

Minutes from Town Plan Hearing
12/5/13

RECEIVED

DATE January 14, 2014

MEMBERS PRESENT: Knox Cummin, Dana Cummings, Everett Marshall, Julia Austin, Gordon Miller

MEMBERS ABSENT:

MINUTES: Liz Greenberg

OTHERS PRESENT: List from sign-in sheet at end of minutes

Opening

Melinda Moulton moderating, welcomed everyone.

Knox Cummin: Introduction, here to take comments on the plan. Want to hear your thoughts.

Megs Keir: Curious if there is a definition for open space. Asking because as we talk about adding new population in the village centers and neighborhoods around it, thinks about where the open space is. If open space is hayfields where there's a view that is different than if that's where there's forestland.

Knox: Open land is undeveloped land.

Megs: If we add more population to the village centers and areas around it, I'm concerned we'll use up the visually open area to the detriment of what we envision as "the beautiful Huntington."

Dori: Were you going to give an overview of the major changes?

Several people chimed in that this would be helpful.

Knox: Land use categories have changed. Center of village zone is now its own area in the villages and then there's the surrounding village district.

Everett: An area within the current village districts in three villages.

Duncan Keir: In the village center designation it's about 49 acres. Have you calculated how much of that is in the flood zones or proposed fluvial hazard zones and would be excluded for more housing.

Knox: One map has those centers and other overlays on top. My understanding is that there's none of those overlaps in the village centers.

Duncan: Coloring was so similar it was difficult to interpret in the Town Plan.

Knox: Good feedback.

Everett: Yes there is, identified the lower part of properties along Bridge Street. Is tight there so would be less than 100 feet and within the setback. None of Huntington Center and 5-10% of the lower village.

Mark Smith: Where does this plan take the villages? Will they become more/less pedestrian friendly? More parking? More businesses? What does this new plan mean for the identity of our villages?

Knox: Yes, the goal is parking available, pedestrian and business friendly.

Mark: How will this happen?

Knox: Come to the meeting when we talk about the regs and how that will work.

Everett: This doesn't include new regulations; it lays a framework for future regulations. One thought was to have more flexibility in the village area which would allow redevelopment or different uses of certain areas.

Mark: Asked for clarification on what's being prioritized as the stage is set for new regs.

Everett: It talks about goals and objectives; could compare village center and neighborhood district goals.

Roman: A couple of Town Plans ago we had an increased density plan. Is this another concept that won't be implemented?

Knox: Not our intention. We'll do the best we can.

Sarah Jane Williamson: PUD?

Planned unit development.

Knox: Used to be PRD, planned residential development. State got rid of that and now there are only PUD. RPUD means Rural PUD.

Roman: Mixed use?

Knox: Residential. We'll have to wait to get to the reg stage to refine that.

Megs: Clarify how they're different?

Knox: RPUD is to get people thinking clustering houses as opposed to houses far apart on 5 acre lots. The idea of RPUD is to cluster several houses on a few acres and have many undeveloped acres. The goal is to have more undeveloped space and cluster housing.

Duncan: Please continue highlighting the major changes.

Knox: We're here to take comments, not to explicate. Happy to answer specific questions.

Duncan: Specific change in proposed plan regarding the villages. Haven't read all 60 pages so am wondering if I missed something. Would be helpful if you could highlight specific changes in the plan from current plan.

Knox: Mostly the districts and the goals, and allowing more density in the village center district. Some about pedestrian awareness and recreational paths, but not dramatic changes. That's on pp 5-6. Just a plan, not regs.

Duncan: But if we adopt it, it's the guide of where we're heading. It would be good to get out concerns.

Everett: Should we do a sentence comment on each section?

Barbara Elliott: Could you do that one section at a time, taking comment after each section. Will organize our comments.

Julia Austin: Interested hearing what people noticed that they would like us to talk to us about. Our expectation is that everyone has a copy of the document and we can answer questions as needed.

Barbara: I have comments and questions for each section.

Melinda: Let's start and go one section at a time.

Land Use

Jeanine Carr: Thank you for the effort put into this process. Have questions, especially the village section. How will increasing village density increase quality of life? It might increase quality of life for the town overall, but in my opinion it decreases quality of life in the village. Want to be careful about development in rural areas of time.

Megs: Concur.

Duncan: Perhaps Hinesburg is a good example of that.

Nat Weaver: Don't agree with the group housing idea. If you sell 5 acres to someone they want to build where there's the best view. This is restrictive to landowner, especially if I ever want to sell a parcel.

