

Town Common Committee Neighborhood Meeting Minutes
November 28, 2023
Approved December 19, 2023

Members Present: Maggie Gordon, Lenore Budd, Rachel Kring, AJ Driscoll, Nathan Fry

Members Absent: none

Staff: Alex Weinhausen (Director of Planning & Zoning)

Public Present: Andrea Morgante, Jamie Cudney, Nora Cudney, Will Patten, Jen Hunter, Jon Slason, Carrie Harlow, Andrew Leise

A meeting with neighbors and interested townspeople was held at the Hinesburg Fire Station.

Alex began the meeting at approximately 7:00 PM.

1. Alex gave a brief history of the project and presented the conceptual design (see [Town Common Committee page](#) for project information).
2. Nathan talked briefly about developing a phasing plan through to project completion (2030).
3. Community Input and Discussion
 - Play structures/kid appeal:
 - Important that equipment is universally accessible (e.g., ramps up to play structures). The Committee clarified that play area will be more of a natural exploration area, and we will keep accessibility in mind.
 - Should keep asking kids for input (some already involved in a design charrette).
 - Many current elements may appeal more to younger kids/families (play area, water feature). Need to think about teens. Some elements may already appeal as a “hangout” place, and green space is great for frisbee, etc.; could also consider half basketball court or something teens would like (ask them).
 - Other recreation activity discussion:
 - Bocce, horseshoes or chess tables suggested.
 - Pickleball suggested, but there was discussion that this may be better suited to the Bissonette Recreation area (noise, space).
 - Neighborhood resident wanted to make sure skating rink is coming back this winter; will likely need more volunteers to make it happen - for the past seasons it's just been a few volunteers maintaining and Creekside neighbors shoveling sometimes.
 - A dog park frequently comes up as a desire from some community members.
 - Neighbor expressed a hope that there will be paths to Bissonette fields. There will indeed be sidewalks and multi-use paths as part of the proposed developments nearby (if those happen).
 - Social space/community-building:

- Suggestion to have designated “chatters bench” so lonely neighbors can connect and have a conversation. Loneliness negatively affects physical and mental health.
 - There needs to be lots of seating. The Committee does plan to place lots of benches and also hopes to have tables (not many places to meet up for lunch outside currently).
 - Desire expressed to have events/activities on the Common. That is the desire of the Committee as well.
 - Much agreement that sweat equity in this project will be positive for community building. The Committee agrees as well and can envision an event like a pavilion-raising.
 - A strong feeling by some that community members should also be asked to contribute financially. Some meeting attendees felt crowdfunding would be a great first fundraising step to generate excitement/interest (as opposed to finding grant funding first); will likely have to be a balance of both.
 - Naming rights for the Common or individual park elements was proposed by a community member; some folks felt strongly that things should not be named for a non-Hinesburger, and there would be more community ownership if many people could contribute and buy bench plaques or something similar.
- Timeline:
 - Many attendees agreed timeline could go quicker if there’s clear communication to the public (e.g., “we can do xyz if we have this amount of funding”).
 - Alex reminded that funding could help move things along, but there are other considerations. Requests for proposals (RFPs) take time to get and must be done for each step of the project.
- Discussion about how Fire Department move/rebuild will impact the Common:
 - If the Fire Department rebuilds in the current location, the skating rink would not be possible in the planned location (behind the station).
 - Fire Department expansion in the current location would not impact parking along the connector road or any of the plans for the northern portion of the Common.
 - Some attendees wonder if it’s possible for the Town to decide on a Fire Dept location soon. The Selectboard has turned the spotlight away from that move/rebuild for a time because of costly wastewater treatment upgrades. Alex noted that a decision will likely not be made soon.
- Other:
 - Hinesburg business community excited about this project, said Will Patten. Could also be valuable partners in the project.
 - Some meeting attendees appreciated that the Common project will not rely heavily on tax dollars and believe that’s a selling point for public support.
 - Concern about the site being too wet (site work will alleviate that). Creekside neighbor also recommends planting willow trees.

- Should put up a sign on the Common now that says “coming soon.”
- If there could be a skating rink in the same location this year, there could be a QR code so the public can make donations.
- Could ask for more community input via Survey Monkey.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Rachel Kring, Secretary, Town Common Committee