

Town of Hinesburg Planning Commission December 2013 Report

Under Vermont State Statute V.S.A. 24 Chapter 117, the responsibilities of a constituted planning commission in soliciting public input and drafting development policies, plans and bylaws for consideration by the Select Board are broadly defined in four areas:

Town Plan: A town plan includes a statement of the objectives, policies and programs of the municipality to guide future growth and development, a land use plan, a transportation plan, a utility and facility plan, a plan for protection of irreplaceable natural areas, scenic, and historic features, an educational facilities plan, an energy plan, a housing policy addressing affordable housing, a statement on relation of the plan to adjoining municipalities and a recommended program for implementation of the plan's objectives.

Zoning Bylaws: Regulations concerning land development in accordance with the town plan. Zoning bylaws may define zoning districts within the town as well as allowed, conditional and excluded uses within a defined zone. The regulations may further detail provisions or exclusions for development in river corridors and floodways, provide specifications for building setbacks, lot coverage and sizes and provide regulations on signage as well as processes and regulations for subdivision of land and site plan previews among other possible content.

Official Map: An official map identifies future municipal utility and facility improvements such as roads, recreational facilities, park land, utility rights-of-way, and other public improvements as well as a mechanism for possible acquisition of required lands by the municipality.

Non-Regulatory Planning: Non-regulatory planning includes research, public education and outreach, capital budgeting (typically left to the Select Board), coordination with other town and regional organizations, and other activities. Implementing the town plan is strongly tied to land use and development regulations; however it also requires non-regulatory efforts.

Since last reporting to the Hinesburg Select Board in October of 2012, the Hinesburg Planning Commission (HPC) has been involved in a number of efforts; most notably, rezoning of the RR2 and agricultural districts, rezoning of the RR1 and shoreline districts, storm water regulation, energy efficiency regulations and participation in the Hannaford Act 250 review process.

In December of 2012, the HPC formally submitted a package of zoning revisions for the RR2 and Agricultural districts which included expansion of rural uses, improved design standards and definition of rural density as well as alterations to the Town Plan and the Planned Unit Development Regulations to the Hinesburg Select Board for consideration.

The HPC sincerely appreciates the monumental effort by the Select Board in reviewing this extensive revision and its adoption, as well as the significant town resource required to support the subsequent ballot referendum.

In addition to completion of the multi-year RR2 and Agricultural District revision effort, The HPC also began consideration of changes to the RR1 and shoreline districts. While some of the concerns to be addressed in these two zones parallel the RR2 and Agricultural areas, the diverse nature of service areas and landscape within the RR1 area and the water quality / erosion concerns of the shoreline district provide additional challenges which may result in division and / or redefinition of district boundaries as well as changes to the regulation provisions themselves. Work on zoning in the RR1 and shoreline districts will continue into 2014.

Also discussed during the HPC's 2013 term was storm water regulation which has seen increased focus at both the regional and state levels. One of the HPC's primary concerns in this effort is to avoid the issues experienced by towns such as South Burlington in dealing with impaired waterways and to insulate the town from liability. To date, the commission's direction has been on extending state standards for impacts between $\frac{1}{4}$ and 1 acre of area and a focus on the impacts of roads and driveways in order to prevent, as well as a focus on low impact design and the educational aspect of storm water control. As part of this effort, the HPC has championed the application for a grant to design a storm water system for the village area where higher densities and fragmented ownership make design and installation of a system by a single landowner / developer unlikely. Should the grant be approved, the eventual goal would be to apply for additional grants to install the as-designed system, which may require matching funds from the town..

Also in 2013, the HPC participated in Act 250 Hearings for the Hannaford Project due to the official map implications of the project and forwarded an energy conservation zoning proposal to replace Energy Star with the State Energy Efficiency Standards to the Select Board. This latter proposal will be reviewed by the Select Board on 12/16/2013.

Moving into 2014, the priorities of the HPC will be in beginning revisions to the Hinesburg Town Plan with a goal of submitting a revised plan to the Select Board by 5/2015. While the former town plan revision was statistical in nature, the HPC would like the 2015 revision to involve significant town-wide input that would encompass surveys and forums not done in a decade. This effort, as well as the eventual writing of the plan may require professional services. Also in 2014, the HPC plans to continue to pursue storm water revisions and revisions to the RR1 and Shoreline district zoning, as well as revisions to the zoning bylaws, subdivision regulations and official map as may be necessary.

The past year has seen significant changes in the make-up of the HPC. At the end of 2012, Carrie Fenn departed the H.P.C after many years of service and Grace Ciffo joined the commission. In March after his election to the CVU Board, Ray Mainer departed the

HPC and was replaced by Aaron Kimball. Both Grace and Aaron have proven to be excellent additions to the HPC, providing new levels of energy as well as new perspectives to the Board. Throughout 2013, Jean Isham, Johanna White, Bob Linck, Kyle Bostwick, Maggie Gordon and Tim Clancy remained strong board members indispensable in developing both HPC direction and regulation detail. I thank the entire HPC for their strong commitment to the planning process. It is with sadness that I recognize that Jean Isham will end her long tenure with the HPC as 2013 closes. Jean has served not only as the leader of the HPC but as a mentor to all of our members and she will be missed even as we welcome Rolf Kielman to fill her seat. Thank you Jean for the tremendous service which you have given the Town of Hinesburg.

The work of the HPC would not be possible without the overwhelming and much-appreciated assistance of the Director of Planning and Zoning, Alex Weinhagen and the applied wisdom of Zoning Administrator Peter Erb as well as the assistance of Freeda Powers our recording secretary. Overall, the Hinesburg Planning and Zoning Office has again gone beyond the call to provide the HPC with information and contact with regional and state experts to assist in policy formation, and we sincerely thank them for their efforts. As we move into 2014, it's expected that we will need even more assistance from the Hinesburg Planning and Zoning office to support Town Plan development and adopt storm water standards. It is also important to note, that as regulatory provisions, especially with regard to storm water, become more technical in nature, the Planning and Zoning office may themselves need additional assistance in the review of applications and administration of permits.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joe Iadanza
Chair, Hinesburg Planning Commission