Knox: What if the clustered housing all has a view?

Nat Weaver: A restriction I don't agree with.

Everett: Right now you can subdivide 5 acres off your land. A RPUD doesn't stop you from doing anything but allows you greater density if you develop.

Knox: It is intended so that several houses could be clustered and all have that best view. Hard to say without a specific piece of land. Idea is to make an incentive so that you'd want to do that but you could still do the five acre subdivision.

Roman Livak: RPUD? Rural means you're out in the country. If I was buying a house in the country, I would prefer not to see my neighbors. Find it a strange juxtaposition.

Megs: Agrees.

Dana Cummings: Currently you can put a fair number of long skinny lots in with lots of houses along the road but the RPUD allows clustering.

Mark: We're doing a lot of development with the farm that falls under PRD. We worked with the

zoning board with that concept in mind. A lot of interesting integration going on, some by happenstance like Camels Hump Ski Association trails. Questioning incentivizing good behavior for taking on rec trail development program or protect prime open space land. We could reinforce good behavior, affirm what we can do instead of a plan that tells you what you can't do.

Knox: That's high on our list. We're looking a behavior that allows multiple uses of the land. One issue that could be addressed is fragmenting forest land. We're not forbidding certain behavior, but are trying to help encourage other ways of using the land.

Barbara: Question on first goal page 6, goal one.

Barbara: If this says it must protect then it means we can't develop anything agriculturally viable.

Duncan: You use the term "prime ag soil" but this document says "viable ag soil" which is almost anything.

Knox: We'll have to be more specific in regs, agreed that can also be adjusted in the document.

Megs: When we identify certain natural lands, there are a lot of things we want to save. If the town is going to set up goals that are followed by regulations that preclude people from doing something on their land, there has to be a way to compensate the landowner.

Knox: Goes back to incentives.

Dorie Barton: Certain natural resources that are identified at the state and federal level and are clearly defined.

Megs: How can the state say you can't do something on your land?

Dana: That's not our purview tonight. Pointed out third column page six, first item as one example of implementation.

Knox: Concerned we'll get over focused on this topic. Can we take other questions about other areas and come back to this at the end?

Roman: Scenic views and viewsheds. Methodology developed to identify them but think that this process is highly subjective and should not be used.

Nat: All personal opinion.

Barbara: Concerned about Village Development Reserve Fund in second column page 6, first bullet under implementation. Concerned about property taxes.

Roman: Would everyone be paying for this?

Megs: Third column, bullet on grants. Would want to be careful about hired professionals for consulting on development.

Mark: In the past our town plan wasn't sensitive enough to commercial agriculture (large like Tafts but also smaller sugaring operations). To protect open space it needs to be working, farmed. How much

does this new plan take things into account? That's something I value and would look for in the plans and regs.

Everett: Referenced second goal, it is stated. Look through implementation items to see if it supports that goal. Give us comments by next Monday.

Dori: Core village development - does that mean center village? Make sure it reflects the new districts.

Barbara: Found that confusing in other places. "Outside the villages" in second objective - what does that mean?

Everett: Maybe do a search on "village" and check this.

Roman: Don't see how zoning regs have increased or decreased property value. *Missed the place he referenced.*

Julia: Keeping the area from looking like downtown Hinesburg will preserve the aesthetic.

Roman: Understand this but am not sure it connects to tax rolls.

Paul Schwarzkopf: Do support this idea. Value of land in rural MO is much lower than in VT. Land here is preserved and maintained and rural character has been protected and it does preserve property values.

Mark: Respectfully disagree with Roman. From what I've read there is a correlation between good planning and positive property values and Huntington is an example of that. It gives people confidence in the community and they'll pay more money for real estate.

Dori: Implementation on first item, concerns about wastewater (p. 6 second column) and recommendations from the wastewater report were for all districts, not only the village center. Language could be changed to reflect this need.

Transportation

Barbara: p. 11, last bullet. Do we want to be as specific as talking about the black culverts saving money which is now not thought to be the case?

Jeanine Carr: Speed limits comment. Would like to see some stronger limits on page 13, second implementation bullet. "Increased compliance" is not strong enough for this issue. Traffic calming committee report from a few years ago. Would like to see some of their suggestions implemented.

Megs: One recommendation was to have narrow lanes. That concerns me. Walking in the village now, if streets are narrower, people would be hit while walking from one place to another while on the edge of the street.

Knox: Sidewalks would be made possible by narrowing the lane. Also provide street parking which would slow traffic.

Melinda: This slows people if there are sidewalks, street parking and narrower roads.

