

**Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission
March 27, 2019
Approved April 10, 2019**

Members Present: Maggie Gordon, Rolf Kielman, Jeff French, Joe Iadanza, Marie Gardner, James Donegan, John Kiedaisch

Members Absent: Barbara Forauer, Dennis Place

Public Present: Calen Casco, Margo Casco, Donna Jaro, Michael Wright, Leonard Ducharme, Valerie Ducharme, Erik Engstrom, Gill Coates, Ray Nails, Jay Kiley, Abbi Kiley, Steve Girous, Ruth Ayer, Tom Ayer, Dawn Francis, Janice Osgood, Lenore Budd, Russell Spies, Michael Buscher, Andrew Frost, Matt Hayes, John Hagman, Dan Myhre, Mary Jo Brace, Ken Brown, and others

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

Maggie G. chaired the meeting, which was called to order at 7:04 PM.

Agenda Changes: None.

Public Comments for Non-Agenda Items: None.

Public Hearing – Proposed Revisions to Official Map and Zoning Regulations:

Alex W. gave a brief overview. He reviewed the process of land use and zoning changes in Hinesburg, and explained that tonight there are two proposals in front of the Commission. After the public hearing tonight, they may make changes, and once they settle on the proposal, they forward it to the Selectboard. The Selectboard will then also hold a public hearing before adopting the proposals.

Alex W. reviewed the two proposals: the Official Map was adopted in 2009, and hasn't been changed since then. It is in need of revision. The Official Map states that developers and landowners need to design with that future community facility in mind; if they don't want to comply with the Official Map, the Development Review Board will deny the application. This starts a clock, and the Selectboard then has 120 days to begin to acquire an easement, or show progress on purchasing the property. If the Selectboard chooses not to act in those 120 days, the developer may have it reviewed again by the DRB without taking into consideration the Official Map. The Commission, on this draft, has taken off some facilities, and has added some new facilities (including road and sidewalk connections, including sidewalk up Richmond Rd. to North Rd.).

Alex W. stated that the second proposal is a change to the zoning regulations. A developer often proposes public open space as part of the development, but it sometimes gets shunted to the side (wetland, stream, etc.). This regulation codifies that a minimum amount of this space be built in an area that people can utilize, and it provides standards for design.

Jeff F. clarified that there was no conflict of interest for him to participate in the discussion, as he is now a member of the Selectboard. Alex W. said there is not, per state statute.

Maggie G. opened the discussion to public comment.

Donna Jaro owns property near number 37 between Richmond Rd. and North Rd. She asked if a park 'n' ride and park would be acquiring her property, and if so, how much would be taken. Maggie G. and Alex W. explained that this area is within the existing town road right-of-way and where cars currently park/grassy area. She asked about the aesthetics of her property; she was concerned about vandalism, and trash being dumped there. John K. said he expected that any future facility would build on the aesthetics that she has already started there. Joe I. explained that their reasoning broke down into three categories: 1) safety, 2) testimony that when Texas Hill Rd. is bad people leave cars at the bottom (important to have a space out of the way of the equipment), 3) there is a large population center in that area without much space for recreation. Donna G. said she is concerned about devaluing her property.

Gill Coates asked who actually owns that corner. Alex W. said he thought it was all owned by the town, but didn't know the answer.

Janice Osgood commented if it would be good to find out who owns the land before deciding what to put there. John K. replied that in most cases they do know who owns the property.

Ken Brown clarified that this tool is just saying we have an interest in this property, but there is nothing planned for it. Joe I. agreed, that this is just a planning tool.

Alex W. commented that the Selectboard did not render an opinion on a possible park in the corner, but they did apply for a grant to fund a study for making this a 4-way stop and potentially putting in some vegetation. If they are awarded this grant, there will likely be a public hearing on this too.

Russell Spies spoke about the sidewalk on the east side of Mechanicsville Rd. His is first place just north of the cemetery. If you measure from the corner of his house up to edge of driveway, and factor in a standard slope on that type of hillside, that slope will go up against his foundation. He has a stone foundation, and he put a lot of money and time to put in a swale in to channel water away from his foundation. They'd also have to move about 10 telephone poles. He would rather not see a sidewalk go in here.

