Town of Hinesburg
Planning & Zoning Department
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Selectboard & Town Administrator
FROM: Director of Planning & Zoning
DATE: October 15, 2013
RE: FY2014-2015 Planning & Zoning Budget

Please see the attached FY14-15 planning and zoning budget proposal. This budget is based on ongoing operational costs (staff salary & benefits, postage, regional dues, etc.) as well as our anticipated projects for the next 20 months. Here are the projects we are or will be working on. New FY14-15 projects are explained in greater detail below.

FY13-14 (Current Year)

P&Z Department Projects

- **Route 116 Corridor Study** (no funds allocated, CCRPC funded) – began March 2013, ends January 2014
- **West Side Road Scoping Study** ($8,000, Special Projects) – local match for CCRPC funding that was not acquired - study partially included in broader Route 116 Corridor Study – evaluating how to use funds
- **Sidewalk Feasibility Study** ($4,500, Special Projects) – local match for CCRPC funding – slated to begin in January 2014
- **Growth Center Designation** ($7,500, Special Projects, carried forward from FY 12-13) – local match for State planning grant awarded in December 2012 - slated to begin in June 2013, behind schedule - still awaiting kick off
- **GIS/computer mapping** software upgrade and training ($8,500 for software, Technology capital budget; $3,000 for training, Technology budget)

Selectboard Projects

- **Rural Area Zoning** (no funds allocated this year) – SB began March 2013, "ended" September 2013, PC work began in 2007
- **Hannaford Act 250 review & court case** ($7,000 in special allocations made for consultant assistance) – began in March 2013, Act 250 likely complete in December 2013, court appeals into 2014 and possibly 2015

Development Review Board Projects

Unpredictable, major projects include:

- **Hinesburg Center Phase Two** (38+ dwelling units plus non-residential uses)
- **Norris PUD** (25 dwelling units)
- **Black Rock, Haystack Crossing** (150+ dwelling units plus non-residential uses)

Planning Commission Projects

- **Stormwater Regulation Revision** ($1,000, Professional Services, carried forward from FY12-13) - began Jan 2013

Planning Commission Projects (cont'd)

- **Rural Residential 1 District Zoning** (no funds allocated) - began Jan 2013
- **Shoreline District Zoning** (no funds allocated) - began January 2013
- **Energy Star Regulation Revision** (no funds allocated) – headed to Selectboard in January 2014
- **Community Outreach/Surveying** ($2,500, Special Projects) – first steps for update of Town Plan – slated to begin in spring 2014

FY14-15 (Proposed)

1. **Town Plan update** ($2,500, Special Projects) – meetings, speakers, consultant review – delivery to Selectboard in May 2015
2. **Official Map update** (no funds requested) – if time allows
3. **Village Growth and Rural Zoning revisions** as necessary (no funds requested) – if time allows
4. **Zoning Regulation housekeeping changes** (no funds requested) – if time allows
5. **Village Stormwater project** ($6,000, Special Projects) – local match for potential State planning grant
6. **Sidewalk Feasibility study** ($4,500, Special Projects) – local match for CCRPC funding
7. **Cheese Plant road assessment** ($5,000, Special Projects) – engineering for future Town road acceptance
8. **DRB iPad technology** ($3,500, Technology budget) – purchase iPads for DRB members who don't have their own tablet or laptop

Important projects recommended for other departments

Town Administrator/Selectboard:

- Capital budget & plan update
- Village infrastructure impact fees

Buildings and Facilities:

Local match for sidewalk construction grants (VTrans bike/ped, VTrans transportation alternatives, CCRPC bike/ped, etc.):

- Village North Sidewalk phase 2 – from Riggs Road to CVU Road
- Sidewalk segments from this year's feasibility study with CCRPC

FY14-15 Planning & Zoning Projects & Budget:

1. **Town Plan update - $2,500 (Special Projects Line)** – The Town Plan was last adopted in May 2011 by the Selectboard, and must be updated or re-adopted by May 2016. In order to make that happen, the Planning Commission must complete work on any Town Plan

revisions by late summer 2015. There are significant items to work on in the next Plan update, first and foremost is to add an Economic Development section – hopefully with the help of the still to be appointed Economic Development Commission. This fiscal year (FY13-14) the Planning Commission will begin the process with community outreach and surveying – likely in spring 2014. The bulk of the work on rewriting the Town Plan and holding follow up hearings will occur in FY14-15. The proposed $2,500 will be used for community meetings, town-wide mailings, as well as possibly consultant review and/or bringing in expert speakers. The Planning Commission has designated the Town Plan update as their highest priority project for FY14-15. They feel the rural zoning debate may indicate the need for the community to revisit some of the central tenets in the Town Plan.