Megs: Large delivery trucks need to be accommodated. Maybe traffic cones to give the image without actually narrowing.

Melinda: You need to do engineering studies before changing the road.

Duncan: In other places people talk about widening road to accommodate bike lanes.

Linda Fickborn: It's not about really narrowing the road, but how it's striped to slow people.

Megs: Considering weather, want to be safe.

Dori: p. 11 second implementation bullet. Town has plans and "review" existing plans instead of proposing to "developing" plans that already exist.

Barbara: Have edits to give to Knox about that.

Megs: Happy to see idea of widening roads for pedestrian and bike safety.

Facilities, Services and Utilities

Barbara: p 16, town doesn't purchase criminal investigation services, only traffic enforcement services.

Megs: p 14, Replace two Library and UMH sections with Library/Union Meeting House section and have two paragraphs under it.

Where is 100 acre town forest?

Knox: On one of the maps.

Julia: At the end of Stagecoach Road off of Bert White Road.

Barbara: p 17 caution against specifying certain organizations we support financially, mention the type but not by name. Public and waste water systems, second paragraph page 17: "municipal wastewater facility will be needed." There are alternatives to a municipal system according the report on this. Page 19 goals, second goal about education opportunities, are we providing them or allowing access? Page 19 first bullet of implementation, second sentence "shall include".

Julia: This was intentional because it's a poor use of the town's resources not to look into alternative energy options.

Barbara: Ad Hoc building and grounds committee has made recommendations to Selectboard, as opposed to creating a liaison position.

Roman: Add a bullet on page: three phase electric power to provide adequate electric supply.

Megs: Duncan has one.

Duncan: Three phase right to the barn. Power company does that. A lot of Huntington does not have that.

Roman: The Tafts pay a lot for this conversion.

Duncan: I doubt VT Electric Coop would run that out there.

Dori: Go back to Barbara's comment about wastewater. Page 17 wastewater treatment sites should reflect concept of wastewater treatment sites, not facilities.

Housing and Housing for the Elderly

Dori: Possibility of distributed wastewater system in village. My recollection is that this was not part of the recommendations of wastewater study.

Knox: What about shared septic fields? Would that fall under that category?

Everett: Was referring to your concept, of sites.

Roman: How did you determine there needed to be an increase of density in the village district? We have about 7 new housing starts per year. Have there been any studies or extrapolation of our density?

Melinda: Population data on p.25.

Roman: That doesn't indicate the need. When do we reach our carrying capacity when we need to put in more housing/wastewater system.

Knox: Are already maxed out in lower village.

Dana: Were looking at how village can't grow under current zoning. If we added on it would look quite different. We also looked a preserving open space.

Roman: How fast are we using up the one acre lots?

Sarah Jane: Thinking that we don't know what's going to happen with housing market. The plan sets priority and goals regardless of what might happen in the future. Set goals to manage what you want.

Paul: Can't predict what will happen.

Dori: Gave example of how Bert White Road has developed since moving up there. Appreciate the planning effort. We can look at areas we've seen drastic changes and put some thought into where the lots will go, even without knowing what our population will be.

Barbara: Page 21, first implementation bullet: Is the reference to young families new? Why specifically young families?

Gordon Miller: Opportunity for young families because this addresses people early in their careers who are priced out of the housing market.

Megs: Is this about families with kids or people of lower income? Change to moderate income?

Julia: Or were we trying to say low income?

Barbara: page 26, third bullet: Number of residents with various education levels. "This was an improvement" is that the correct phrasing? Counters the goal of provide housing opportunities for low income.

Knox: Maybe "an increase."

Childcare

no comment

Natural Resources

Roman: Is Gillett Pond a "natural" resource?

Dana: It's a surface water.

Megs: Gillette Pond doesn't have an e on the end. (*News to me! says Liz*)

Duncan: Research actual name, was once "Gillett's Pond".

Barbara: Page 36, third column, first bullet: confusing layout. Do all the following bullets relate to that first bullet?

Knox: All those verbs should have -ing added to them.

Megs: Or change "necessity for" to "necessity to:"

Roman: Second bullet about public access points. "Wild life will not be impacted" change to "minimally impacted". Next to last bullet in that column. Are you going to write regs to discourage development in the forest areas. Could it be written in a positive way "incentivize, encourage" etc.

Melinda: Huntington is one of nine places in the world that has so many songbirds. We are so lucky in this region. That's why this sort of forest preservation is important.

Dori: Page 30, second paragraph about ECOS project. Clarify mapping of natural resources.

