

Town of Hinesburg
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Wednesday, July 13, 2011
Approved August 10, 2011

Members Present: Bob Linck, Carrie Fenn, Jean Isham, Joe Iadanza, Tom Ayer, Johanna White

Members Absent: Kyle Bostwick, Tim Clancy, Ray Mainer,

Also Present: Alex Weinhagen (Planning/Zoning Director), Mary Seemann (Recording Secretary), John Kiedaisch, Bill Marks, Dave Hurth, Maggie Gordon

Jean I called the meeting to order @ 7:40pm

1. Rural Area Regulation Revisions – Addressing Wildlife Habitat

- Defining “critical wildlife habitat” as used in proposed Conservation Subdivision Design Standards.
- Planning Commissioner questions, comments, discussion.
- Public questions & comments.

Alex W gave a quick overview, bringing all present up to date on where the Commissioners were on “Critical Wildlife Habitat.”

The Commissioners discussed the two types of resources primary and secondary, with primary resource areas as being unbuildable.

Discussions on the need to better define what the meaning of “habitat” is and what language should be used for the Subdivision Regulations. This was followed by a discussion on the resource area definitions; what needs to be redefined, what needs to be added and what needs to be taken out. **Alex W** said he had spoken with Jens Hilke at VT Fish & Wildlife and that Jens H thought the language thus far is good; Jens H made the suggestion that perhaps “Critical Wildlife Habitat” and “Core Habitat” could somehow be combined and he was also thinking how “Core Habitat” could be defined.

There was a discussion on what and where a true “Core Habitat” was and where one is located in Hinesburg. It was pointed out on a map that there is a large swath of habitat on the eastside of town and perhaps the Planning Commission could select the two most important habitat areas and elevate them to “primary resources.”

The Commissioners had a discussion on using “Significant Wildlife Habitat” instead of “Critical Wildlife Habitat.” This led to discussions on combining the ephemeral areas with better established areas, open fields, and how many years does it take for an open field to become a forest.

Dave H said one can’t make somebody maintain an open field. **Alex W** said Act 250 does and the Commission should think about what types of habitat reside in certain areas.

Bill Marks has a concern: there is a field that is shared by many residents and they are trying to find a farmer to maintain it. He said there is the potential for the land to be re-tilled and put back into agricultural use. He is concerned the Commission could be protecting wildlife that isn't there anymore. It was agreed that there is no way of knowing which wildlife has moved on or vanished as towns don't keep records on this, it is usually the community who records sightings of the wildlife.

Jean I said getting more "Bang for your buck" the Commissioners should concentrate on design standards, wildlife corridors, where they connect with other corridors in other towns and if the design standards could keep roads out of them, which would be a plus.

Dave H said the wildlife corridor issues stand to have long-term importance as once they are lost, they are lost forever.

It was decided a map is needed before going forward with this as a map will give everyone a better sense of what, where, and how.

It was discussed on how some rare and threatened habitats are sensitive, such as a rich fen, or a bog. Both can be easily damaged where a rich northern hardwood forest of oak is not particularly sensitive. This led to discussing the need for a definition as to what "sensitive" is. **Jean I** said the definition should allow for some expansion.

Alex W will talk with Jens Hilke from VT Fish & Wildlife for help with the definitions.

2. Minutes of the May 25, 2011 Meeting

Bob L moved to accept the minutes as amended, **Joe I** seconded. A vote was taken.

6-0 [THE MOTION PASSED](#)

3. Other Business & Announcements

- Correspondence received.
- **Letter of support for HCRC grant application – AARP Active Living Workshop program.** *Bob L made a motion to have Jean I sign a letter of support for this grant, Tom A seconded the motion. A vote was taken. 6-0 [THE MOTION PASSED](#)*
- **Village Center Designation renewal application.**
Alex W explained the reason for the renewal.
- **VT Smoke and Cure Grant & Creation of a Revolving Loan Fund.**
Alex W explained the grant Hinesburg received to help VT Smoke and Cure relocate and get the facility up to date. He said Smoke and Cure will pay the loan back to the town and the town is able to keep half of that money, which can go to help other companies get established in Hinesburg.

Next scheduled meeting: July 27, 2011

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Seemann
Recording Secretary