

**Thetford Planning Commission  
Minutes - June 19, 2007**

**Present:** Stuart Blood, Hayden Brownell, Heather Carlos, Dennis Donahue, Lori Howard, Rick Howard, Wayne Parks (Chair)

**Absent:** Liora Alschuler

**Guests:** Mike Brown, Peter Gregory, Chris Sargent

1. Meeting Called to Order 7:15
2. Public Comment: None
3. Welcome new Recording Clerk, Ann Fenton
4. Town Plan/Zoning Bylaws - Peter Gregory and Chris Sargent, Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission presented a revised document, titled: Thetford Zoning Ordinance, Rough Draft. Sargent asked the Planning Commission to direct him on how they want to proceed, noting that in this meeting the PC could complete the review of the Zoning Ordinance, and then move on to review Subdivision. The PC asked Sargent his recommendation on how to proceed. Sargent suggested focusing on getting the Ordinance adopted. He recommended that, since the document is so old, particularly in regard to State Statute language, that it may be of value to adopt the Ordinance with the new State Statute language, with contentious issues waiting until a later review, possibly by public forum. In discussion, Parks, Howard, and Donahue stated support of first making the Administrative changes necessary, then implementing the Town Plan. Blood questioned if the process proposed is a change from an earlier goal, to implement the Town Plan as much as possible, not in a piecemeal way. Carlos said she could go either way, seeing the benefits of both methods. Blood presented a middle ground option: In this meeting complete the review of the Ordinance, at which point it will be in compliance with State law, but not necessarily in conformance with the Town Plan; then take a few more meetings discussing certain items there may be consensus on, to push the Ordinance a little forward. Brownell joined the meeting at 7:35. Carlos moved that the Planning Commission continue to go through the Zoning Ordinance, with State regulation compliance; and in the next meeting have another pass, adding some of the low hanging fruit of the Town Plan; and at the end of the month decide whether ready to put it to Town Hearing for adoption, or to take additional meetings; then review the rest of the Town Plan. Blood seconded. The motion passed unanimously. (7:40) Blood agreed to send the PC the list of Goals, Objectives and Recommended Policies, organized in columns, as he had presented before.
5. Review of Zoning Ordinance:
  - Article V, Development Review: Section 5.01, Authorization and Procedures: Consensus on Brown's recommendation to change number of members of Development Review Board from "five" to "five to nine"; since the Board can have

up to that number, though it is currently operating with five; and change wording from “ordinance” to “by laws”.

- Section 5.04, Site Plan Review: Brownell asked that “all instances” be defined.
- Section 5.05, Conditional Uses: Findings of Fact: Donahue recommended organizational refinement of this section for clarity of the Conditional Use Review process. Parks recommended, before the public hearing, to give a copy of the Ordinance draft to the Development Review Board and Zoning Administrator to review.
- Section 5.07, Variance Requirements: Blood asked if the change of wording from “may” to “shall” is accurate. Sargent will check. In discussion of when a variance can be requested, Sargent and Donahue explained that it could only be requested in the form of an appeal, of a Zoning Administrator decision, following an application. In practice, some applicants who know their application will be rejected, skip the application, and go straight to asking for a variance. Sargent will check the statutory language. He noted that the feeling of the DRB at the joint meeting was that variances are granted rarely; waivers are granted slightly more easily, but on very specific items, such as handicap access. Sargent agreed with the consensus of the PC that this would be a good place in the Ordinance to add clarity, and examples; and he will pull the language from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns recommendations.
- Section 5.09, Thetford Historic Preservation Committee: Blood asked for clarification of where this section fits. Sargent agreed that there should be a heading, “Role of Advisory Commissions”, and in discussion, it was the consensus of the PC to add a Conservation Commission section under that heading.
- Section 5.10, Appointment of the Administrative Officer: Carlos asked why it is the Planning Commission versus the Development Review Board, who nominates and can recommend removal of the Administrative Officer, since the DRB is more involved in the Officer’s work. Sargent said it is State Statute.
- Section 5.11, Duties of the Administrative Officer: Carlos recommended moving Section 5.10, lines 19, 20, 21 to Section 5.11, since they regard duties. Sargent agreed.
- Section 5.13, Application: Consensus to update the language in the sections: Flood Hazard Area Approval, and Historic Overlay District.
- Section 5.15, Effective Date: Consensus to set the time limit the same as building permits, which is two years.

- Section 5.20, Violations: Brown recommended change of wording “the Selectboard” to “Legislative Body”. Sargent agreed.
  - The Planning Commission completed review of the draft. Carlos commented that the revised document was formatted well. Sargent will make changes, as discussed, and bring further revised document to next meeting. He will continue to color code, to distinguish original language and revisions. Sargent and Gregory departed the meeting at 9:00.
6. Review of Prior Minutes: The Minutes from June 4<sup>th</sup> were adopted. Donahue abstained, since he was not present at the meeting.
  7. Elect a Planning Commission Clerk, since Donn Downey resigned: Carlos nominated Brownell. Rick Howard seconded. The vote passed unanimously.
  8. New Business: None
  9. Adjournment: 9:05

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Fenton  
Recording Clerk