

**Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission**

May 30th, 2012

Approved June 13, 2012

Members Present: Joe Iadanza, Johanna White, Carrie Fenn, Maggie Gordon, Jean Isham, Tim Clancy, Ray Mainer. Bob Linck arrived at 8:12pm.

Members Absent: Kyle Bostwick.

Also Present: Alex Weinhagen (Planning/Zoning Director), Freeda Powers (Recording Secretary), Bill Marks, Gill Coates and Anne Donegan.

Joe Iadanza chaired the meeting, which was called to order at 7:42pm.

Rural Area Zoning; Objective #3: Rural Area Development Density/ Maximum Build Out.

The commission continued discussions on Density and Maximum Build Out by looking at surrounding municipalities as well as several local lots and established neighborhoods to see what current density numbers look like. Alex W did not have a town-wide build out available for review but will provide that at the June 13th meeting.

Tim C reminded the board that whatever numbers they decide upon, they must be able to justify how and why they reached that decision. He feels it is very helpful to view data from surrounding towns.

Alex W gave the commissioners a handout showing Rural Area Density numbers for nearby towns (data as of 5/2012). He pointed out that density varies significantly and noted some interesting numbers, such as the high PUD density bonuses in Underhill and Jericho (50-100%). He also noted that some towns have something called a Conservation District where development is not anticipated or even allowed. Alex W observed that Monkton, Jericho and Westford are all at 1 unit per 10 acres and asked the board to consider if that is the kind of rural setting they would like to emulate. Historically, Hinesburg has been at around 1unit/8acres.

Ray M asked for clarification between Minimum Lot Size vs. Density numbers. Alex W said the Minimum Lot Size dictates the smallest lot creatable per parcel; the Density refers to the number of units/acre allowed on any parcel.

Looking at data from other towns, Tim C noted that Charlotte appears to be sort of an anomaly; he thinks of it as being rural in character and yet the density numbers are set at 1unit/5acres. Carrie F noted this might be due to the large areas of conserved land there.

Alex W recommended Tim C call the PC chair person in Charlotte and ask about the development pressure they feel there and to get a feel for how those density numbers work for

them. He agreed with Carrie F, saying Charlotte is very proactive when it comes to delineating and preserving resources and noted their Design Standards are a big part of that.

Tim C and Joe I both agreed, the density numbers are set too high as they are. Ray M asked what was meant by “full build-out.” Alex W explained that it means a parcel is not expected to have any development potential remaining, being developed to its maximum potential units.

Tim C asked then, what to conclude from the numbers being looked at; Minimum Lot Size is what is currently used to determine density but that the true density tends to be much lower. Alex W said yes.

Tim C clarified, saying this is due in large part to a set of circumstances; i.e., a family subdivision is very different from building a community. The board said not necessarily. Alex W said that currently, the regulations are not completely clear on density, which is the purpose of this discussion. Current regulations do not ensure the implementation of the Town Plan. He addressed Tim C’s concerns regarding Minimum Lot Size & density numbers, saying there is not an expectation to build out to the full maximum density. Tim C reiterated the importance of the boards’ ability to justify whatever maximum density number they decide on.

Bob L voiced his concerns that current density numbers may not protect resources as they would like.

Jean I cautioned that historically, the 10 acre/septic rule created many 10acre lots and resulted in “chopped up” open spaces. She suggests that more flexibility on lot size allows for more open space potential.

Joe I asked about the current process landowners go through in determining buildable lot areas. Alex W explained that there is an informal process that happens between staff and landowners, in determining take out areas and buildable areas.

Tim C gave an example of a large lot where 90% is impacted by sensitive areas which results in the remaining 10% being very densely populated. To him, this is not in the spirit of maintaining rural character.

Joe I said he wants the land to be able to speak for itself (i.e., take outs address this).

Tim C asked if RR1 is included in the density numbers they are considering. Alex W said no, but that at some point, they should consider if they want to wrap RR1 into these regulations. He noted that RR1 has some unique considerations when it comes to density numbers as a good portion of the Northern part of RR1 is covered in steeply forested areas resulting in little or no development contrasted from the Southern parts of RR1, which house the densely populated trailer parks.

