

Town of Hinesburg Planning Commission

March 25, 2015

Approved 4/8/15

Members Present: Joe Iadanza, Rolf Keilman, Dennis Place, Kyle Bostwick.

Members Absent: Maggie Gordon, Russell Fox, Tim Clancy, Neal Leitner, and Aaron Kimball.

Also present: Alex Weinhagen (Director of Planning & Zoning) and Freeda Powers (Recording Secretary).

Public Present: Barbara Forauer, Gill Coates.

Joe I. chaired the meeting, which was called to order at 7:39pm.

There were no changes to the agenda.

Discussion of Community Forums: Barbara F. spoke from the audience, saying that the forums were appreciated and helpful. Rolf K. agreed with Barbara, saying all four forums were quite helpful though he wishes they had been better attended. Gill C. said he agrees with the idea of local support of businesses but not of the “wine & dine” feeling he got from one of the presenters. He was struck by the discussion or lack thereof, of the internet’s impact on brick and mortar stores; he suggested a longer term outlook which asks how many stores will we really need in the future? Alex W. said people still need places to work though. Gill C. said just recognize the changes that are happening and plan for it. Rolf K. said structures still need to be made for entertainment etc. Gill C. said he also very much enjoyed presenter Brian Wright who shows the real landscape. Gill voiced his concern with the safety of dead end roads which create potential evacuation and egress problems; he likes the idea of a network of roads in this sense. He said also, the larger buildings need to have some carry-over from the rest of the village i.e., color, shutters, etc. Alex W. said his take-aways from the forums were; purposeful green space, underground parking, FBC costs money to adopt, mixed scale is good, consider all options regarding energy i.e., large scale and small scale. He liked the idea of an Economic Vitality Staff or department to assist with business (such as the Community Development Corp in Randolph) which is not municipal so it doesn’t move at that ‘glacial pace’. He really liked the 6 principles which help guide good economic development. Also, he said, he took away from the forums that we should focus on people and jobs, not businesses specifically. Joe I. said his take-aways were; what are we willing to tolerate (i.e., congestion) and exploring the quota system or way of granting phased permits on larger projects. Dennis P. said he felt that Bruce Seifer had good ideas. He thought of the Saputo site, and said really, Hinesburg doesn’t have the infrastructure to do a lot more; there is no 3-phase power by the Casey Sand & Gravel Pit. On Green Space, he said, density bonuses allow developers to fill density numbers. We never said how much mixed use, etc. that we wanted. In that sense, he said, we cannot fault the developers as we give them the bonuses. He feels that we should not have given as much in those bonuses. In a way, he said, we almost promoted that area for density; it was previously 2 Acre zoning. Kyle B. said we need the residential development to sustain the businesses and vice versa. Dennis P. agreed, saying we need higher paying jobs so that people can actually work and live here. Alex W. said Hinesburg is a small rural village and may never have a flourishing midday activity level.

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Barbara F. asked who follows through with developers now to ensure plans are followed and met. Alex W. said that is Peter Erb, the Zoning Administrator. Barbara said regarding underground parking which came up in one of the forums, it is in her opinion great for winter, increases open space, and is visually appealing. She feels strongly that energy, water and wastewater need to be looked at closely.

Kyle B. disagreed with the belief that we can just find the financial resources needed to achieve most goals/ideals. He noted the suggestion from one presenter that the Town should have a person who acts with businesses as far as recruiting and engaging and helping them to succeed. Alex W. agreed, saying it's a good instrument if you can financially swing it. Remember, he said, that some grants are available which could help with that cost. Joe I. said the area available designated to those uses also determines to a degree the feasibility of such spending. Kyle B. said it does seem evident that there is a cost of collaborative relationships between business owners. Alex W. said a take-away for him from the economic development forum also was to remain positive; approach businesses in a "what can we do to help you?" tone.