2. **Official Map update – no funds requested –** The Official Map was adopted as a regulatory and planning tool for the village growth area in May 2009. It needs to be updated to reflect changes in the locations of future community facilities, and to add specificity about the types and sizes of the facilities indicated. For example, the western portion of the Lyman property was shown as a possible future community facility primarily with recreation fields in mind. Now, these recreation fields are planned to the north on the Bissonette property. The Hannaford review taught us a valuable lesson about the need for specificity. Each of the future community facility areas need to be revisited with as much detail as possible provided about type and size of the future facility. Other updates could include revisions to the Cheese Plant property designations and a look at the need for the "Riparian Park" designation/facility. This update should be done in conjunction with the Town Plan update, since the Official Map is incorporated into the plan.

3. **Village Growth and Rural Zoning revisions – no funds requested –** I anticipate that the Growth Center designation project may illuminate the need for additional fine tuning of the village growth area zoning. If the rural zoning is adopted via the 11/5/2013 town-wide vote, I think we all anticipate the need to do additional fine tuning there as well. This project would be tackled as needed, and as staff and Planning Commission time allows, with the understanding that the Town Plan update takes priority.

4. **Zoning Regulation housekeeping changes – no funds requested –** From time to time, we do housekeeping revisions to the zoning and subdivision regulations to address issues and inconsistencies. I keep a running list of issues raised by the DRB, applicants, and the Zoning Administrator, and this list has been building for several years now. This project would be tackled as needed, and as staff and Planning Commission time allows, with the understanding that the Town Plan update takes priority. This effort may be put off given that a complete overhaul of our zoning regulations is contemplated for 2015 or 2016.

5. **Village Stormwater project – $6,000 (Special Projects Line) –** These funds would serve as the required local match to complement the $19,000 State municipal planning grant that we applied for in September. We should hear about grant awards in December – i.e., without the grant, this line item would either be greatly reduced (e.g., $1,000 to fund stormwater education) or eliminated. The project would design stormwater infrastructure to help treat and control runoff in Hinesburg's historic village area. The project would provide "shovel-ready" plans that the Town and private partners could implement as

funding is available (e.g., VT ANR Ecosystem Restoration Program or ERP grants, Town impact fees, etc.). As an example, in August 2013, the Town and the Lewis Creek Association (a non-profit watershed protection group) were awarded a VT ERP grant to install a substantial stormwater control structure (3-tiered rain garden) at the Silver Street, Route 116 intersection. This award was due to prior planning and a conceptual design.

6. **Sidewalk Feasibility Study - $4,500 (Special Projects Line) –** <u>**last year's $9,000 request was cut in half due to budget constraints**</u> Beyond road improvements, the Official Map also includes many future public sidewalks. While we have done feasibility studies and cost estimates for a few sidewalk segments, there are at least 7 significant segments on the Official Map that have not been assessed. If we're going to have a pedestrian friendly and focused village area, then we need to assess the feasibility of these sidewalk segments and get them into the capital budget with a clear understanding of how they will be paid for. In 2010, the CCMPO provided me with a scoping study cost estimate of $45,000, of which the Town would be responsible for 20% - i.e., up to $9,000. The FY13-14 budget includes funds for half the work needed. This proposal is to fund the rest. Also, beyond the village growth area, the Selectboard has talked in the past about assessing the feasibility of a sidewalk along the initial segment of Richmond Road – i.e. from CVU Road to North Road. If the Selectboard wants to prioritize study of this segment, the requested funds could be utilized there instead.

7. **Cheese Plant road assessment - $5,000 (Special Projects Line)** – The Official Map and our Zoning Regulations anticipate that both the Cheese Plant drive (from Route 116) and Stella Road (from Charlotte Road) will become a Town road someday. I recommend we budget funds to have an engineer (e.g., Mike Weisel) do an evaluation, so that we better understand the possibilities, challenges, and likely cost. The property owner (Redstone) is not going to take the lead on this, and is working hard to fill the remaining vacant space in the Cheese Plant. Part of filling this space will mean changes to the large, central parking area. The sooner the Town can express a clear vision for the form and function of the future public road through here, the better.

