

Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
July 14, 2021
Approved August 11, 2021

Members Present: Lenore Budd (via Zoom), James Donegan, Barbara Forauer, Nina Friscia, Marie Gardner, Rolf Kielman, Denver Wilson.

Members Absent: John Kiedaisch.

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

Members of the Public: James Sanchez.

Rolf K. called the meeting to order at approximately 7:02 PM.

1. Agenda Changes:

None at this time.

2. Minutes of June 23 Meeting

Denver W. **made a motion, and Rolf K. seconded, to approve the minutes of June 23 as amended. The motion passed 5-0.**

The minutes were amended as follows:

- P.3, paragraph 3: Strike “James D. said that if the new height limits are accepted, the Town will need a fire truck with an adequate ladder and that it should consider purchasing one” with “James D. said that if allowing this building height will mean the Town would have to purchase a ladder truck, the allowance should be changed so that the Town wouldn’t need to purchase one.”
- P.3, paragraph 5: Strike “July 21st” and replace with “July 7th”
- P. 5: move “The Planning Commission will continue discussion about height limits, density bonuses, and the Rural Residential 1 District at their next meeting.” From Agenda item 6b to agenda item 6a.

3. Zoning Revision– Village Area Design Standards

Continued from 6/23/21 meeting

- a. Discuss building height limits per public hearing feedback. Consider eliminating height bonus provisions in Section 2.9.3 that allow buildings to exceed the 35-foot height limit.

Alex W. noted new public comment from Audrey Homan regarding bicycle use and including more bicycle use in the design standards. He also added that Xander Patterson submitted a comment noting that his suggestions from the June 23 meeting were not included in the waiver section (regarding allowing waivers in light of affordability). Alex W. said that he replied to Xander noting that the Planning Commission hadn’t come to consensus on that subject. Alex W. also noted that he drafted language around affordability and waivers for the Planning Commission to review. Regarding height requirements, Alex W. provided a summary of an email received from Chief Al Barber from March 2020 specifically about the Haystack project, which included an assessment of the structures in the Town and noted that 58 of them that are above the 28’ limit for current rescue/extinguishing capacity. He also noted that a ladder truck is a planned purchase in the Town’s capital plan and that it is anticipated to be a replacement for Engine #2 (pending a decision from the Selectboard). Denver W. said it is important

to take this into consideration in terms of zoning requirements. Alex W. said that there is a question of whether to wait for development until the purchase of a truck, and that one of the conditions of approval for Haystack was to confer with the Selectboard on the timing of such a purchase, so that this issue can be better understood when the Development Review Board (DRB) conducts final review. Alex W. said that originally they had contemplated beginning construction for the Haystack project in Spring of 2022, with inhabitants moving in in 2022 or 2023. Denver W. said that that could mean going for a year without a ladder truck, though it is a replacement engine, not an additional one. Marie G. pointed out that there is mutual aid, should the Town need to respond to an emergency with a ladder truck. Alex W. said that sprinkler systems typically preserve the building long enough for mutual aid to arrive, but Chief Barber was concerned about life-saving, and that mutual aid may not arrive in time to extract people from fires.

Rolf K. said that it seems like there are fewer than 50 buildings that meet that three-story height, with window heights in excess of 28 feet. He also noted the Fire Department's concern about modern buildings not having strong enough roofs to withstand heat of intense fires. Rolf K. noted that structural requirements for roofs at the State level have likely gotten much more strict and that older roofs are the ones that are more at risk. Alex W. said that one of the risks of more modern structures is that the roofs are pre-fabricated and held together with adhesive that may not hold up under high heat and the roof trusses become less stable. Rolf K. agreed that that may be a possibility.

Alex W. asked the Planning Commission whether they want to allow 4-story structures in future, given these concerns. He said that the current height limit is 35 feet, with a density bonus eligibility for the Village growth area. He suggested potentially removing the density bonus section from the revised regulations, since no developer has used that bonus to date, and revisit the language if and when a ladder truck is purchased. Planning Commissioners agreed with this approach.

b. Review other revisions per public feedback: bicycle use; DRB vs. ZA review expectations. Alex W. proposed a series of changes to try and speak to some of Ms. Homan's comments. Denver W. agreed with the increased bike lanes proposed in her comments. Rolf K. spoke about the proposed language in Section 5.5.5, and proposed further adjustments, including that a property must require bicycle storage if it has 5 or more parking spaces and that there be at least one bicycle parking space per every two motor vehicle spaces. He said that if the Town is planning for the future, it should be more aggressive about non-motorized transportation accommodations.

Lenore B. asked if there's a definition of bicycle storage. Alex W. replied no, and said he anticipates that the vast majority would be bike racks. Denver W. asked to whom this would apply. Alex W. replied that it would not apply to single family homes but rather to commercial, mixed-use, and multi-family properties and parking lots. Denver W. said it would be important to define bicycle storage as a term.

Alex W. noted potential limitations of getting to the future state that Rolf K. mentioned above. There are constraints beyond Hinesburg's control, such as if the Town wanted to add bike lanes to 116, it would need approval from VTrans, since the State controls the highway, and spoke about space constraints in general. He noted other roads where substantial improvements would need to be made in order to create bike lanes, including Richmond Road and Charlotte Road, which don't have enough existing pavement. Lenore B. suggested focusing on what can be improved now, like bicycle storage. Rolf K. said he anticipates more cycling in future, given the pandemic and current remote working, and said it'd be good to lay groundwork to take these trends into consideration and encourage them. Denver W. suggested using the term "non-motorized transportation" instead of "bicycle". Alex W. noted that

the Vermont legislature just passed a bill to better define e-bikes and creates a 3-tiered system to classify them. Alex W. suggested still using “bicycle” but including a note in the definition section to say that the term includes other items such as scooters and tricycles. He said he would email the legislation language to Denver W.

