

Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission
November 9, 2016
Approved November 23, 2016

Members Present: Dennis Place, Maggie Gordon, Jeff French, John Kiedaisch, James Donegan, Joe Iadanza, Barbara Forauer

Members Absent: Rolf Kielman, Russell Fox

Public Present: Rob Bast, Laura Carlsmith, Michael Bissonette, Tom Ayer, Jerrilyn Miller, Ann Carlsmith, Aaron Miner, Allison Beach, Stuart Deliduka, Jamie Carroll, Anne Donegan, Johanna White, Merrily Lorell, Nancy Baker, Tim Brown, Kristi Brown, Mary Beth Bowman, Chuck Reiss, Gary Thibault, Mary Thibault

Also Present: Dawn Morgan (Recording Secretary) and Alex Weinhagen (Director of Planning & Zoning)

Joe I. chaired the meeting, which was called to order at 7:11 pm.

Agenda Changes: None.

Public Comments for Non-Agenda Items: None.

Town Plan Public Hearing - Community feedback on draft Town Plan

Joe I. began by saying the purpose of the hearing is to gather community feedback on the 3rd draft of the Town Plan. The Commission will then discuss any needed revisions based on this feedback prior to submitting the Plan to the Select Board for review.

Alex W. gave a brief history of the Town Plan, saying that it is a visionary document for the Town detailing where the Town was, where it currently is, and where it is headed in the future. He said the last time there was community involvement in the Plan development was 2005, with minor updates by the Select Board in 2013, so the Select Board felt that it is now time for a substantial update. The process began 2-1/2 years ago with a series of community surveys and meetings, followed by draft submissions on each subject from the various town committees. The Planning Commission then worked to streamline the document and identify what they felt were the top 10 action items detailed in the Plan.

Alex W. noted that this Plan differs from the previous Plan, primarily in regards to growth. He said that the last Plan spoke at great length to village growth, and this Plan is more focused on how, and how quickly, the town will grow rather than how much it will grow. This Plan speaks more to physical infrastructure limitations that are driving how quickly we can grow, the Shoreline and the Rural Residential 1 zoning districts, and storm water control.

Joe I. opened the discussion for public comments, noting that the purpose of this meeting was to gather overall community feedback for the Commission to review and incorporate into the Plan at a later

meeting. Alex W. said that the Plan will then be submitted to the Select Board for review, and that there will be additional opportunities for community feedback before the Plan is finalized.

Laura Carlsmith thanked the Commission and town committees for their hard work on the Plan. She said the Plan was a wealth of information and was a great reference tool.

Nancy Baker reiterated Laura C.'s comments and expressed her appreciation for some of the goals, design standards and the inclusion of language saying that market forces shall not trump the community's desire for measured development. Nancy B. continued by suggesting the inclusion of a Town organizational flow chart to assist community members in identifying the appropriate person to approach when issues or questions arise.

Jamie Carroll asked if the Regional Planning Commission (RPC) has reviewed the Plan, and Alex W. responded that it will be if the Town wants the Plan to be approved (which it will need to do if it wants to qualify for certain grant funds). Alex W. went on to say that the formal RPC review process will begin once the Plan has been finalized. Jamie C. asked if the Plan has been reviewed by an attorney, and Alex W. responded that there were no current plans for an attorney review as the Plan serves as a visionary document that will later drive the Town's regulatory documents.

Jamie C. Thanked the Commission for their efforts on the Plan and expressed appreciation for the level of specifics included. He went on to say that he lives in the Shoreline District and agrees with much of what is included in that section. Jamie C. commented that the Plan discourages subdivisions in the Shoreline District, but inquired as to whether the Town has considered the joining of lots.

Rob Bast also expressed gratitude for the effort made in reworking the Plan. He made suggestions regarding some of the data details to improve accuracy and continuity within the Plan. Rob B. also suggested the inclusion of language stating that the Town should be receptive to intersection design improvements (such as roundabouts) as well as the possibility of longer term improvements in the transportation plan.

Rob B. noted language in the energy section stating that all new homes will be required to be net zero by the year 2030. He commented that it is expensive to build net zero housing and expressed concern that this goal may not be compatible with the Plan's goal for increase affordable and senior housing. Rob B. suggested that the Town may need to consider creating a path, such as a community solar project, to help developers and residents attain both goals.

Laura Carlsmith also commented that she had just built a net zero home and the cost was about 20% more than conventional development

Jamie C. suggested the creation of an energy efficiency program, or perhaps lower permit fees or taxes to help offset the cost of high efficiency homes. He expressed disappointment when the Town moved away from their energy star rating program.

Jerrilyn Miller expressed concern regarding the natural gas pipeline that she feels is very close to Town wells. She noted that if the pipeline were to leak it could have a negative impact on Town water safety.

Stuart Deliduka thanked the Commission and Staff for warning the hearing on Front Porch Forum. He said he was excited to see that a top action item was providing transportation services to help current and new businesses. Stuart D. noted that there is general conversation amongst community members regarding the potential for an additional traffic light on Rte 116 as well as the possibility of making portions of Mechanicsville Rd. one-way. He reiterated his request that the Plan considers current and future business when making these decisions.

Joe I. thanked the public for their comments and encouraged them to send any additional comments via email, phone call, or in person.

Nancy Baker inquired as to the timeline going forward, and Alex W. said that he hoped to have a final draft submitted to the Select Board after they begin the budgeting process early next year. He reiterated that the community will have additional opportunities for comment before the Select Board approves the final Plan document.