Alex W. displayed the area in question. Russell S. asked about Quinn property development. Alex W. replied that there has been discussion about development on west side of Mechanicsville, and the property on the east side is still for sale.

Matt Hayes owns the property just below the cemetery. He mentioned he'd be impacted in the same way as Russell Spies. He understands the development of a sidewalk up the north side of Richmond Rd. He'd argue that the sidewalk on the east side of Mechanicsville Rd. is redundant because of the sidewalk on the west side. It would be safer and less expensive to make a crosswalk near the Quinn property across Mechanicsville, than to have to go across Richmond Rd. at the intersection. With the new development area in #36, they would have to cross the road to get to CVU; might as well cross Mechanicsville further south than to go to the busy 4-way stop (with the right-turn lane to turn east on Richmond Rd.) to cross. Jeff F. said to keep in mind that this is a planning tool that doesn't have an engineered study, and that this sidewalk would likely not happen once the costs became clear.

Ray Nails lives on Richmond Rd. and is worried about his daughter who runs on the road. He is glad it is being discussed. He doesn't like that it will take years to come to fruition. To him, the Mechanicsville Rd. sidewalk is a waste of time; he is concerned about the safety of his family and the Richmond Rd. sidewalk needs to be addressed now. He'd like to see this process moved forward to keep people safe.

Mike Buscher brought up the descriptive language under future roads and road improvements. He is a resident of Creekside and the landscape architect for Hinesburg Center II and another development. He questioned the language stating there should be bike lanes and sidewalks, likely on both sides of the street. He has worked on several similar projects, and there is a conflict between on-street parking and bike lanes. He is typically not used to seeing bike lanes on this type of road. If both on-street parking and bike lanes are provided, we need buffers between them (at least 2-3 feet). If on both sides of the road, that becomes 50-foot-wide pavement, which encourages higher speeds. In his work planning for a development in Burlington, connecting from North Ave. to the bikepath, they decided to not have bike lanes on street. Instead, they chose to have shared bike and vehicular traffic on one side of the street (going downhill), and on the other side, a shared use path. This leads to narrower street sections and is safer for younger children. A shared use bike-pedestrian path is 8'-10' wide. He would recommend 11' drive lanes, on street parking, sidewalk on one side, bike-shared use path on the other side. Bump-outs to calm traffic would lead to a 22' width at intersections. With bike lanes, this would be a 30' width at intersections. He is happy to look at this more, but the language right now is pretty prescriptive, and he'd like the opportunity to study this language a bit more.

Mike B. also brought up the future communities and facilities, where he'd highly recommend a connection between 30 and 32. Not connecting with a pedestrian path that can be off-street would be a huge lost opportunity.

Abbi Kiley, 8 Mill Rd. agreed with what her neighbors said about the sidewalk on the east side of Mechanicsville. She felt this sidewalk would be a waste of taxpayer dollars. She'd recommend a

flashing light by the crosswalk down by mini mall. She also brought up the maintenance costs of a sidewalk (plowing, etc.). She also asked about how it would work if the town took some of their property for town use; would they receive compensation? Alex W. replied that this map doesn't delineate how a conversation would work about that. If they can't fit it all on town right-of-way, they would enter negotiations with the landowner to come to an agreement.

Matt Hayes asked about decisions about what is most important to move forward, and is this something the public is involved with tonight? Alex W. replied this map does not lay out priorities; that is up to the Selectboard.

John Hagman lives just across the street from Russell Spies'. He gave up a weedy ditch to build the sidewalk that's there. He's happy to see the sidewalk there, as it was a safety issue. He'd like to see the sidewalks cleaned of gravel.

Mike Wright lives on Birchwood on Richmond Rd. He thought the Richmond Rd. sidewalk was already put up to a vote and was voted down by the town. It was extremely expensive. Alex W. said it was a \$2.5 million cost estimate, and all agreed it hadn't been voted on. Mike W. said people would be killed on this road. He didn't feel a sidewalk is warranted, people don't use it much. He felt it is getting tough, as taxes are high.

Ray Nails was worried about his family's safety on the road, and stated it is a well-traveled road with little kids and mothers pushing strollers on the road.