Barbara: Also explain the acronym.

Duncan: Can we include a statement about the songbirds in the plan?

Melinda: Can ask Audubon Exec Director.

Roman: Is it because of diversity of open space and woods?

Melinda: Something about red oak, situation of Camels Hump, etc.

Recreation and Open Space

Roman: Scenic byways should be excluded.

Melinda: To clarify that this is about an analysis only.

Roman: Could prevent silvaculture.

Everett: In almost all cases it wouldn't prevent this.

Melinda: Don't you think we want to know where the scenic views are?

Roman: I find many places scenic.

Julia: Term scenic byway is very different than a viewshed. You can get grant money. That's not what this refers to.

Dori: Keep it there. Removing eliminates all discussion of the idea of scenic byway. Want to opportunity for the conversation.

Melinda: And will help improve property values.

Mark Smith: Like objective 5 and 6. Don't see follow up in the implementation.

Julia: One of the main things we talked about: last bullet in third column on page 39 - kiosk item, guidance for hiking, parking.

Mark: Would urge you to explore this area more.

Historic Features

Linda Fickbohn: page 42 on Town Hall: Would like to give you an edit; will email a rewrite for the paragraph.

Roman: implementation, third paragraph page 44: Form versus function question *I didn't understand this*

Schools

Liz Greenberg: Question about RED

Everett Marshall: updated information about it but not taking a position

Barbara: add "and other community uses" on page 50 third bullet on community involvement third column. And add "to facilitate participation" on transportation.

Dori: Focus on transportation in this section is on extra-curriculars. People drive their kids to school because the bus route is so long. What about a fleet of minivans to shorten the time on the busses. They are mostly empty consuming lots of energy. Think outside of the box for this issue.

Energy

Roman: Some energy requirements are based on transportation?

Julia: Yes, that was bundled in it.

Roman: If more people didn't travel so far, we'd be saving on transportation. We don't have the infrastructure to stay at home and travel little.

Barbara: What about adding something about revisiting and clarifying the role and charter of the energy committee in order to be able to focus on goals, objectives and implementation? Strengthen that committee in town by clarifying the charter.

Knox: We have a charter?

Barbara: No, that's my point.

[Note: Charter is charge to committee as opposed to Town Charter, which Huntington does not have.]

Megs: The pie graph in black and white is impossible to read.

Everett: Can be remade.

Julia: Interpreted but recognized it's difficult to read.

Mark Smith: There's nothing in the implementation about encouraging or developing a biomass development in the community. Could the town do something to promote this industry?

Linda: Does touch on it on page 54.

Julia: Objective #4 it hints at it indirectly.

Duncan: Not seeing anything to help reduce how much people travel.

Everett: Carpooling, small buses and developing jobs in town - these are in the section.

Julia: Also telecommuting.

Everett: We do know we're seeing increase use of town park and ride. We're moving a positive direction.

Linda: We might want to reinforce it in this section and not only mention it in transportation. Maybe this is something the energy committee is tasked to think about.

Julia: Part of the challenge of a document like this is making a document small enough that people would read it but we can put something into this section to refer people back to the transportation section.

Megs: Maybe shuffle the order of the sections so energy and transportation are back to back.

Jeanine: There's also a lot of traffic related to getting kids to school. Noticeable increases in traffic when school's in session.

Economic Plan

Mark: Economic development committee - glad it's in here. Would like to see movement on this in the next year. Also, think so highly of the Western Slopes Business Association. Huntington proportionally is not members compared to Richmond and that is an important goal to increase participation. It offers a lot to businesses.

Roman: Like how this is written. Primary source of income is property tax and don't see this expounded here. What does the town need to stabilize taxes? More information to explain connection between our infrastructure and the amount we pay.

Mark: Agreed.

Relationship to Surrounding Towns

No comments

Managing, Amending and Updating

Barbara: PC has spent endless time on this and appreciate the effort involved.

Roman: Easier to read than the last one.

Everett: Stay tuned on openings on the PC.

Closing

Knox: Will use your comments to sharpen this up and then send to Selectboard by end of year.

Everett: Accepting written comments up until Monday evening when we meet.

Minutes to the HPC: December 6, 2013

Minutes Approved: January 13, 2014

Minutes to Town Clerk: January 14, 2014

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Barbara Elliott
Sarah Jane Williamson
Megs and Duncan Keir
Nat Weaver
Mark Smith

Dori Barton
Paul Schwartzkopf
Roman Livak
Jeanine Carr

John Altermatt
Linda Fickbohm
Doug Graver
Paul Finnerty