis P. will presumably be elected to the Select Board (given that they are both running unopposed). Maggie G. clarified that her PC term is up at the end of February. Alex W. clarified that Dennis P.’s PC term isn’t up until 2022, but that he assumes Dennis P. will want to step away from the Commission so he can focus on the Select Board and the DRB. Dennis P. indicated that is his plan, but that he is willing to stay on the PC if it would be helpful while we seek to fill the vacancies. John K. asked about numbers for quorum to hold a meeting. Alex W. said that as a nine-member board, we need five commissioners to make quorum. Meetings can be held with fewer commissioners, but no motions or actions can be taken. Marie G. wondered if there had been any conversation about reducing the PC to a seven-member board. Alex W. said there hasn’t been any discussion of that yet. Maggie G. encouraged everyone to reach out to people they know in the community. Alex W. said he would post to Front Porch Forum.
- c. **Election of Chairperson & Vice Chairperson:** Maggie G. **moved to appoint Rolf Kielman as chairperson.** Marie G. **seconded the motion. The motion passed 8-0.** Rolf K. said that he is willing to serve, but that this will be his last year on the Planning Commission. Barbara F. **moved to appoint Denver Wilson as vice chairperson.** Marie G. **seconded the motion. The motion passed 8-0.**

- d. **Work plan for upcoming projects (cont'd from 1/27/21 mtg):** Alex W. suggested taking this up at the next meeting given time constraints. James D. asked for a brief synopsis of the Rural Residential 1 zoning district update project. Alex W. said that some time ago, the Commission had started a project to update the RR1 district – e.g., list of allowed uses, development density, minimum lot size, special standards, etc. At that time the Commission discussed splitting this zoning district into its three distinct areas: 1) northern, undeveloped and highly constrained area near Mt. Pritchard; middle, 2) central, highly developed area (with some water/sewer service) along Richmond Road; 3) southern, lightly developed area. Maggie G. asked if the list of zoning housekeeping changes could be discussed at the next meeting. Alex W. said that is just one of several potential projects, and that the Commission should consider all the projects, and prioritize which one or two to work on next.
- e. **Agenda item requests for February 24 meeting:** The next meeting will include finalizing the Contractor Yard draft regulations per the input from Town Counsel, and discussion of the work plan and priority projects.

Maggie G. adjourned the meeting at approximately 9 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Alex Weinhausen, Director of Planning & Zoning