Andrew Frost, who lives on the north side of Richmond Rd. is a proponent of keeping the Richmond Rd. sidewalk on the map, he'd suggest looking for alternative funding through grants, etc.

Ruth Ayer asked if it is adopted, to please notify landowners. The Commission said notification was already done several months ago.

Donna Jiro added that if there was a sidewalk leading to town there would be no need for a park there on that corner.

Dawn Francis commended the Planning Commission for their hard work. She had thought the Commission would show only a portion of lot 15 for public use, but it is still shown as the full lot. She summarized what she felt was the common theme tonight, that there are a lot of needs in town and taxes are already high. She questioned why the Commission would take this lot off for commercial development and place it as public use? She then asked about the publicly-owned land off Birchwood development. Marie G. said it is mostly steep and wet. Alex W. mentioned that the centrally located space may be usable, but there are some wetland pieces there; more research and a site visit needs to be done. John K. mentioned that the pie-shaped piece is very steep and exposed rock.

Dawn F. also brought up the language about non-commercial uses being required to either dedicate a portion of the land to public use or pay a fee. She wondered if we had received a legal opinion on this. Alex W. said there were many drafts, then it went out to peer review and the town attorney reviewed it.

Dawn F. brought up lot 15, where she felt that there was no mandate from the community for this lot. She suggested compromise language or removing it entirely from public use. Perhaps revise map to show a small portion of lot 15. She suggested language along the lines of “a minor portion shall be made available for a pocket park along Mechanicsville Rd...area for a farmer’s market shall be provided on or near lot 15.” She urged the Commission that we now need some unification in the community on this, and asked them to re-consider.

Erik Engstrom, president of Iroquois Snow Beavers VAST snowmobile group, introduced himself. He felt the existing VAST trail should be shown on the map. The landowners they receive permission from are proponents of winter recreation, but opponents of summer recreation. Joe I. felt that the trail maps for the town may be a more appropriate place for this. Joe I. asked if they are asking for a town interest in these trails. Erik E. said he can’t speak for private landowners. Erik E. said he’d also like to propose a definition of trail (natural, vegetated, soil cover) as opposed to sidewalk. He provided a written comment, and clarified that there should be a dashed black line next to the dashed red line.

Andrew Frost commented on aspects of the map he supported: the sidewalk up to North Rd., connecting trails around neighborhoods. He challenged the amount of green space allocated: 1) over 12 acres of green space, which he felt was a lot for a rural area. Amount of Hinesburg’s growth area is fairly small compared to the overall town.

2) community designation opens town to lawsuits – it may be a tool for opposition to oppose anything, like the kinds of houses being developed

3) community designation is that town must offer to buy it – he’s not sure how lot 15 would benefit our small community.

He would recommend: eliminating or reducing the community designations in these areas, removing it entirely for lot 15, and removing the limitation to 20,000 sq. ft. building.

He was on the Water/Wastewater Allocation Committee: if you think green space is so important, allow the incentives to work by getting allocation for wastewater. He doesn’t feel it’s the role of government to force someone to have more greenspace.

Ken Brown disagreed with Andrew F. A retail invasion occurred just 15 miles north of us, and there are plenty of people there who would cry to have the sort of greenspace we have left in our community. This tool allows us to put a pushpin on an area, telling the developer to speak to us about how they will serve our community.

Tom Ayer echoed Dawn F.’s comments. He felt there was ample community feedback that this should be a commercial use. He asked questions about areas 31 and 32: how do recent plans for that area (that incorporate greenspace) mesh with this map? Alex W. answered that 31 and 32 were located there

based on the developer's plan. 32 is the same as what they proposed in sketch plan. 31 is a bit wider than what was proposed in plan. They would lose 4-6 single family home lots if they complied exactly with what 31 shows. This version syncs up the official map more closely with what the developer proposed, as the old version of the map was different than the developer's proposal. The developer, should these changes be adopted before they receive their approval, would need to make some minor changes to 31. Tom A. said it seems challenging to comply with the official map and zoning regulations; he wants to make sure there's no clash.

