

Planning Board
Town of Hinsdale, NH
Meeting May 16, 2017

Present: Chair Sean Leary, Selectman Mike Darcy, Members Stefan Zielonko, Zeb Hildreth, Megan Bassett, Tom Woodbury. Two members of the public were present.

6:30 pm Chair S. Leary called the meeting to order.

M. Darcy made a motion to approve the Minutes dated April 18, 2017 of the previous meeting. Seconded by S. Zielonko. The motion passed unanimously.

There was discussion of the Roadside Commercial Zone in Town and possible issues the Board might address. One issue is the water supply pipe which will not support the fire suppression systems required in the northern part of the Zone. The existing pipe is too small. Another issue is the minimum parcel lot size and the minimum frontage. As they stand, the minimums may be prohibitive to smaller businesses coming into the Zone. The Board might look into reducing these minimums, with an eye toward attracting smaller businesses.

M. Darcy pointed out that the Planning Board must keep in mind what the “feel” of the area should be. Is “rural country” or “Main Street” the aesthetic look and feel the Board intends? The Board may ask for drawings at the Site Plan stage of an application to determine if a new proposed building fits in the aesthetic vision for the Zone. For instance, is the parking out back with the building close to the road (“Main Street”) or in front with the building farther from the road (“rural country”).

There was discussion of the larger lots with small frontages on the East side of Route 119 south of Walmart and that NH DOT limits the number of driveways allowed there. There are three existing curb cuts and no more will be allowed. Any new businesses in that area must be accessible from one of those existing curb cuts.

The Board must understand how frontage plays into the development of the Roadside Commercial Zone.

There was discussion of the Town of Milford’s Zoning Ordinances and how Hinsdale might benefit from their “Sub-Zone” idea, separating the Roadside Commercial Zone into smaller Sub-Zones with different requirements as to frontage, lot size, permitted uses.

In the event of a commercial “boom,” some homes in the Rural Agriculture Zone on Route 119 would become prime, sought-after Commercial Real Estate to businesses wanting to develop. This might be an example of where setting up a Sub-Zone in Rural Agriculture could make it easy to transition a parcel from Rural Agriculture to Roadside Commercial.

M. Bassett asked about the allowed uses listed in the Ordinances and wondered if they all need to be specifically included, with or without eliminating any. There was discussion about the difficulty of restricting use or denying specific types of businesses, as that may be interpreted as discrimination.

Mr. Robert Harke joined the discussion.

There was discussion of the wording of the Town’s Zoning Ordinances. Roadside Commercial allows all uses in Business, with some exceptions. Business allows all uses in Residential, with some exceptions. So, Roadside Commercial allows some Residential uses, with some exceptions. The Roadside Commercial Zone is interspersed with Rural Agriculture. This so-called “spot-zoning” makes it difficult to treat the area as one. Because of the uses allowed in Roadside Commercial, the Rural Agriculture along Route 119 could be re-zoned to Roadside Commercial, with only a few exceptions or variances

("grandfathering"). This would more clearly define the areas of Town and their uses.

Because the first line of some Zones is "allows all uses of [other Zone] except [some exception]," it is difficult to read and understand what is allowed in a Zone. There may be unintended uses allowed because of this confusion. The Board would like to look into spelling out the uses in all the Zoning Ordinances.

There was discussion of the most desirable kind of new development in Town. Because Residential uses the most Town services (water, police, schools, etc.), large/light industrial and commercial are more desirable.

The Board would like to confirm what is listed as frontage in all Zones.

The Board wishes to leave subdivision of larger (60 – 100 acre) lots up to the developers.

The Board would like to look into rezoning central Route 119 from Rural Agriculture to Roadside Commercial, perhaps adopting a new "Sub-Zone."

The Board would like to look into changing the "deeper" sections of the East side of Route 119 into Commercial Industrial.

The Board wonders if there are restrictions against certain business types that we can ask for without being considered discriminatory.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, S. Zielonko made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Z. Hildreth. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Thomas C. Woodbury, Secretary

Draft until approved and signed