

**Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission
June 28, 2017
Approved July 12, 2017**

Members Present: Maggie Gordon, Barbara Forauer, Rolf Kielman, Dennis Place, Joe Iadanza, John Kiedaisch, Marie Gardener, James Donegan arrived at 7:42 pm

Members Absent: Jeff French

Public Present: None

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

Joe I. chaired the meeting, which was called to order at 7:33 pm.

Agenda Changes: None.

Public Comments for Non-Agenda Items: None.

Village Growth Area –Development Density Review: Development density – definitions and why it is important, densities of existing development, currently allowed densities, comparisons with zoning for other municipalities.

Alex W. walked the Commission through the history and intent behind the development density zoning regulations. He said that it defines how many dwelling units developers are allowed to build per acre. He said that in Hinesburg, the concept refers to residential projects because non-residential projects are typically governed by other criteria such as lot coverage, building height, traffic flow, etc.

Alex W. went on to explain that it sets an upper limit on how much residential development can happen in a given district, which is important to ensure that infrastructure such as water/waste water, transportation, schools, etc. are not overwhelmed. He said that density regulations are also instrumental in creating concentrated walkable communities where infrastructure can be installed and maintained at a lower tax cost because it is also concentrated within a central area.

Alex W. said that State statute also encourages towns to define and allow higher density in village areas. He said that there are certain State designations (village center, growth center, neighborhood, etc.) that help towns realize their growth vision. He said that in order to receive those designations and leverage State resources, communities need to be planning for a certain minimum development density in their village and downtown areas.

Alex W. said that in 2009, when the density regulations were developed, Hinesburg tried something a little different than what most communities do. He said the Town set a base level of density at a lower level than what is actually desired. From there, a bonus system was devised in which developers could increase their allowable units by achieving certain goals that serve the public good (e.g., smaller dwelling unit size, green energy certification, utilizing renewable energy technology, providing important public infrastructure, providing affordable housing). He said that developers taking advantage of bonus incentives could potentially double their allowable units. Alex W. said that many communities employ the bonus system, but not very many have intentionally lowered the base level the way Hinesburg has.

Alex W. said that there are currently three different density levels set in the following areas:

Village Core = 4 units/acre
Village NW & NE = 3 units/acre
Residential 1 & 2 = 2 units/acre

Alex W. showed maps on screen that were created through the Village Visualization project so the Commission could have a better idea of where the density areas are located. He also showed a few examples of dense developments that the town has today. He noted that there is a difference between the overall density of a project and its apparent density, saying that if a project has a certain amount of unbuilt land (such as a storm water lagoon or a wetland area), the overall density will take into account the entire project acreage, while the apparent density will be reduced by the acreage of the unbuilt land.

The Commission reviewed the maps and project examples and general discussion followed. The Commission agreed that some of the bonuses made sense at the time of drafting but now seemed outdated (e.g., green building was once an aspiration and is now an industry standard) and that the entire zoning section would benefit from rework and simplification. John K. suggested looking at some examples of dense development in other communities. Alex W. agreed, but noted that most of the other communities that would be good examples are larger and have greater density allowances than Hinesburg (e.g., some communities allow up to 20 units/acre, other communities don't have a limit in their core area at all, etc.).

There was additional discussion about mixed use development and the current limitations on water keeping the larger in-progress projects from moving forward. Alex W. said that he would do his best to find more examples of dense developments for future discussion.

Outdoor Lighting – Review New Draft Regulations

Alex W. said that staff is reviewing many of the housekeeping changes but that he brought the outdoor lighting section to this meeting for review.

Barbara F. asked what “full cutoff fixtures” were, and Alex W. explained that they were a fixture designed to keep the light source from going above a horizontal plane. John K. said that if an existing non-conforming project submitted an application for unrelated reasons, he felt that the DRB’s conditions of approval should include an update to all non-conforming lighting. Joe I. said he felt it would be important to balance the desire to update lighting with placing an undue burden on a business owner. Alex W. said clarifying language could be added to the regulation differentiating between minor and major changes, and tying lighting updating to those definitions. General discussion about updating requirements followed and John K. suggested that Alex W. provide some examples of clarifying language.

John K. said that he had an issue with encouraging downcast lighting on top of flag poles. Joe I. noted a grammar change. Rolf K. asked about relatively uniform lighting levels, general discussion followed, and Rolf K. suggested including some definitions. Alex W. agreed and said that if this regulation is adopted it would also be good to have a lighting training session for the DRB.

John K. questioned allowing lights as high as 20 feet, and suggested 12-16 feet would be better. There was some discussion about the appropriate height for parking lot lights.

Minutes of 06/14/17 Meeting: Rolf K. **made a motion to approve the 06/14/17 minutes as amended.** John K. **seconded the motion.** The Board voted **8-0.**

Joe I. **made a motion to adjourn the meeting.** Rolf K. **seconded the motion.** The Commission voted **8-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Morgan, Recording Secretary