

Town of Hinesburg Planning Commission

August 10, 2011

Approved August 24, 2011

Members Present: Carrie Fenn, Johanna White, Kyle Bostwick, Tim Clancy, Tom Ayer, Joe Iadanza, Jean Isham, Ray Mainer arrived late.

Members Absent: Bob Linck

Also Present: Alex Weinhagen (Planning/Zoning Director), Mary Seemann (Recording Secretary), Mike Bissonette, Bill Marks.

The Commissioners and interested parties took a field trip (approximately 1 hour) before reconvening at the Town Hall for the scheduled public meeting. The purpose for the trip was to visit some areas identified as scenic resources per the draft Greenspace plan, which was the topic for the night's meeting.

Jean I called the meeting to order @ 8:25pm.

Rural Area Regulation Revisions – Addressing Scenic Resources

Questions discussed:

How do we define scenic resources and identify where they are?

Conservation Subdivision Design Standards – scenic resources as a secondary resource.

What development design standards do we currently use & overview of alternative design standard options.

Alex W handed out a scenic resource map explaining it was just one piece of the many maps that went into the Greenspace map and said he thought it would be a good place to start but it shouldn't be taken as gospel. He reiterated that the commission had talked about scenic resources as a potential secondary resource in the Conservation Subdivision Design protocol. He said **Johanna W** had combed through the existing language in the Design Standards and found there needs to be a clear definition of what the scenic resources are and how one identifies them.

The commission had discussed in the past the fact that there are a few of these secondary resources: wildlife habitat, forest, scenic resources, and cultural resources that didn't seem well defined. **Alex W** said if there is going to be a standard that mentions scenic resources there needs to be a definition of what those are and preferably have a map, to some extent, indicating where these most important places are.

Alex W went on to say the Planning Commission needed to talk about what specific design standards make sense and to make sure those resources are preserved. There should be a good balance between the ability for rural area subdivisions to do some level of development while not adversely impacting these scenic resources. He stated that there is no definition of what "scenic resources" is right now, but there are design standards already in place.

Bill Marks, a member of the Conservation Committee, said his memory of the history for the language was that there was a public forum where the map was discussed and decisions were made based on the input the public gave. It was based on what the residents at the meeting felt were important. **Bill M** said what he noticed in some of the other town's ordinances while it appears they do rely on maps to a large extent, they also say that for any particular development the DRB, or some other Board, in making an evaluation can do so by an investigation, to decide if the area has significant value.

There was a discussion on the two parts of a "scenic resource". First is where you are seeing it from, whether you can see it, and what you are looking at. This could be a farm field in the foreground, a hillside or a mountain top. Second, if any development would have impacts on the scenic resource.

Jean I asked how the commission could incorporate this into the Conservation Design Standards. She said probably any map that is done is not going to address all the areas in town. There was no discussion or answer.

Kyle B said it is going to be hard because beauty is very subjective. One might think the "view" is beautiful where someone else would not. **Jean I** said that is why there needs to be standards so everyone can have criteria to use to make a judgment.

Johanna W said "scenic vistas" to her are not simply mountains and hills with houses on them. She pointed out that there are going to be some manmade objects in the view that we will have to live with, such as the trackers on Charlotte Road. She stated this is where she has trouble. Not everyone will agree to what beauty is. She gave an example of being at the bend on Charlotte Road, standing at David Carse's farm and looking towards town, you will be seeing all those trackers and to her that is not beautiful. She said it is not simply one thing it is a combination of things that make beauty.

Bill M said the bigger picture for him it is not what a view is from a hilltop, it is what the view is from the public roads nearby. The roads where the public will walk, ride bikes, hike etc and enjoy the view. He asked with everything else being equal should a new house be allowed to impair the views of others who are in lower areas.

Mike B said he in his opinion there are three (3) types of land the Commissioners saw on the field trip. "Conserved land" which will always stay open and always have a view, "Current land use" where, if the program was subsidized, it will help that land stay open and "Private use" which is a different consideration to him. He said he struggles with the rights of a private property landowner versus the rights of the public.

Jean I asked if the Commissioners wanted to make "scenic vistas" a secondary resource area. **Alex W** said there is a bigger question "should it even be a consideration". He said it is right now. He stated the DRB frequently works with applicants to ensure that the new house(s) are absorbed by the natural landscape features and to be in locations least likely to block or interrupt scenic vistas, as seen from the public roadways. **Alex W** said that is why the map would be helpful. It would show everyone where those areas are and there would be no arguments.

Tim C is concerned about blocking scenic views. The view/vista one would be looking at may be a very important view and should not be blocked. **Tim C** said he was curious on how it would be decided which views could not be blocked from the public.

Alex W said there is the Quechee test that the Supreme Court uses for judging scenic resources/views and the commission could look at those as well. **Alex W** requested that before the next meeting the Commissioners look at the design standards from Charlotte or any other town and pick out what seems to be the most valuable. He said **Johanna W** was able to talk to an expert who is willing to come to the first meeting in September and **Alex W** thought it would be nice if the Commissioners had a list of what design standards they thought were important.

Bill M asked about ridgelines and this led to a discussion on ridgelines, slopes, good stewardship of property owners.

Joe I gave an example of a good ridgeline home. He said the home on Mount Pritchard on Rocky Mountain Lane. He said this is a huge house and it is on the ridgeline but can only be seen in the winter because the owners have cleared out very few trees. So if the commission is concerned about ridgelines, here is an example of how it can be done right.

Jean I said the Planning Commission will review the standards from other towns to see what could possibly work for Hinesburg.

As it was getting late it was decided to continue the "Scenic View" discussion at the next Meeting. This will give the Commissioners a chance to review other town's standards.

Minutes of the June 8, 2011 meeting:

Johanna W made a motion to accept as amended, **Carrie F** seconded. A vote was taken. [THE MOTION PASSED](#) . 8-0

Minutes of the July 13, 2011 meeting:

Johanna W moved to accept as amended, **Joe I** seconded. A vote was taken. [THE MOTION PASSED](#). 7-0 with **Ray M** abstaining.

Other Business & Announcements

Alex W said there was no correspondence received since the last meeting. He then gave a brief narrative on what is happening around town.

- Vermont Smoke and Cure: Hinesburg received a grant which made it possible to give a loan to Vermont Smoke and Cure to help with their relocation and updating needed to start production in Hinesburg. The way this loan works is Hinesburg will be paid back by Smoke and Cure and the town will be able to keep half of that money, with the other half going back to the State. The money Hinesburg receives in the payback can then be used to help other businesses start in Hinesburg.
- The permanent zoning for the Saputo property; the Selectboard is just now getting to review it. Hoping they will have an approval soon.
- Village Center Plaza was bought by David and Marie Blanck who are now updating it.
- Kinney Drugs is getting ready to put the front side on the building and open soon.
- Jolley/Mobil will be getting under construction very soon to enlarge their store. There will not be a 3-bay car wash.
- Ballard's is waiting for final Wastewater Permit and is hoping to be under construction in a few weeks.
- Estey's is selling the hardware store. There are differing rumors as to how much of the plaza has been sold, all or just the hardware part. We should all know in a couple of weeks.
- Hannaford's should be on the DRB agenda for September 20th.

Ray M made a motioned to adjourn, Tim C seconded.

The meeting closed at 9:29pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Seemann
Recording Secretary