

**Town of Hinesburg**  
**Town Common Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**September 26, 2023**  
*Approved 10/24/2023*

*\*\* This was the first meeting of the Town Common Committee since it was formed \*\**

**Members Present:** Maggie Gordon, Lenore Budd, Rachel Kring, AJ Driscoll, Nathan Fry (via Zoom)

**Members Absent:** none

**Staff:** Alex Weinhagen (Director of Planning & Zoning)

**Public Present:** none

Maggie G. called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 PM.

**1. Agenda Changes**

None.

**2. Introductions and summary of project**

Everyone introduced themselves, and Maggie G. provided an overview of the project – e.g., past efforts leading the conceptual plan for the Town Common. Alex W. reviewed the mission and charge of the Committee, which is essentially to spearhead the effort to create a vibrant Town Common by 2030 on the land behind the Police Station and Fire Station.

**3. Work in progress**

Maggie G. explained that on/around September 13, 2023, the Town submitted an application to the State for an Act 250 permit amendment for two items: 1) to continue to keep the connector road next to the Police Station closed to through traffic (i.e., movable barriers to allow emergency vehicles only); 2) to make phase one improvements to the Town Common – e.g., site grading, drainage work, landscaping, and pavilion construction. Committee members discussed the rationale for the road closure, as well as neighborhood traffic and parking concerns and ideas. Alex W. noted that the local-level (Development Review Board) permitting for the Town Common will also be needed prior to construction of the pavilion. He suggested that this local-level permitting could likely happen this winter, and that it would provide the community (including the adjacent neighborhood) an opportunity to learn more, provide suggestions, and express concerns.

Alex W. explained that the Town recently publicized a Request for Proposals (RFP) for site engineering. Responses to the RFP are due on October 4. This RFP is focused on engineering for grading, drainage, and landscaping. The idea is to prepare plans and supporting information so that the Town can put the site work (grading, drainage, and some landscaping) out to bid this winter, for completion in 2024. Additional engineering would likely be required later for some specific improvements – e.g., pavilion, parking lot, splash pad.

**4. Discuss Project Phasing**

The group reviewed the conceptual design. Maggie G. described the process that went into creation of the plan by a landscape architect at Dubois-King. Alex W. noted that the landscape architect recommended that rough grading and drainage work be done first. AJ D. agreed that addressing drainage first is key, especially given how soggy portions of the space were this summer, due to

frequent and excessive rain. Rachel K. felt that getting shade trees planted was important. Maggie G. and Lenore B. felt that the next logical amenities after grading and drainage should be the pavilion and walkways. AJ D. agreed that the pavilion would be a good amenity to do early on. He said that the play structures could come later, as the Town Common will still be a great space in the interim. Nathan F. recommended planning and installing water lines and electrical conduit early in the process, so as to avoid having to dig up the same area twice. The group discussed the proposed parking areas, and agreed that it was important to plan for them in the correct sequence. Several committee members supported focusing on pedestrian access and off-site parking elsewhere in the village, and leaving creation of the proposed on-site parking until later.

Alex W. mentioned that he had hoped to do a neighborhood meeting to give neighbors more information, get feedback, and hear concerns. He had planned to do this once the fire station expansion plans were farther along; however, the Select Board decided to pause work on the fire station expansion earlier this year. AJ D. lives in the adjacent neighborhood, and felt it would be a good idea to have such a meeting. He said the Creekside Association typically meets at the Fire Station. Alex W. suggested planning such a neighborhood meeting for early November, so that it happens soon, and so that the Committee can meet one more time ahead of time. AJ D. said he would reach out to Dan Jacobs (president of the Creekside Association) about coordinating.

## **5. Budget and Fundraising**

Alex W. explained that the Town has approximately \$17,500 in capital reserve funds allocated for Town Common improvements. For several years, the annual Town budget has included approximately \$5,000 to add to this fund. Maggie G. explained that the Select Board is also considering applying some of the Town's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to the project. She has recommended \$150,000 of ARPA funds for the project, but the Select Board has not made a decision yet on this. She explained that fundraising and grant writing will be a good idea for high profile improvements like tree planting, pavilion, play structures. She feels that Town funds will be important for less noticeable, but just as important work like engineering, grading, and drainage. She mentioned that if/when the Hinesburg Center 2 development is built, the developer has committed to providing approximately \$42,000 to go toward Town Common improvements. That development is still going through State permitting, so even if realized, that funding is likely two or more years away.

Alex W. noted that the Town's budget season is beginning, and that now is the time for departments and committees to make requests for the proposed FY25 budget that runs from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025. The group agreed that Town funding was necessary to move the first phase of the project forward – i.e., site grading, drainage, landscaping. Alex W. will confer with the Town Manager about whether it makes more sense to continue seeking Select Board approval for ARPA funds (which would be available sooner), or make a request for funding in the FY25 annual budget.

Maggie G. said that she is working with the Town Manager on a State Urban and Community Forestry grant application for tree planting funding. Apparently, the Town plans to submit a larger application, of which the Town Common planting would be just one part. Maggie G. said she is working to get the necessary information to the Town Manager in October, and that the grant submission deadline is January 5, 2024. Maggie G. and Lenore B. volunteered to work on this grant application, in collaboration with the Town Manager.

Alex W. briefly mentioned some of the other potential funding sources – e.g., State’s Better Places Program, federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, etc. The group agreed to make this an agenda item for the next meeting. Rachel K. volunteered to start working on a list of potential grants and other funding sources.

## **6. Organization**

AJ D. volunteered to chair the committee. Lenore B. volunteered to be vice chairperson. Rachel K. volunteered to be secretary (i.e., take minutes at future meetings). Maggie G. made a motion to approve these three officers of the Committee. The motion was seconded by Lenore. The motion passed 5-0.

The group decided to set regular meetings for the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7pm. Special meetings may be called on as needed basis with appropriate notice. The next meeting will be on October 24 at 7pm at the Town Office. Alex W. will check with the Assistant Town Manager as to the best room to use.

Alex W. gave a brief overview of the State open meeting law requirements – e.g., meeting notice, agenda posted at least 48-hours ahead (Town website, Town Office, Post Office, Library), minutes taken and posted to the Town website, group discussion with three or more Committee members only at public meetings and not by email, etc.

Respectfully submitted,  
Alex Weinhausen, Director of Planning & Zoning