

**Town of Hinesburg**  
**Planning Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**July 13, 2022**

*Approved August 24, 2022*

**Members Present:** Lenore Budd, Nick Chlumecky, Barbara Forauer, Marie Gardner (via Zoom), John Kiedaisch, Denver Wilson.

**Members Absent:** Dan Baldwin, James Donegan.

(There is currently one vacancy on the Planning Commission)

**Also:** Alex Weinhagen (Director of Planning & Zoning).

**Members of the Public:** Connie Kendall (via Zoom), Kathleen Newton (via Zoom), Rich Kozlowski (via Zoom), Tony & Ruchel St. Hilaire (via Zoom initially, then in person at 7:58pm).

Denver W. called the meeting to order at approximately 7:02 PM.

**1. Agenda Changes**

None at this time.

**2. Public Comments for Non-agenda items**

None at this time.

**3. Minutes of June 8 and June 22 meetings**

Lenore B. **made a motion, and John K. seconded, to approve the minutes of June 8 and June 22 as amended** (Barbara F. and Nick C. **abstained**). **The motion passed 4-0.**

The minutes were amended as follows:

- June 8: correct spelling of Dan Baldwin's name
- June 22: include names of guests who also participated in field trip

**4. Rural Residential 1 District Zoning Revisions**

*(continued from June 8 meeting)*

- a. Observations from the June 22 site visit to the Parkinson property

Denver W. said that the field trip to the property was valuable, as it provided an opportunity to experience firsthand a property that looks on the map to be inaccessible and has many cliffs, steep slopes, and animal habitat. However, when they walked it, the property appeared to be similar to other properties that have been developed in Hinesburg. He said that getting a firm grasp and understanding of the terrain was important. He said that this comports with landowners' feedback that decisions shouldn't be made solely after reviewing maps, since some features may have changed since the maps were drawn.

John K. said that the property did not seem very accessible. He said that the Hinesburg Zoning and Subdivision codes prohibit building structures on slopes greater than 25 % and that building access roads on similarly sloped land will be demanding, i.e. costly.

Denver W. said that he wouldn't want to see the entire property scattered with homes, but that the landowners should be able to develop their property to an extent, and that the property had several areas where some development would be possible.

Barbara F. cautioned that they should be thinking several generations ahead when making decisions about zoning and that they should be mindful of protecting wildlife habitats and water sources.

Alex W. noted that the owner of the Parkinson property has a development plan that they have not yet acted upon. He said that even some of the more developable sites, such as Site #4, would be difficult to develop due to cost (long driveway, extensive utilities).

b. Continue discussion of rezoning options

The Planning Commission had a discussion about water, wastewater, septic, and drilling wells. Alex W. pointed out that water and wastewater are regulating at the State level. Denver W. said that the group should focus on the areas that are in its purview, such as wildlife habitats, corridors, buffers, and decreasing fragmentation of those areas. He said that though cost is a deterrent to developing in some of the more rural and inaccessible parts of RR1, cost is not insurmountable, and the Planning Commission should have reasonable regulations in place to deter development in certain places. He also pointed out that the Development Review Board (DRB) has tools they can use to ensure responsible development.

Lenore B. said that it might be helpful to discuss and agree on the purpose for each of the new districts proposed for RR1 district (she referenced Option 6) instead of immediately focusing on density, setbacks, etc. She asked whether the group has reached consensus regarding the purpose of the Rural 1 District as described in Option 6. She reviewed the purpose of the RR2 district, which is to promote sustainable forest-based land uses and allow low-density and rural development that preserves those resources. She said that using some of the rural area design standards could be helpful, specifically around conservation.

Ruchel St. Hilaire, a property-owner in RR1, expressed concern that property-owners in the RR1 district are being discriminated against and said that it feels as though their rights are under attack. She spoke against requirements that would force clustered development rather than larger lots. Tony St. Hilaire, a property-owner in RR1, spoke against further restrictions in the RR1 district and said that property-owners are not in favor of changes to the regulations. He said that when they bought their property 20 years ago, they had the right to develop with 3-acre lot zoning and would like to keep that right. He said that if that right is changed and he loses his building potential, he will sell the property. Alex W. said that there is no intent to attack or devalue or eliminate property-owners' rights to conduct reasonable development on their properties. He added that the Planning Commission has been engaging with property-owners in RR1 to try to ensure alignment between regulation changes and property-owners' visions for their properties in the future. Tony St. Hilaire said that if the Town would like to dictate what happens on that land, he will sell the land to the Town. Denver W. clarified that the Planning Commission is trying to determine how to make changes without negatively impacting development potential for property-owners. Tony St. Hilaire indicated that he would apply to fill the vacant Planning Commission seat because of his concerns on this topic.

Connie Kendall, a property-owner in RR1, said that she would be in favor of Option 6, as the density would still allow her to move forward with her development plan for her Mount Pritchard-area

property. She supported the approach that the Planning Commission has taken in trying to modify regulations based on property-owners' visions for future development on their properties.

c. Discuss the possibility of another site visit

Denver W. asked the Planning Commission whether an additional site visit would be beneficial in terms of making a decision around potential changes to the RR1 zoning district. Several members said that it may be useful, and decided to visit the Babbott property on Pond Road.

## **5. Other Business & Correspondence**

a. News, announcements, etc

Alex W. noted that the Selectboard met to discuss the future Town common behind the Fire Station and that they received good public feedback. He said that the design team is working on a final concept plan, which should be available in August, though no work will be done until a plan is developed for the Fire Station itself.

Alex W. noted that another Planning Commission discussion item in its work plan is updating the flood hazard regulations for the river corridors (which they had begun discussing a little over a year ago). He noted that FEMA will be adopting new flood hazard maps for this area, and the State is recommending that municipalities review and revise their flood hazard regulations based on that. He said that there will be a push over the next year to conduct updates, though there is no hard deadline.

Alex W. additionally noted that Hinesburg received the permit from the State for the newly-drilled well, and now is working out how to ensure that new development pays for it rather than the existing user base.

Alex W. finally noted that the Selectboard has been discussing how to use Hinesburg's \$1.3 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. He noted that there will be a community survey in August to obtain feedback on how that money should be spent.

b. Agenda items for the July 27 meeting

The Planning Commission will conduct a site visit (pending owner availability) of the Babbott property at its next meeting, to start at either 6:00 or 6:30 P.M.

Denver W. **adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:03 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Amy Coonradt, Recording Secretary