Joe I. said while we can create the desirable spaces, we can't force the customers, in this sense, the Board discussed Kyle's concerns with how to help the businesses *stay* once they start. Rolf K. said there is a methodology for how to create the town you want and a great deal depends upon the quality of the people working for you. First try to understand what a community wants to be. He admits he is a bit enamored with Form Based Code (FBC). He said while we have tried to proactively plan for growth, recent contentious projects instills in him a willingness to look at alternate methods and strategies. He said there should be an easier process on the DRB and on the community as a whole. Financial support will need to be looked at, he said. The topic of Energy should continue to be pursued and perhaps more assertively.

Kyle B. said it remains a struggle for him as to how to keep people living and working here; currently he sees many residents leave Hinesburg every day and return home at night after work. He wonders what strategies could create the jobs locally to allow those residents to stay within the community each day. Also, regarding energy, he said, we must consider how our rural character and associated need for vehicular mobility factors in to use and impacts.

Joe I. noted FBC and how it relates to everything around it. Alex W. said it might be good to consider if the Board feels they are ultimately more concerned with the impact and flexibility of uses vs. design. He went on to say that he feels in Hinesburg a fear of what is different or new in terms of development with different scale than what exists. However, the forums indicate we shouldn't fear a mix of scale. He said he doesn't know if FBC can overcome that fear. Kyle B. said it depends on what structures look like; i.e., NRG is a large structure but its design results in a low-impact building. Alex W. said he feels there will always be contention around large projects—that just is.

Joe I. said FBC is perhaps a plug towards Master Planning and may be helpful in making people more comfortable with those larger buildings. There was some discussion about the Green Space around large buildings which soak up the density numbers for development projects but provide unusable open spaces. Joe I. said he feels people in Hinesburg do not see the trade coming through from the intent of more commercial/retail opportunities as well as more housing which came with mixed use. At this point, it is mostly residential development happening. Alex W. said this is in part a function of where we set our allocations and where and how explicitly we state it in the Town Plan. Joe I. said he'd like to see that put in the Town Plan.

Kyle B. referred to old buildings, which in some cases have stood over 100yrs. Those buildings, he said, were designed and built in such a way that allows many uses to be possible over time. He has concerns with new structures which can only support one use. He reiterated his concern with providing space for business opportunities as it relates to the commuter drain each day in Hinesburg. He said an increase in residential development will simply increase the number of people driving out of town each day to jobs elsewhere. He said in regards to Green Space; in our search for open space, we may lose sight of its usefulness. He said personally, he would rather see larger buildings if the developer can increase the usable green space by increasing the number of units in a building.

Rolf K. said spaces need to be purposeful (gardens, etc.) and there should not be a lot of wasted space. A good example, he said, is the northern side of the Hinesburg Center, LLC. Project the space between the buildings on Farmall Drive is essentially useless. The same could be said for the small area to the south of the bakery structure which has a couple of benches and also has a large utility transformer box. This area is not purposeful. He would have preferred to see those buildings combined/collected to create useable outdoor space. Self-definition goes into the process of FBC, he said, and it is complicated. Alex W. asked how would you go about applying FBC to, for example, an empty field, where there is no existing development to fit into. This led to some discussion about the Village core, which is currently dominated by 1 ½ story single-family-homes.

Town Plan Updates: The Board agreed to the possible addition of zoning district descriptions to the Town Plan.

Chapter 6 (Transportation) is not completed; Joe I. will provide this once ready. Alex W. said no rush as Energy, Conservation Commission's Green Space Plan and Economic Commission's submissions are all coming to the PC soon (April).

Demographics & Housing Data is not yet complete; Alex W. will send to the Board as a PDF once done. A poverty matrix is likely to be added.

Minutes from 2/11, 2/18, 3/11: There was not a quorum to review minutes.

Other Business: There were no major disagreements during the Select Boards' discussion regarding storm water regulation revision proposals. A public hearing on those revisions is likely soon. The Select Board has a meeting on 3/30 @7pm re: Water & Waste Water capacity and the potential adoption of interim bylaws (moratorium).

Kyle B. made a **motion to adjourn**. Rolf K. **seconded** the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:17pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Freeda Powers, Recording Secretary