

Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
December 8, 2021

Approved December 22, 2021

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

Members Absent: Nina Friscia.

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

Members of the Public: None.

Rolf K. called the meeting to order at approximately 7:04 PM.

1. Agenda Changes

None.

2. Public Comment for Non-agenda Items

There was no public comment.

3. Minutes of November 10 Meeting

Lenore B. **made a motion, and John K. seconded, to approve the minutes of October 24 as presented. The motion passed 7-0.**

4. Energy Plan action item review/discussion

- a. Discuss adding action items to 2022 Planning Commission work plan

The Planning Commission reviewed the 11 action items specifically charged to the Planning Commission in the Town Energy Plan, and discussed adding certain items to their 2022 work plan.

John K. said that he has been examining the entirety of the Town Plan and looking at it through the lens of how the changing climate will impact the Town as a whole. He said he reviewed the State's Climate Action Plan, which identifies the most critical areas to target, the most vulnerable populations, and where the most pollution is coming from. He said that the two most important areas to target are transportation emissions and thermal (heating). He suggested that staff review the Town Plan and pick out the action items related to climate change. Alex W. suggested targeting the action items that they believe are the highest priority within the Town Energy Plan. John K. noted that the Town doesn't mention electrifying its vehicles or dealing with the level of insulation within Town buildings. Alex W. replied that 8.5.3 is close (though is not a PC-tasked goal). He said that that action item encourages the Town and school district to install electric charging stations and considering electric and biofuel options first when purchasing vehicles.

John K. asked if anyone is looking at the action items in general in the Town Plan. Alex W. said that they are looked at periodically, but there is not one staff person tasked with tracking action items on a regular basis. He said that when the original version rolled out, he visited several committees and outlined their action items and invited discussion and questions. He said that the Energy Committee was active because they wanted to revise the Energy Chapter, and the Conservation Commission very actively reviewed their items and selected their top priority items.

Denver W. suggested selecting 8.4.5, since it seems very Planning Commission-centric because it deals with new development. He said that any regulation that is imposed that affects pre-existing homes will impact those underprivileged people John K. mentioned above. He said that it is a task on which the Planning Commission can have an impact. Alex W. said that 8.4.5 links up with 8.4.7, which discusses Net Zero Energy requirements for new construction and assessing how much it will impact affordability.

Alex W. noted that Lenore had a question about what the stretch code is and what adopting it means. He said that the Residential Building Energy Standards include information on both the base code and the stretch code, and the stretch code is a higher level of stringency for energy efficiency and it's required for all Act 250 developments. He said that the stretch code would also apply in communities that decide to adopt it, and it would place a greater emphasis on continuous insulation on above-grade walls, a stronger preference for more efficient ventilation systems, and higher points to achieve compliance in the protocol. Lenore B. asked about what adopting it means. Alex W. replied that it would entail revising zoning regulations in order to meet stretch code. Lenore B. asked if there are ways to incentivize or reimburse those individuals who may not be able to afford certain things. Alex W. said that there are tax credits available to those who build homes that implement higher energy standards (according to Efficiency Vermont). He said he isn't sure how the Vermont stretch code compares to Efficiency Vermont's requirements.

Rolf K. asked whether other Commissioners think 8.4.5 and 8.4.7 are important to work on. He noted that the subsidies mentioned above don't tend to cover the extra costs that would be incurred by including higher energy efficiency systems in new construction. He said that there are a wide variety of financial/value ramifications for some of these components. He said that the Energy Committee has some individuals who may be more knowledgeable about some of these areas. He said it would be important for the Planning Commission to understand the cost ramifications of some of these proposed requirements.

Denver W. said that promoting both energy efficiency and businesses in the Village can be tricky, as they are often at odds with each other. Rolf K. said that there are a number of businesses who have come into the Town and are focused on energy efficiency.

Rolf K. said that the Town leading by example is crucial to reducing energy consumption and suggested having an energy czar (or a designated go-to person on energy-related topics).

