Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission
April 22, 2015
Approved 5/13/15

Members Present: Joe Iadanza, Dennis Place, Kyle Bostwick, Maggie Gordon, Aaron Kimball.

Members Absent: Russell Fox, Rolf Keilman, Tim Clancy, Neal Leitner.

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

Public Present: Chuck Reiss, Carrie Fenn.

Joe I. chaired the meeting, which was called to order at 7:34pm.

There were no changes to the agenda. There were no public comments for non-agenda items.

Town Plan Update—energy chapter rewrite by the Energy Committee: The Board reviewed the energy committee's revisions to Chapter 7 (Energy). Alex W. noted that the charts in it are old and that updated charts are available and will be supplied. Chuck Reiss said also that the charts as presented in pie-chart format can be changed to other chart forms if the Board desires. He said the Energy Committee members each tackled a section of the chapter to complete the revisions. He said regarding achieve by dates, the committee used stated energy goals and green home targets as the starting point.

Maggie G. said she felt that the dates were ambitious, and asked what the status of the plan is. Chuck R. said the plan is informing what the state legislature does now (i.e., H40) in switching to renewables. He said the Total Energy Study shows the goals are feasible.

Joe I. said the chapter seems heavy on renewables.

Chuck R. explained how the Public Service Board issues a certificate of public good which currently is all a developer needs then they can place renewable projects wherever they want. He feels, as does the Energy Committee, that from the Town's perspective we should have some say in this process.

Kyle B. asked if there are any other communities that we could look at as a model. Carrie F. said there are some towns dealing with issues around wind turbines and solar siting. There was some discussion about large scale vs. individual (personal vs. commercial) renewable development. Chuck R. said there is no longer a bonus from the state for solar, it is now looked at as <10Kw. vs. >10Kw (about 4Kw per tracker), which seems reasonable to him.

Kyle B. said regulatory language will be tough to craft. Joe I. said the Town can encourage via guidelines to get the desired results i.e., sufficient screening, minimizing impacts, etc. Carrie F. encouraged more vigorous notice of pending siting hearings. Joe I. said education is also a big part of the process as it was with erosion control and other issues. Chuck R. said there is a CPG notification to neighbors for solar trackers. The process, he said, is much quicker for roof-mounted solar. Kyle B. said he agrees with Joe and we should offer a 'tool box' approach.

Chuck R. and Carrie F. suggested that the language could read "development guidelines to assist…" but do we want to encourage or require, that is the question. Alex W. said the Public Service Board will only look to our Town Plan on larger scale commercial projects. The language needs to be there, not in the regulations. Joe I. said he has a philosophical problem with that. Maggie G. asked about the language we have now. Alex W. said he personally feels it is very vague. Dennis P. wondered about specifying not allowing the large scale commercial projects to go in Ag fields. This triggered some discussion about the locations these larger solar projects (as seen recently in other towns) should not be placed and what exactly to 'protect'. Chuck R. said there will always be some push and pull; if you put these projects in a field and it is well screened and respects neighboring view, etc. how do we feel about that? This is how guidelines might be helpful, he suggests.

Aaron K. said this issue touches on the idea of "rural character" as it relates to visibility i.e., the big Ag fields which invoke the idea of Hinesburg's character. He said we must find that line and perhaps the Green Space Plan can help here. Alex W. said the Green Space Plan focuses on green space and doesn't address such things as view-sheds in the same regard. Also, he said, is a neighbors' view the Town's priority? Or is the priority wildlife and bigger impacts. Where is the real community interest, he asks. Aaron K. said we can look at the solar we have now, at NRG and on Charlotte Road and incorporate what already works (i.e., buffers, setbacks, etc.) Chuck R. said we must mitigate conflicts, because solar *is* coming.

Kyle B. said from an integrity standpoint, he feels we should have similar criteria as for subdivision review. Maggie G. and Aaron K. both said they feel that is what we're doing here. Alex W. said as in RR1, the language can identify primary and secondary resources to avoid; noting that wind energy will need some exceptions to the steep slope conditions. The Board agreed. Chuck R. asked if the language defines "minimize" in terms of impacts. Alex W. said no. Kyle B. said it is important to allow some flexibility here. If projects can be done successfully without impact, they should be allowed. Chuck R. agreed, saying we can accommodate resources in some cases, but said don't treat this the same as a subdivision review. He said the Board needs to think also about wind energy, as Alex mentioned. He said the traffic and maintenance impacts are lower in solar vs. wind projects. He said he feels that wind & solar is a good mix of renewable options for Hinesburg.

The Board discussed maps which might be useful in renewable projects, which would denote sensitive areas overlaid with high wind areas and 3-phase power locations, etc. Kyle B. said such a map would give options.

The idea of hydro power was discussed. Currently, a good deal of hydro power is brought to our state from Canada. Long-distance infrastructure is a concern. Carrie F. said consider transmission loss and other economic costs i.e., jobs. Joe I. said indeed, there will always be a cost. Kyle B. asked if any of the existing Hinesburg damns have hydro potential. Chuck R. said yes, adding that micro hydro is a real option. Hinesburg's history is clear on this and the potential is still here. Carrie F. said part of the problem locally is in ownership. Kyle B. said he feels this is something the Town should look at the economics of and seriously consider.

