

Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
June 9, 2021

Approved June 23, 2021

Members Present: Lenore Budd, James Donegan, Barbara Forauer, Nina Friscia, Marie Gardner, John Kiedaisch, Rolf Kielman, Denver Wilson.

Members Absent: none.

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

Members of the Public: Maggie Gordon, Robert Thiefels, Johanna White

Rolf K. called the meeting to order at approximately 7:05 PM.

1. 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.

2. Agenda Changes:

None at this time.

3. Minutes of May 12 and May 26 Meetings

Denver W. **made a motion, and John K. seconded, to approve the minutes of May 12 as presented. The motion passed 8-0.**

John K. **made a motion, and Barbara F. seconded, to approve the minutes of May 26 as presented. The motion passed 8-0.**

4. Public Hearing – Zoning Regulation Revisions – Village Area Design Standards

- a. Brief overview of proposed revisions – what is changing and why

Alex W. said that zoning regulations were created in Hinesburg in 1971 and that design standards have been included since the inception of the Village District (in 1981), that they were refined in 1996, and when Hinesburg did its rezoning in 1999, they were fine-tuned even more. He said that when polled, residents expressed dissatisfaction with housing, and also didn't think the Town was prepared for the future (only 13% said that they believed Hinesburg was prepared for the future). In a follow-up survey in 2015, the Town asked how they should manage development, and the top answer was to revise the Town's zoning regulations. Alex W. noted that one of top action areas of Town Plan revision in 2017 was to tune up existing standards for building and site level design to set community expectations for developers, and so that community members have confidence in what will come out of the development approval process. For these current revisions, existing provisions were reviewed and refined by the Commission and new provisions were added. A consultant was hired to provide illustration for some of the concepts described in the standards.

Alex W. then provided an overview of the proposed changes, which are as follows:

- Revise building footprint limits for retail uses, which would create a common size limit for all zoning districts of 15,000 sq ft for retail and 25,000 sq ft for grocery stores.

- Add requirements around building façades so that large projects with multiple buildings must have variation in how the buildings present themselves to the street.
- Add standards around window pattern and minimum window coverage to require a minimum percentage of glazing for windows and doors.
- Require more prominent entryways, like porches and porticos for single-family homes, and porches, patios, or storefront design for other types of structures.
- Refine requirements around building form to prohibit excessive repetition and prohibit corporate or franchise architecture.
- Add requirements around building material variety to avoid monotonous building repetition.
- Include height requirements of 1.5 stories or more.
- Clarify roof pitch requirements.
- Institute new setback requirements so that there are both minimum and maximum setback requirements.

b. Public input & discussion – questions, concerns, ideas

Robert T. said he was impressed with the level and quality of detail in the proposed changes. He expressed support for the minimum fenestration and setbacks and said he liked the design.

Rolf K. spoke about the fenestration requirement and said that the Town conducted a significant inventory of the buildings in Town to determine the percentage of glazing on facades. He said it was clarifying to take stock of existing buildings. He said the same holds true for the setback requirements. He said the regulations should force developers to be more thoughtful about what they are building and making.

Alex W. reminded attendees that the Planning Commission began this conversation in May of 2019.

The Commission discussed the potential for large buildings being developed in Town (up to 40,000 sq ft). Rolf K. assured that even if a lot was created to accommodate such a large building, it would still need to go through a rigorous conditional use review both at the Town and likely the State level. Denver W. said that when the Planning Commission decided on this verbiage, they were skeptical about the size, but the Cheese Plant and NRG are examples of structures of that size that they'd want to see in the Village.

Maggie G. said that they also looked at the plans for the Village Northeast, zoned for light industrial.

Johanna W. said that the Town always forgets what the Cheese Factory represented, that it isn't the most aesthetically-pleasing building, but it has evolved into something that is accepted and valued by the Town. She said that Hinesburg should maintain its hometown feel, to show the character of who lives here. She said that Kinney Drugs did a good job of changing its usual appearance to something that would be more accepted in Hinesburg.

c. Review & discuss public feedback received ahead of the hearing

Alex W. reviewed written feedback from the public that was received ahead of time.

Chip McArthur had positive feedback, voicing support for these thoughtful changes and saying that they would do much to support Hinesburg's unique character. He commented that the maximum height limit should be three stories (the current regulations allow a density bonus to go to four stories, and he said that this is too tall and is inappropriate).

Justin Daniels said he is adamantly against the proposed changes, but did not provide additional comments.

Dan Morris, a colleague of Rolf K., said that Hinesburg's standards look sophisticated and detailed. He asked if there is a difference for standards applied to developments or the development of a single structure or lot. He also suggested providing illustrations of what the Town does not want (though the Planning Commission had a discussion about this already and made the decision not to include them).

Alex W. said that he also met with the Development Review Board (DRB) at their June 1, 2021 meeting. Greg Waples of that Board asked which of these standards would be reviewed for new development during the DRB process and which would be reviewed after the DRB process by the Zoning Administrator (ZA). Alex W. said he informed Greg that the ZA would ultimately need to ensure that the standards are being met; however, some of the standards can be reviewed during the DRB process—like the site-level standards. He said that many of the building standards are difficult to review at that stage, since the buildings might not yet exist. John Lyman wanted some sort of acknowledgement that a 4-story building can be safe and adequately protected in terms of fire and public safety access. Dick Jordan said that these proposed revisions felt like overreach and are overly prescriptive and that he is worried about ending up with a lot of sameness, rather than diversity.

Rolf K. said that the height limit is permissible under circumstances where the building starts to step back as it goes up. He said that the regulations prohibit presenting a 45-foot building in one plane addressing Main Street or Route 116 and that the structure needs to step back as it goes up. Alex W. added that the standard is called "building height relief", and requires the upper 2 stories facing the street to be stepped back a minimum of 8 feet from the bottom two stories.

Lenore B. asked about a potential conflict between building forms and orientation along the street. She said that these regulations are asking for variety in the revisions but in the energy chapter there is discussion of orienting buildings to maximize solar gain, and asked if there is a conflict there. Rolf K. replied that he doesn't believe it conflicts and that it can be done in a way that addresses urban design requirements and enables the placement of solar panels on a roof. He added that the South Farm development is a good example. Barbara F. said that some developers may not be creative enough to solution for this, and that the language may need to be modified. Alex W. said that the solar issue versus variety and street trees was discussed by the Planning Commission during the revision process. He said there is plenty of opportunity for creative solutions. He said that it is also important to ensure that there is enough space for people to enjoy walking around.

d. Discuss next steps

The Planning Commission will discuss this at the next meeting and make additional revisions based on feedback that has been received.

Lenore B. **made a motion, and John K. seconded, to continue the public hearing to June 23, 2021. The motion passed 8-0.**

5. Home Occupation Contractor Yards & Vehicle Repair Service – Zoning Regulation Clarification

a. Discuss which zoning districts to allow these home occupations

Alex W. said that when these revisions came before the Selectboard, they asked about the zoning districts to which these regulations do and do not apply. They asked specifically whether they would

apply outside the Rural Residential 1, Rural Residential 2, and Agriculture Zoning Districts. Alex W. said he pointed out that the regulations are for services which are not allowed in other districts, but that he would pose to the Planning Commission the question of whether there are other districts where the Town should allow residents to have a home occupation of these two uses. He said that in the Village Growth Area, contractor yards as a principal use are not allowed with the exception of the Industrial 4 District. He said that additionally, contractor yard use is already allowed in the Industrial 1 District on south side of town and are also allowed on Richmond Road. Alex W. said that vehicle repair services are more complicated—as a principle use there are a number of them in the Village. He said that they are not allowed in the Village Northeast District, which is intended to be a light industrial/residential district. He asked if there are other districts in the Village Growth Area where the Town would want to allow residents to have these sorts of home occupations. He said that this is less of an issue in industrial districts, since residential uses aren't allowed in industrial districts (though there are some pre-existing non-conforming residents in the Industrial 1 District). He said that for home occupation contractor yards, one of the provisions is a minimum lot size, which would screen out a lot of properties. He noted that there isn't an acreage requirement for vehicle repair services, and that there are limitations, but they aren't ubiquitous.

John K. said that the Town should limit where those home occupations can happen, and that the regulations should remain as proposed. The other Planning Commissioners agreed.

6. RR1 District Observations from May 26 field trip meeting

John K. said he would like to conduct more field trips around the Rural Residential 1, particularly at the north end where it transitions into St. George and Williston. He said that it would be good to be able to walk around there and see the topography.

Rolf K. said that the river corridor discussion might also overlap with the RR1 district and that a field trip that encompasses both topics would be good.

Barbara F. and John K. both spoke about the varied topography around Piette Road. John K. also emphasized the importance of not getting too limited by looking at property lines and district lines, saying that the environment doesn't care about those subdivisions and limitations put on it. He said that the Town should look at where it wants to protect the existing environment and for what reasons.

Lenore B. said that the RR1 District was very diverse and that many of its areas don't have much in common. She suggested that maybe they should be treated differently in the zoning.

Rolf K. said that roads are often used to mark the line between one zoning district and other. He said it might be good to move toward simpler standards and district definitions, and that the Planning Commission could think about doing this during its review of RR1. Alex W. said that generally, it is convenient and helpful to try and keep properties in one zoning district or another but that Towns have flexibility to modify them as they see fit. He mentioned that the Town has overlay districts, like the flood hazard overlay, which is dictated by FEMA. He said that in rural areas, the landscape might inform where the district limit is, but in more urban areas, it could be delineated by lot lines. He added that the Town Plan says that the RR1 district doesn't seem to hang together well and that the Planning Commission should consider modifying those lines. He said that zoning today serves to highlight the differences between districts, which are development density, allowed uses, and dimensional standards (like what the setbacks need to be).

7. Other Business & Correspondence

- a. Agenda item requests for June 23 meeting

The Planning Commission will continue the public hearing for zoning regulations. They will also be prepared to further discuss the Rural Residential 1 Zoning District. Alex W. suggested utilizing the Hinesburg Natural Resource Viewer to dive more deeply into certain areas at the next meeting.

Rolf K. **adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:52 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Coonradt, Recording Secretary