Mary Jo Brace asked why the Commission modified it from what they proposed. Alex W. replied that the developer designed this so that there could be greenspace and a large enough box to put in a future community building. The Commission felt that said building would make more sense to locate closer to the Bissonette Rec Fields (in 31), to benefit from the existing parking areas at Rec Fields, shared restrooms, etc.

Jeff F. commented that they are working together now with developers.

Valerie Ducharme (house on CVU Road) would like more information about proposed walking trail (buffers, etc.), because of wetland here. Her neighbors would also like more information. Alex W. replied this hasn't had any study. They are talking about potential development in this area. She commented there is a lot of water from the development (Bittersweet Hill) above them. They also have concerns about loitering and people coming onto their properties.

Peter Erb commented that when they decided to create the Village Growth Area, they wanted to try to keep rural land available as a healthy working rural landscape. The town should have a commitment to make this dense area, where we are encouraging people to live, the best possible area. We should give them the kind of experience that makes people want to live and stay there. He advocated for the greenspaces identified on the Official Map. He felt we should require more greenspace in the zoning regulations than proposed to developers. This greenspace doesn't have to be all public greenspace. The town should be able to be in a position to not have to beg for more greenspace. We should require this as part of design for developments.

Abbi Kiley agreed with Peter Erb's comments. She grew up in New Jersey, and every inch of her town was built up. There is a need to designate these spaces before it's too late. She wants Hinesburg to grow, but in a responsible manner.

Erik Engstrom said that the surrounding area of growth area is a green space. This underlines the importance of designating trails on the map to get people out to that green space.

James Kiley grew up in Florida, and commented that they had lots of undeveloped area, now there are 16 story condos there. He appreciates the planning here for the 10-15 year plan. He mentioned pocket

parks: by lot 15, that adds so much to the aesthetics of that road. Town planning and pride is important. Please leave greenspace.

Mary Jo Brace commented that the town is really condensed, and it is easy to go just outside town to get to greenspace. Joe I. mentioned that we generally aren't going 2 miles to get to greenspace when we get home from work; it needs to be walkable. There are great parks right outside village, but at the same time, lots of land has owners. Other pieces are worked agriculturally. There's a balance here of green to look at vs. green to use as a community.

Maggie G. mentioned lot 1 that is green, but is not very usable. There's a difference between open green space and usable developed areas where people can interact and meet up with each other.

Lenore Budd, Trails Committee, wanted to make people aware that this is one map, but there are 15 maps or so in the town plan. The vision is to connect from the more densely developed village area to the outlying areas (town forest, etc.). She'd refer folks to map 13 (trails) in the town plan.

Andrew Frost mentioned that one need is the ability to drop off trash and recycling. Was there any thought to designate this as a community need? Joe I. said there was planning in the Town Garage re-development to allow the CWSD facility to return there, and it has just taken time to make this happen.

Matt Hayes thanked the Committee and fellow town residents for coming out tonight.

Joe I. requested that if there is further communication for the Planning Commission, send it to Alex, and he will forward it to the Commission in order to comply with Open Meeting Laws, and to get the widest coverage for their comment.

John K. shared that Google Earth now has a system so you can go back in time and look at aerial views of a lot of Vermont (starting in 1999).

As there were no further comments, Maggie G. closed the public hearing, but the Commission will still be able to receive future comments and discuss at a future meeting.

Lot 1 Pop-Up Park Idea:

Maggie G. mentioned the conference she and others attended on placemaking. The idea is to hold a half-day pop-up public park in an unused public space as a way of showing people what could happen there. The other purpose is to generate or gauge interest in making permanent changes to a public space. They will be scheduling a meeting to plan, look for funding, etc. Kevin Harper (Bristol Bakery) is interested in featuring this on April 25 (their re-opening). Alex W. said this is meant to be fun (don't plan)! There should be lots of people involved. Rolf K. asked about Local Motion; Alex W. said they have a cart they can lend out. Maggie G. requested names of those interested.

Maggie G. proposed moving the review of minutes to the next meeting.

Other Business & Correspondence: None.

Alex W. added that they received written comments from many people, and they are all on the Dropbox site. Mitch Cypes also looked at them and had a couple suggestions that will be reviewed at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Kelly, Recording Secretary