8. **DRB iPad technology - $3,500 (Technology budget, Computer Hardware Line)** – At the urging of the Town Administrator and the previous DRB chairperson, the Planning & Zoning Department would like to work with the DRB to move to all digital board materials – i.e., similar to what the Selectboard did. To date, we have been unable to find the necessary funds in the FY13-14 budget – hence the request for FY14-15. Approximately two or three board members have iPads, which means we need funding to purchase six to seven iPads for the use of the other board members. There may be some additional costs to configure and install the necessary apps (e.g., iAnnotate) on the iPads, but hopefully this can be minimized thanks to the successful Selectboard roll out.

Staffing Levels:

After several years of working at or above capacity, I feel we are at a crossroads with regard to the Planning & Zoning Department. <u>Either we increase staffing levels or we cut back on future projects in order to rebalance the work load.</u> We've tried (and will continue to try) to improve productivity and process efficiency for a few years, but these efforts have not solved the issue.

In the past six months, we have tempered DRB scheduling and reorganized staffing responsibilities for the DRB, and while these appear to be positive changes, we are only scratching the surface of the work load issue. As you can see from the project lists above, the department is juggling a lot of different projects and providing support to several different boards. As the economy improves, and development increases, I only see this issue becoming more pronounced in the coming years.

What these lists don't show is the day to day work that soaks up a significant percentage of our time. Given our "bullpen" office environment, all of us spend substantial time helping people who drop by the office for information – e.g., landowners, Town committees, business owners, real estate agents, paralegals, developers, and lots of folks thinking of moving to Hinesburg. Traditional zoning administration requires at least 20 hours/week – e.g., helping residents with building permits and other compliance issues, providing zoning interpretations, responding to zoning complaints, ensuring compliance with projects under construction, pursuing enforcement on zoning violation issues. DRB support and administration probably requires 60 hours/week – e.g., scheduling, legal notices, packet preparation, meetings with applicants, writing staff reports and drafting decisions, attending DRB meetings. Planning projects and department administration (at least with the current number of projects) easily requires 40 hours/week. In addition to overall staff morale, it is the planning slice of the department that has suffered most for lack of time, and this has been reflected by delayed project starts and extended periods of time needed to complete even priority planning initiatives.

Currently the P&Z Department has 2.5 full time equivalent (FTE) employees which equates to 100 hours/week, not including our recording secretary who covers minutes at PC and DRB meetings. When you add the numbers above, you'll see that we really need another 20 hours/week – i.e., 3 FTEs of regular office staff instead of 2.5 FTEs. <u>The proposed FY14-15 Salaries line item reflects increased, professional-level staffing – i.e., 20 hours/week at $20/hour. An adjustment to the FICA line item would also be necessary</u>, but likely no change to employee benefits would be needed if the additional staffing came in the form of another part-time position. Increased staffing levels will require some reorganization of the department, which we will be happy to plan for if the Selectboard supports the request.

Honestly, I probably should have requested increased staffing earlier, but I have been reluctant to do so given the tight budgets the Selectboard strives for every year. I've also hesitated because it seems like several other departments at the Town Office have also been straining under heavy workloads. There has been a collective spirit of simply trying to grin and bear it. This is no longer sustainable for the P&Z Department.

Capital Budget:
For the second year in a row, the budget proposes a $3,000 capital transfer to build a reserve to pay for a comprehensive overhaul of the Zoning Regulations. As explained last year, I would like to budget for this for three years (FY13-14, 14-15, 15-16), in order to have enough money to hire a consultant with a fresh pair of eyes to help us with this. Hopefully, we can also leverage some grant funding as a comprehensive rewrite may cost more than $9,000. Without grant funding, we may have to delay, and continue saving funds for a couple more years. The problem is that after 40 years of tacking on new provisions and adjusting other existing

provisions, I feel that our Zoning Regulations are overly complicated, difficult for people to understand, frustrating for us to administer, and likely to collapse under their own weight. My goals for this future effort are to make the regulations shorter, simpler, and easier to understand. I'd like to add graphics, drawings, and other visuals to better explain standards/goals – i.e., add a picture, delete 1,000 words. I'd also like to use this effort to consider a unified bylaw (combines Zoning and Subdivision Regulations), and to consider form-based codes for the village growth area.

Revenue Projection:
Actual revenues from zoning permits, DRB fees, and compliance statements (Bianchi statements) all ran better than projected in FY12-13, and so far are on track for a repeat performance in FY13-14. Given that, I've increased the FY14-15 revenue projections – up $7,500 (22.4%) from the FY13-14 projections.