Barbara F. noted that the Town needs to look at the things it has influence over, and she put the 11 goals/action items into descending priority order. She noted that Chuck Reiss (of the Energy Committee) and Kate Kelly (of the Conservation Committee) look at climate impacts. She said that the Town is buying a new police vehicle that will be electric and that there is at least one electric bus. She said she thinks there is also a charging station at the library.

John K. noted that only 2 of the 40 action items had anyone other than staff or volunteers being lead on them. He said that the Town has not taken this on in an active enough way.

Denver W. said that if the Town has electric vehicles and puts electric vehicle (EV) charging stations around Town it would enable residents to buy their own electric vehicles and have power sources. He said that this would both decrease emissions in the Town for Town vehicles as well as enabling others to switch to electric vehicles as well. Alex W. noted that the Energy Committee has been actively discussing

installing charging stations with the Selectboard. He noted that federal infrastructure dollars to incentivize EV stations will also make it more feasible in a budgetary way.

Denver W. asked how relevant the Planning Commission is to electric vehicles and charging stations. Lenore B. mentioned 8.5.2, which has been tasked to the Planning Commission. She wondered if charging stations should be required in all developments above a certain size threshold. John K. said that the Planning Commission has a big obligation to monitor the effects of the Town Plan. Denver W. said that some of these requirements, like having electric vehicle charging stations at certain developments, will cost money that will be passed on to residents.

Barbara F. said that when the Energy Committee was presenting its plan to the Selectboard and the Development Review Board, Chuck Reiss provided a significant amount of helpful information and detail. She suggested asking Chuck some of these questions by inviting him to a meeting. She noted that her top priority was that new developments have charging stations.

Alex W. said that he envisioned the Planning Commission coming up with 2 or 3 of the action items that were significant and wanted to take action on and then inviting the Energy Committee to come to one of its January meetings. He said that the Energy Committee serves as the ombudsman that Rolf was referencing, and are the experts in the entirety of the energy chapter. John K. said that the Energy Committee, Planning Commission, and Selectboard need to be coordinating and communicating more. Alex W. suggested maybe a Planning Commissioner member go to other boards' meetings to ask some targeted questions. Barbara F. volunteered.

Rolf K. noted that there are some strong connections between some of the 11 items on the list. He said 1 and 3 are pretty closely related, as well as with 8.3 and 8.4. He said that both items under 8.5 are transportation related. He suggested maybe Planning Commission splits into groups and tackles some of these with some of the other committees. John K. stressed the importance of the committees communicating with each other on progress, to avoid duplication.

Lenore B. suggested picking 3 of the items and having joint meetings with boards. She said that one priority is getting EV charging stations in town, because it seems finite, tangible, and doable. Barbara F. said her top priority is new developments having charging stations, and her second is strengthening zoning and subdivision regulations. She suggested looking at the zoning regulations after they have more information.

Rolf K. said that transportation is a large and complex factor. He said that the focus should not just be on charging stations, but also patterns of movement and encouraging alternative movements. He said another priority for him is ensuring that buildings are efficient and performing well. He said that studying how to improve their performance should be a goal of this board. Marie G. agreed, saying this is a high priority for her.

Barbara F. spoke about 8.3.4 (related to solar energy) and said it'd be better to encourage solar panels on rooftops rather than fill up open space with them. She said it would be good to encourage them on rooftops and alternative ways to install them. Denver W. agreed. Alex W. spoke about goal for new solar and new renewables for 2050 is much steeper than just putting solar on rooftops that exist today.

Alex W. noted that for 8.2.5, the Energy Committee really wanted to lead on this.

Planning Commissioners will come up with questions and comments to bring to the Energy Committee and will discuss these at its (the Planning Commission's) December 22 meeting.

5. Other Business & Correspondence

a. Notice – Town of Monkton, December 14 public hearing on regulation revisions
Alex W. noted that Monkton is having a meeting to discuss regulation revisions, but he did not see significant or notable changes when he reviewed the revisions.

b. Agenda items for the December 22 meeting
At its next meeting, the Planning Commission will discuss how they want to proceed with the contractor yard regulation discussion, in addition to continuing the conversation around the energy plan action items.

Rolf K. **adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:40 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Coonradt, Recording Secretary