Barbara F. asked if current properties would be grandfathered in once these regulations are approved and implemented. Alex W. replied that zoning requirements always begin from when they are adopted and pre-existing structures don’t need to comply, but new or redeveloped properties would.

James D. said that he liked Alex W.’s proposed language. Others agreed. Alex W. will include a definition of bicycle parking and storage facility in the new proposed language.

The Planning Commission then discussed clarifying the regulatory roles of the Zoning Administrator and the Development Review Board in the context of these revised design standards. Alex W. referenced a memo he drafted clarifying that site level standards are what the DRB should review in the process, but likely not building level standards, since buildings may not yet exist at time of DRB review. Alex W. said he wants to have legal counsel review this clarifying language before including it in the standards.

The Planning Commission then addressed Xander Patterson’s comments by adding language into Section 5.22.1 (waiver option) that states that the DRB shall take into consideration “the extent to which the project addresses goals outlined in the Town Plan,” which would ensure that the DRB take those goals (which include affordability) into consideration when contemplating whether to issue a waiver.

c. Discuss next steps and schedule to forward to Selectboard

Alex W. will incorporate the changes proposed at this meeting into the draft proposed design standards and will send to the Planning Commission for their review, no later than the second meeting in August.

4. Rural Residential 1 District Zoning

Continued from 6/23/21/ meeting

a. Review mapped data for the district and surrounding area

Lenore B. asked what is the problem that the Planning Commission is trying to solve with reviewing the RR1 District and contemplating zoning changes. Alex W. replied that the Town Plan makes note of the RR1 district and how it doesn’t hang together as a cohesive zoning district in that it includes both undeveloped and highly developed areas. He said that examining and potentially splitting the district could serve to recognize those differences.

Lenore B asked about the purpose of the RR1 district. Alex W. replied that it came into existence in 1981 and that prior to that (from 1972 to 1981) there had been in place a smaller residential district, and that prior to that there was nothing. He noted that the historical purpose of the district has been to accommodate historic development patterns around Richmond Road and the surrounding areas, as a sort of relief valve for the Village Growth Area.

Lenore B. asked if the RR1 district is a success, and how that could be determined. Alex W. said that the field trip was an important component of making a determination about this and whether competing values (such as development and wildlife habitat) are being adequately balanced.

Denver W. asked if there have been any zoning grievances for RR1 since 1981. Alex W. replied that he hasn’t heard complaints about development being overly constrictive in the RR1 district and that he

doesn't think developments have been built to their full potential in that district. He also noted a fair amount of development in that district since 1981 and that it is a desirable place to live.

Denver W. said that the swathe of the RR1 district that isn't on Richmond Road seems to be relatively similar and that it is developed less densely than Richmond Road. Alex W. asked whether the Mount Pritchard area should be rezoned. Denver W. replied that even though it had not been developed in the past, that area could still be developed in the future. Barbara F. noted that the Mount Pritchard area needs stronger conservation subdivision standards. Alex W. said that as an exercise, he would take the regulations from the other rural districts and apply them to the non-Richmond Road portion of the RR1 district.

Rolf K. spoke about the importance of clear zoning regulations. He said that there are some areas of RR1 that should just be left alone.

The Planning Commission coalesced around the need to draft a purpose statement.

Barbara F. noted that she had attended the Conservation Commission's last meeting and that they would be following up with suggestions for the rezoning exercise, which include the creation a forest district and a conservation district.

Alex W. displayed the Natural Resources Viewer and overlaid the district map. He then displayed some of the resources. He showed the wildlife overlay, noting that the Mount Pritchard area has a lot of core wildlife habitat and deer wintering areas. He also showed forest blocks, which include high priority forest blocks, resiliency routes, and connectivity. He noted that the state considers the Mount Pritchard area to be a priority block of forest. James D. asked about the Buck Hill Road area. Alex W. replied that it is considered a physical landscape diversity block and also has what the Town considers core wildlife habitat. Alex W. then showed the surface water layer, which shows waterways. He noted numerous hydrological resources around the La Platte River and fewer in the RR1 district, except for the Patrick Brook area. He noted that there are not many hydrological resources in the Mount Pritchard area, though there are streams and some wetland. He then displayed slopes in the Mt. Pritchard area, which has a significant area of slopes between 15-25% and then greater than 25%. He compared the slopes there to the slopes in the RR2 district.

- b. Discuss possible zoning revisions—district lines, development potential, development standards, etc.

This item was discussed above.

- c. Discuss next steps and possible field trip

The Planning Commission discussed a field trip to the Mount Pritchard area. Alex W. suggested that the Commission follow up with Kate Kelly, who had a particular spot in mind to visit.

5. Other Business & Correspondence

- a. Agenda item requests for July 28 meeting

The July 28th meeting will be a field trip to the Mount Pritchard area of the RR1 zoning district.

- b. Notice – Town of Richmond, zoning revision hearing on July 21

Alex W. noted that the Town of Richmond is proposing minor and technical zoning revisions, but that they should not have much bearing on the Town of Hinesburg.

Rolf K. **adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:08 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Coonradt, Recording Secretary