

**Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission
March 13, 2019
Approved April 10, 2019**

Members Present: Maggie Gordon, Barbara Forauer, Rolf Kielman, Jeff French, Joe Iadanza, Marie Gardner; John Kiedaisch arrived at 7:30 PM

Members Absent: James Donegan, Dennis Place

Public Present: None.

Also Present: Alex Weinhagen (Director of Planning & Zoning), Kate Kelly (Recording Secretary)

Maggie G. chaired the meeting, which was called to order at 7:01 PM.

Agenda Changes: None.

Public Comments for Non-Agenda Items: None.

Official Map – Fiscal Considerations:

Maggie G. switched items 3 and 4, to move Fiscal Considerations up on the agenda, as John K. wasn't present yet to discuss his meeting with the Recreation Commission. Alex W. mentioned to the Planning Commission that the Recreation Commission had questions about the ways to fund all these public spaces. He thought it made sense to discuss these options.

Alex W. informed the Commission that each year, the Selectboard reviews the annual budget, but also the capital budget and capital improvement plan. The capital budget includes expected spending in the next 5 years, and identifies where the money will come from. The capital improvement plan looks beyond that 5-year plan, at all the items we think we will have to spend money on over a longer term (30+ years). The Town Administrator's office helps the Selectboard by reporting on the town's budget, debt load, etc.

Some of the items in the capital improvement plan have known costs, but some (like the Richmond Rd. sidewalk) have unknown costs and/or aren't included in the capital improvement plan. Alex W. felt it is important that the Commission consider ballpark estimates and forward to the Selectboard with the recommendation that they be included in the capital improvement plan. Maggie G. asked if we need to call out individual properties, or can we mention all the properties together? Alex W. replied that he would recommend that the Selectboard should begin to set money aside for official map elements (in a reserve fund). He'd also suggest calling out these elements individually in the capital improvement plan.

Barbara F. asked about the land preservation fund. Alex W. replied that recommendations as to its use are made by the Conservation Commission, and decisions are made by the Selectboard (usually for conservation easements, etc.). The fund we're speaking of in this case would be a separate fund.

Marie G. asked if these elements would be the responsibility of the developers. Alex W. clarified that the Official Map only indicates the town's interest in this area, and developer may develop it (but doesn't have to).

Alex W. mentioned that impact fees could be established to help pay for these spaces, but would require some pre-planning to know how much to collect, and you must spend it in 6 years. A special assessment district could be established, so that that area pays an extra amount every year to fund the element in that area. This could be established post-development. Grants are a third option, and we could estimate how much we could receive (but this is never guaranteed). A fourth option is through the property tax, and tax increment financing. Tax increment financing definition: a property has certain value today (undeveloped). Once developed, its value is much larger. The increment is what you can tax. In TIF districts, the property tax from that increment is used only in that district to work on its infrastructure. However, there are no more TIF districts allowed at the moment through state property tax (but could be used for municipal tax).

Jeff F. asked about sidewalks. Alex W. replied that many will be built by developer, but some (where there's no new development) will be our responsibility. The operation & maintenance costs also become the town's responsibility.

Barbara F. asked about the special assessment. Alex W. replied it would ongoing for a certain number of years until investment is paid off.

John K. entered the meeting.

Rolf K. asked about funding mechanisms, and brought up Huntington's conservation/preservation fund. Are those used for land conservation? Alex W. replied that they are, but only a portion of it: it may be enough to make a match for another funding source, pay for closing costs, etc. There have also been specific requests at Town Meeting for special funding (like for LaPlatte Headwaters). Some towns have a dedicated penny on the tax rate. Rolf K. asked about the VHCB fund, which is funded by a percentage of any real estate sold (property transfer tax). Alex W. replied that we have successfully leveraged that fund on most of the projects here in town, but it is competitive and therefore not guaranteed. However, these funds are meant to pay for conservation and affordable housing (not the sort of Official Map element we are discussing tonight). John K. pointed out that a fund of this type shows that the town is interested and behind the project, and Alex W. agreed that this type of fund would be useful.