Chuck R. said the Total Energy Study encourages local generation and this is the Public Service Boards' recommendation as well. Joe I. said it is also important to consider the capacity of the grid. Chuck R. said transmission security is done through micro grids which distribute large scale projects through the local community.

Maggie G. asked about the stretch code. Chuck R. said it has been in place as of December of 2014. It is required for all Act 250 projects. Maggie G. asked if it is doable. Chuck R. said yes. He said the state doesn't have these specific requirements but it is in the Plan. Alex W. asked what the 25% was referring to. Is it specific to the home construction? Chuck R. said yes. Carrie F. said the structures should be built tight enough so that it actually uses less energy. Chuck R. said also, that energy must be renewable. He said now there are heat pumps, PV and other ways to easily achieve the 25%. Alex W. asked how to calculate the % of passive solar, for example. Chuck R. said there are formulas to calculate energy and thermal needs and then figure out the % of renewables. These are annual measures. Dennis P. asked if these standards would apply to outbuildings, etc. Chuck R. said they apply to the main residential structure. Dennis P. asked about the cost of Net Zero building. Chuck R. said with solar panels and heat pumps, net zero is achievable at a cost of between $220-500K for a 15,000-20,000 sq. ft. home. He said that question is not easy to answer. Dennis P. said we need to be realistic here.

Maggie G. said she feels that the item in the Residential Energy Use section which requires *building permits being issued for changes to existing homes should include information as to how a home can achieve net zero energy* puts a burden on the Planning & Zoning office. Kyle B. said this can be achieved with a simple pamphlet being handed out by staff. Chuck R. agreed, saying just make applicants aware. Maggie G. asked that the Energy Committee select their top priorities.

Kyle B. asked how to pay for all of this. He said these are essentially great ideas in a vacuum. He points out there is a financial impact.

Joe I. noted that the Town Plan only mentions 3-phase power in the end with the goals. He said this should be discussed.

New Development "Pause": The Board discussed the Select Board's recent Wastewater Allocation 1 year moratorium, interim bylaws and timeline for further studies & actions. Joe I. said it seems straight forward. The Select Board is looking at a competitive award system similar to what Williston has. They want to do a study first to see the potential for increased capacity and the best way to do it.

Maggie G. said the Select Board is seeking input from the Planning Commission. She said interim bylaws is like the beginning of a process and it seems to her that we can't plan until the fall when we know more about our capacity.

Joe I. said there are many issues coming together here, including the VNW growth, density, phasing, community good, lack of wastewater/water, and pending regulation changes from the states' lake report. He said we can use the interim time, but we never really based the VNW regulations on the water and wastewater issues. He doesn't think we necessarily need to wait for the water issue to look again on the VNW, or other districts for that matter. Alex W. said it is important to remember that preliminary plat approval is when a project is vested in the current regulations. Interim bylaws, he said, do nothing to help the DRB review as they are administered solely by the Select Board; it is a very disparate system.

The Board discussed the meaning behind the recent survey results. There was some discussion regarding infrastructure & density and the relationship/connection between them and how to fairly

distribute the cost of expanded infrastructure. Dennis P. said the potential for a zero increase in wastewater capacity is a serious consideration. Maggie G. said also, it is important to realize that lower density may not get what people want, that idea of a "rural village". Aaron K. said we need to define what we are and what we want as a town or in terms of that "rural village".

Joe I. said he is in favor of interim zoning in this case. The ordinance, as Maggie pointed out, only seems to "stack things up".

Meg Handler spoke from the audience, saying the Conservation Commission has discussed this and is disturbed by the potential of projects stacking up as Joe and Maggie indicate, under current zoning. She encourages the Board and the Town to step back and unify the vision on how to deal with these issues. She urged the Commissioners to consider distribution implications i.e., large development projects take up all capacity.

Joe I. said we should be planning for what we want. He said he thinks we can change and plan without knowing the outcome of the upcoming wastewater study.

Joe I. made a **motion that the Planning Commission recommend to the Select Board as an alternative to the moratorium on wastewater approval to consider instead interim zoning in the VGA with the express desire for the Planning Commission to revisit the VGA bylaws during that interim zoning period.** The Board agreed to put this revision work on Chapter 7 as a top priority once work on the Town Plan is complete. Aaron K. **seconded the motion.** The Board **voted 3-2** with Aaron K., Maggie G. and Joe I. in favor & Dennis P. and Kyle B. opposed.

Minutes from 4/8: The Board agreed to table the minutes until the next meeting due to the late hour.

Other Business: The Selectboard will have a meeting on 5/18/15 regarding storm water.

Joe I. made a **motion to adjourn.** Aaron K. **seconded** the motion. The meeting adjourned at 10:28pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Freeda Powers, Recording Secretary