Joe I. closed the public hearing at 7:53 pm.

There was no discussion of additional revisions at this meeting.

Joe I. called the meeting to order at 8:05 pm.

Magee Hill Road Solar Array - Decision on whether to provide further comments on the project:

Joe I. reviewed that a formal application for the project has been submitted to the Public Service Board (PSB), and that the goal of this meeting is to determine if there should be additional action from the Commission to the PSB.

John K. inquired of the public as to the progress of communication between the developer and the neighbors.

Bret Johnson (neighbor) said that he met with Chad Nichols (developer) and they performed a walkaround at the sight. He described the results of the meeting and said that neighbors have reached a "gentleman's agreement" with the developer towards resolution without the need for approaching the PSB. Bret J. indicated that one of his concerns continues to be screening on the eastern section of the property.

Chad Nichols agreed that they will continue to work with neighbors and that their approach is to stay in a constant state of communication as the process continues. He acknowledged that Encore has not always been as good at communicating as they could have been, but their goal is to move the project forward in a way that works for all parties involved.

John K. said that his concern continues to be the screening on the eastern end of the project. Chad N. said that he spoke with neighbors about those concerns at their meeting today and that the plan is to minimize the impact of the project rather than to build a wall to hide the project.

Joe I. inquired as to whether the developer had read the Town's screening regulations stating that screening should blend, rather than hide, a project and Chad N. indicated that he had. Alex W. confirmed that the developer had quoted the Town's regulations in their application to the PSB.

Jeff F. noted that the original plan indicated critical screening on the eastern edge, including a berm. Chad N. replied that there is a wetland in the South East corner that was larger than originally thought so although that has impacted the original screening design they continue to look at options.

There was general discussion about the appropriate type, quantity and size of screening to be included on the eastern edge.

Barbara F. said that she is glad the developer is back in communication with the neighbors, and asked if there are plans to put their agreement in writing. Chad N. indicated that they would be willing to do that. Joe I. asked if that document would be submitted to the PSB and Chad N. indicated that they would be willing to talk about it.

Alex W. reminded the Commission that their goal for this meeting is to decide if the project meets the regulations for screening or if they want to get further involved. Maggie G. said that she feels the design meets the screening requirements and that the Commission's concern is mostly about breaking up the visual impact from the road and does not speak to the visual impact on neighboring homes. Maggie G. said that as such, she does not believe additional input is needed.

Barbara F. said that although she was not part of the original regulatory discussion she does believe that the eastern screening the neighbors are asking for is warranted. She expressed that this is a good opportunity to set the regulation standard.

Joe I. noted that the way the regulations are written, the Commission cannot apply the regulations to solar projects differently than to other commercial installations. He said it therefore isn't viable to ask for full screening of this project.

Chuck Reisse said that the Energy Committee feels that this has been a good process in terms of the communication between the developer and the neighbors. He acknowledged that there is a need for some additional screening on the eastern side but that the Committee is in approval of the project.

Additional discussion followed regarding screening options on the eastern side, the visual impact on neighbors, and the length of time allowable for screening to grow and fill in. Kristi Brown (landowner) noted that there are neighbors of the project who have home solar installations that do not have screening.

Alex W. commented that the regulations do say that the context of a project is important, and that installations in an industrial area require less screening while a rural installation would require more screening. Additional discussion followed about whether this project met the screening requirements or whether the Commission felt that this rural setting warranted additional screening, particularly on the eastern side.

Jeff F. said that the Commission has already sent a letter to the PSB approving the project, but that additional communication with the neighbors is requested. He then said he does not have an issue with

sending a letter reiterating that statement, with a particular note regarding screening on the eastern side. Joe I. said he would also like to see the developer put it in writing to make the agreement with the neighbors official.

Chad N. noted that the Commission could send the letter to the developer instead of the PSB. He said that when considering other projects, the Commission could still point developers to that letter as guidance for screening. John K. said that he would like to see a letter to the developer, with the PSB cc'd, specifically point to screening on the eastern side. Bret J. said he agrees that a letter from the Commission to the developer would be in the spirit of what the neighbors are asking for, and it would present documentation of the developer's intent without necessarily creating a legal status with the PSB. Bret J. requested that the neighbors be able to review the letter prior to it being submitted to the PSB. Alex W. said he would draft the letter and send to the Commission and neighbors for review.

John K. made a motion that the Planning Commission submit a second letter to the PSB that indicates their support of the project and that also encourages the developer to increase the amount of screening on the eastern portions of the project. James D. seconded the motion. The Board voted to approve the motion 6-0, 1 member voted no.

Minutes of 10/26/16 Meeting: James D. **made a motion to approve the 10/26/16 minutes as written** and Maggie G. **seconded the motion.** The Board voted **7-0.**

Other Business & Correspondence:

- **Notice - State wetlands impact permit for Thibault property (Baldwin Road):** Alex W. introduced Gary and Mary Thibault and told the Commission that their project had been approved but the wetland had since been reclassified from a class 3 wetland to a class 2. As part of that change they were to advise the Planning Commission. Mary T. clarified that the wetland had been reclassified during the process of the gas pipeline installation.
- **Notice – Town of Williston, Nov 15 and Dec 6 public hearings on draft Town Plan:** Alex W. said that he participated in the review of the Williston Town Plan rewrite at the RPC Planning Advisory Committee meeting. He said they did a good job in their rewrite and the new Plan focuses on strong developmental protections in rural areas.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Dawn Morgan, Recording Secretary