Maggie G. asked about what recommendation the Commission should make to the Selectboard. Alex W. pointed out that the PC by statute, can make recommendations and comment on the capital budget.

Rolf K. felt that official map elements should be on equal footing with emergency services; an impact fee and annual set-aside (along with developers' contribution) seems like an equitable balance. He suggested setting aside something like 1% of annual budget (~\$30,000) to this purpose, operations & maintenance, etc.

Marie G. asked where the building permit fees go; Alex W. said they go into the general fund. Impact fees are the only ones that are segregated and can only be used for those projects. Discussion ensued about fees.

John K. asked if a specific project needs to exist in the capital budget in order for them to develop a valid impact fee, and Alex W. replied it does.

Maggie G. asked if Alex W. needed any more direction before preparing a letter to the Selectboard. Alex W. replied he did not, and would draft it after their public hearing (next meeting). Rolf K. suggested developing public community support for the facilities. Discussion ensued about this.

Official Map – Update on Discussion with Recreation Commission:

John K. apologized for being late. He discussed his meeting with the Recreation Commission. They were concerned with long term maintenance of these many areas. They cautioned about having good agreements with developers for setting aside land and developing land. The Recreation Commission also asked if it would be possible to work with VAST and others along town forest to align trails; they would need to discuss this with the Trails Committee. He felt that this kind of review with other committees would be good to do on a regular basis to discuss. He'd like to ask Selectboard to set up a meeting with each committee. Most felt this would be a good idea.

TED Talk Viewing & Discussion:

Alex W. described TED talks (technology, entertainment, design). The Commission viewed a talk entitled "How we can design timeless cities for our collective future" by Vishaan Chakrabarti.

Maggie G. said it appealed to her because she is concerned about the homogeneity that could come with upcoming development in Hinesburg (where many buildings come in at once). How could we "evoke the local" to encourage more inspired architectural details?

Joe I. replied we can encourage it or prescribe it. Architecture on Nantucket is highly regulated (from rooflines to porches, and window ratios to fencing). Rolf K. said he would bring the Nantucket

guidelines book in, as he designed the skating rink there. He said we should start with scale (2-3 stories) and go from there. There are a lot of TED talks on this topic.

Barbara F. mentioned using local materials; everything was stone or concrete in what the video showed, which wouldn't work here, but location is appropriate. Maggie G. mentioned looking back, but not in a nostalgic way (being creative with it). Jeff F. liked it, but wondered how we make it happen without being super prescriptive. Joe I. replied that in Village Design Standards, you encourage sloped rooves, a mix of materials, etc. Rolf K. discussed scale (overall readable size of building) – if you get it proportional to what surrounds it, it is comfortable. That translates to previous Commission's work limiting the footprint size of building. The form reflects the standards that the consumers expect, so upping the expectation is important.

Maggie G. said developers seem to have a limited playbook. Joe I. added that consumers have been trained on what to expect. If you want variability and interest, you need to suggest/encourage/regulate it. Marie G. agreed, and added that it may be economically driven. Joe I. pointed out that in the video, they were the same basic building, but could be modified to fit the situation, which would likely be economical. Rolf K. commented that our current neighborhoods fit well in town (nothing stands out too much, and they all blend together well). Maggie G. suggested the Commission bring ideas back for the discussions to come of design standards.

Minutes of February 13, 2019 Meeting:

Barbara F. made a small change to the minutes.

Jeff F. **made a motion to approve the minutes as amended.** Rolf K. **seconded** the motion. The Commission **voted 5-0**; Marie G. and Joe I. abstained.

Other Business & Correspondence:

Alex W. stated that the public hearing will occur on March 27. If there are few comments, the Commission could close the hearing and discuss, then make recommendation to Selectboard, but this likely won't occur until the first meeting in April. Barbara F. will be absent.

Rolf K. has been starting discussions about a possible community center, and developing a survey. Alex W. is happy to help with the survey, as the town has a SurveyMonkey license.

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Kelly, Recording Secretary