Jean I suggested they either defer further discussion on RR1 or entertain splitting it into two separate districts according to those topographically related density differences. The board

deferred further discussion on the issue, citing the lack of current development pressure there and agreed to first determine density numbers for RR2/Ag Districts.

The board looked at examples of existing full build-out areas.

In the Hayden Hill West area, the board could see that most structures were set at field/forest edges, and closely to access roads, demonstrating a desirable rural character, while minimizing impact on sensitive areas.

The area of North Road showed higher density numbers, mainly due to the proximity to a paved roadway. In addition, smaller lot sizes play a role in the higher density numbers in the North Road area.

Joe I noted that smaller lots (such as those in the North Road area) become unavailable for further subdivision, so this is pretty much what the board is looking at in terms of full density.

The Fletcher Farm area was looked at as a successful and desirable Rural Area development. The area was shown once again to have homes built at field/forest edges, providing individual homes with privacy while preserving open space and minimizing impacts.

There was some discussion regarding density allowances based on road conditions/classifications. Alex W asked the board if they wanted to consider options such as keying out Rte. 116 and grouping all the remaining roads into separate classes.

Ray M said he would like to see density numbers at 1 unit/10 or 15 acres.

Joe I said he would like to cap bonuses for PUD development at 20-25% with a base of 1 unit/10acres.

Tim C said in regards to Rte. 116; it is what most outsiders see of Hinesburg. He said traffic is one issue, but says it is not everything. Ray M agreed.

Jean I suggested Rte. 116 and Class 2 & 3 roads have a 1 unit/10 acre lot size with Class 4 roads at 1unit/15 acres.

Maggie G cautioned about putting a potential strain on municipal services.

Tim C suggested combining Class 3 & Class 4 roads. The board did not agree, saying Class 4 roads are unique and citing potential cost to the town in upgrading or maintaining them. Tim C offered that while Class 4 roads are considered public roads, the town has no responsibility to maintain them (i.e., plowing etc.) Therefore, the cost would be on developers in upgrading or maintaining them. He said he believes people want higher density numbers to remain near/on paved roadways. He proposes 2 categories with density numbers set at 8/10 and 12/15.

Alex W suggested the board also consider making changes to the Minimum Lot Size, saying it could increase landowners' abilities to accommodate family members or make a small amount of revenue (the most common reasons for subdivisions).

Carrie F suggested density numbers of 8 for Class 2 roads and 10/15 for Class 4 roads with bonuses max at 25-35%. Joe I agreed, saying he feels the 50% bonus is too high. Tim C also agreed, saying he thinks 25% is a high enough bonus.

Alex W noted that the bonus has been set at 25% for a while, and that the word from local developers is that nobody really took advantage of it; it was not seen as a big enough incentive to overcome increased project costs and aggravations for larger projects. The board agreed that this did not make sense, as they feel PUD development should be in fact less costly.

Joe I said he feels that PUD is a good tool, and feels it is important to try to encourage land use in that way. Tim C said it seems more difficult for developers to go through the PUD process. Joe I said it seems the board is in agreement on this; they want the process to be simple but feel clarification on the PUD process is in order. He suggested they avoid overdoing the incentives and focus on improving the PUD process.

Alex W said he agreed with Bob L and Tim C that Design Standards should cover some of this and suggested the board read Section 4.5 in the current Zoning Regulations in preparation for continued discussion on this topic.

Tim C told the board that if they do this right, developers will be asking to do PUD development. Jean I suggested that if they drop the Minimum Lot Size that would be a big reason for developers not to do the PUD process.

Minutes from May 23rd, 2012 Meeting:

Jean I **MOVED to approve** as written. Carrie F **SECONDED the motion**. Motion **PASSED 8-0**

Other Business: None.

Ray M **MOVED to adjourn**. Tim C **SECONDED the motion**. The motion **PASSED 8-0**. The meeting adjourned at 10:02pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Freedra Powers Recording Secretary