

Town of Hinesburg PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Wednesday August 24, 2011

Approved September 14, 2011

Members Present: Bob Linck, Carrie Fenn, Tim Clancy, Tom Ayer, Jean Isham,
Joe Iadanza, Ray Mainer

Members Absent: Johanna White, Kyle Bostwick

Also Present: Alex Weinhausen (Planning/Zoning Director), Mary Seemann (Recording Secretary), Keith Thompson, Russ Barrett, Elly Coates, Brent Francis, Maggie Gordon.

Jean I called the meeting to order @ 7:35pm.

Rural Area Regulation Revisions – *Addressing Forest Resources*

With input from invited guests – Keith Thompson, Chittenden County Forester and Russ Barrett,

- Conservation Subdivision Design Standards – forest resources as a secondary resource
- Hinesburg's forest resources – a description of what exists today (variety and abundance)
- How do we define forest resources with regard to subdivision design (e.g., min. acreage, productivity, current use, etc.) and how do we identify where these resources are?
- What development design standards do we currently use & overview of alternative design standard options.

Alex W gave a quick overview of what the Commissioners had discussed in their past meetings. He introduced Keith Thompson and Russ Barrett.

Keith T gave his credentials and talked about his work with the town of Waterbury. He talked about how to have Design Standards to protect resources, yet maintain some flexibility to allow people to do what they need to do on their land. He went on to talk about the forest conditions in Hinesburg, Chittenden County and the Green Mountains; talking about the different species of trees that grow in these areas. **Keith T** stated here in Hinesburg there is a wide spectrum of forest species.

Russ B said the main thing to think about in designing is the access to the woods. It would be ideal if there is a landing area of approx ½ acres for trucks to enter and exit the forest. There was a discussion on how one would go about determining the size of the landing and how it could work in the zoning regulations.

Russ B talked about rules and regulations for trucks stating it is very important not to discriminate against logging trucks, and said the loggers would like some flexibility especially during mud season. **Russ B** pointed out with the economy as it is today a lot of loggers are going to other, different jobs, and are not logging. The big mills in Maine, New Hampshire and Canada are worried about this saying the markets have been pretty bad so a lot of wood is not being cut.

Russ B talked about State information from NRCS (National Resource Conservation Service) explaining sometimes there are incentive programs for participants.

Alex W said he was interested in the "Welcome Wagon" basket/pamphlet Russ had created for new land owners. It has everything about the program spelled out for them.

Jean I talked about FLESA (Forestland Evaluation and Site Assessment) explaining it is a numerical way to put a price on forest land. **Jean I** said most of this has been done in the past by Conservation Commission, not the Planning Commission. **Jean I** asked if most towns get grants to accomplish this and **Russ B** said yes.

Jean I asked if anyone in the audience had any questions, no response.

Keith T shared one experience he had in Waterbury. The Waterbury Planning Commission tried to consider all aspects of FLESA and thought they did a good job making land owners think about the natural resources, and how to mitigate any impacts it would have. Their hope was when a landowner came in front of the DRB they would know what their options were. When this idea was put out to the public there was a very unpleasant response. **Keith T** said possibly there were a couple of reasons why the residents were unhappy; he thinks the major one was not bringing the public into the discussion. He said the only thing he would do different today, would be to have the public at the meetings, and engaging the public in the whole process. Waterbury had already had the regulations drafted; they had gone too far before asking the public. That was their pitfall.

Alex W said the Planning Commission (PC) has done good and not so good on this part. There was a well attended forum and the PC received good responses, but that was in 2009. **Alex W** said perhaps it is time for another public forum which will take at least one more meeting to discuss this issue.

Keith T said with regard to the regulations that cover the wildlife habitat, the PC may not need to add language for forest "stuff."

Alex W said the language that was done in 2009 could get jettison and replaced with something else. Example: remove forest resources entirely, and deal with specific standards

Alex W thanked **Russ B** and **Keith T** for coming.

Russ B said Brian Shupe would be a good person to get in contact with.

Alex W reviewed Wildlife corridors. He said he had been talking to Jens Hilke (planning biologist) and showed the PC Jens' slide show presentation.

Alex W said his desire is to provide direction without shackles as the PC and DRB doesn't always know what the end result will be.

Keith T said if the Commissioners have any other questions he would gladly come back.

Jean I thanked **Keith T** for his time and information.

Jean I asked **Alex W** what is still needed. **Alex W** said the PC should try to wrap up scenic resources. Once this is done the Commissioners will be able to get back to some public outreach in October.

Municipal Planning Grant Proposal – Village Growth Area Design

Alex W said the VSC (Village Steering Committee) is interested in taking the next step which would be bringing a private consultant in to paint a picture on how the Village could look going forward. The Selectboard approved the seed money.

Bob L said it is a good idea and the PC should move forward with it.

Jean I asked if the VSC is going to take the lead on this, and **Alex W** said he thought they would.

Minutes of the August 10, 2011 Meeting

Carrie F moved to approve as written, Ray M seconded. A vote was taken. 6-0

THE MOTION PASSED.

1. Other Business & Announcements

- Correspondence received (if any)
Alex W said there was no correspondence to discuss.

Jean I closed the meeting at 9:23pm

Respectably submitted

Mary Seemann
Recording Secretary