

**Thetford Planning Commission  
Minutes – July 15, 2008**

**Present:** Liora Alschuler, Stuart Blood, Laurie Burnham, Dennis Donahue (arrived at 7:36), Lori Howard, Rick Howard (arrived at 7:48), Kevin O’Hara, Wayne Parks (Chair)

**Guests:** Richard Blacklow, Mike Brown, Chris Sargent, Bob Walker, Scott Zens

7:23: Meeting called to order by Wayne Parks, Chair.

7:24: Public comment: Scott Zens congratulated the Planning Commission on the adoption of the flood regulations.

7:25: Review of prior minutes: Stuart Blood moved to approve as written the minutes of July 1, 2008. Lori Howard seconded. The vote passed with one abstention.

7:26: Report on Selectboard Meeting of 7/14/08: Wayne Parks reported that the Flood Hazard Area Bylaw was adopted on 7/14/08 with a few minor changes, and will be effective 21 days from adoption.

7:30: Zoning:

- a. Energy Committee: Bob Walker, Energy Committee Chair, explained that the Vermont Residential Building Energy Code became law in 1998, but until now has not been enforced. He commented that this is an important time to bring this law into practice. Walker explained that it protects property owners. If selling properties built after 1998, without an Energy Standards Certificate, landowners and builders may need to provide information, and may have liabilities to bring the building to code. Walker noted that the energy standards are relatively easy to comply with, being less than Energy Star 4, which is part of the Town Plan.

In discussion of whether to require a Certificate of Occupancy, to include an Energy Standards Certificate and Septic Permit, Wayne Parks raised concern of possible delays to property owners, in waiting for the permit and certificate. Chris Sargent commented that a COA requires extra administrative effort. Dennis Donahue commented that he has heard of cases of potential buyers that will not buy without wastewater and energy standards certificates.

Laurie Burnham asked if most builders are complying with energy standards, and if building costs are higher. Robert Walker responded that there is payback to the homeowner in savings over time.

Chris Sargent explained that other towns are talking about energy code enforcement but are not doing it yet. Robert Walker commented that the Energy Committee is hoping for Thetford to be a first town to do it.

In follow-up, Chris Sargent will research language for the Certificate of Occupancy, Richard Blacklow will ask other Zoning Administrators the time involved in administering, and Kevin O’Hara will find out the process time for septic permits to be sent from the State to the Town.

- b. Zoning Administrator: The Planning Commission reviewed, with the Zoning Administrator, his submitted comments on the draft Zoning Bylaws.
  - 1.) Wetlands: Richard Blacklow raised concern that there is no language in the current zoning that the Development Review Board may consider wildlife and habitat. Stuart Blood noted that Chapter 117 requires that towns adopt standards for natural resources protection in subdivision regulations.
  - 2.) Historic Preservation/Certificate of Appropriateness: Following discussion, Chris Sargent recommended that a representative from the DRB and the Historic Preservation Committee come in to discuss.
  - 3.) Building Permit fees: Richard Blacklow asked why there are fees for building permits, but not for renovation. Liora Alschuler commented that building permits are for determining the impact on neighbors; and would not be needed for interior construction, because it does not impact neighbors. Laurie Burnham noted that when this was discussed at a recent Planning Commission meeting, there was concern that without an application process for renovations, the Listers do not get information about increased values, but it was determined that they review properties often enough to get renovation updates.
  - 4.) Right of way: 30 foot/ 50 foot: Motion by Dennis Donahue for a 50 foot right of way for all rights of way. There was no second to the motion. In further discussion, Rick Howard asked why require such a wide right of way. Chris Sargent responded it is in case a development is built. Rick Howard commented that the property owner may not want to give that much right of way, and suggested leaving it to the discretion of the DRB, regarding issues such as slope. The motion died. The Planning Commission decided to leave as written the 30 foot right of way for landlocked parcels.

9:30: Reports:

- a. Selectboard: None.
- b. Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission: Chris Sargent reported that applications are due by the end of October for municipal planning grants for subdivision regulations. He offered to write the application and bring to the Planning Commission for review. Sargent noted that costs for public hearings could be incorporated into the grant.

9:35: Old Business: None.

9:35: New Business: Wayne Parks reported that Heather Carlos resigned from the Planning Commission. He will post the vacancy.

9:45: Motion by Dennis Donahue to adjourn, seconded by Lori Howard. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Fenton

Recording Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission