

**Thetford Planning Commission
Minutes – December 2, 2008**

Present: Stuart Blood, Laurie Burnham (7:22), Dennis Donahue, Mike Fernandez, Lori Howard (7:20), Rick Howard (7:20), Kevin O’Hara, Wayne Parks (Chair)

Absent: Liora Alschuler

7:18: Meeting called to order by Wayne Parks, Chair.

7:18: Public comment: None.

7:21: Review of prior minutes: Stuart Blood made a motion to accept as amended the minutes of November 18, 2008. Seconded by Kevin O’Hara. The vote passed unanimously.

7:22: List of Issues and Topics for Discussion for Meeting with Development Review Board, December 9, 2008:

1. Is there anything in the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations that slows the DRB process down?
2. What is the DRB’s opinion on a combined set of regulations, including Zoning and Subdivision?
3. What is the DRB’s opinion on the regulations regarding the review process for a planned development, as in a case they are currently working on?
4. Does the DRB have any concerns about the Historic Preservation guidelines?
5. Does the DRB have any input on the revised boundary lines for new district lines, which the Planning Commission is proposing?

7:30: Zoning:

a. 7:30: Review of “red sections” in Bylaws Draft: The Planning Commission tabled discussion until they have an updated tracking document and updated bylaw draft, in order to determine if any of the issues in the red sections have not yet been addressed.

b. Assignment Reports:

1.) 7:35: Setbacks: Rick Howard: The Planning Commission agreed on the rationale statement presented by Rick Howard, as amended, to read as follows:

“Setbacks are a measured minimum distance that structures can be located from boundary lines. The side and back yard setbacks 15 feet ensure spacing between structures on adjacent lots adequate for fire protection. The front yard setback, measured from the center line of the traveled way, is necessary for highway maintenance (drainage and snow removal) while allowing landowners maximum lot development potential.”

Following discussion, the Planning Commission agreed that the rationale statement should appear at the beginning of Section 2.08, as a header before the table (between lines 34 and 35).

2.) 8:00: Ridgelines/Steep Slopes: Dennis Donahue submitted a document listing issues. Of the nearby towns he researched, none have ridgeline definitions, but a few have overlay maps. It was noted that Thetford does not have adequate data for overlays. It was discussed that steep slopes would be slightly easier to regulate than ridgelines. The issues raised were erosion, public safety, water quality, and aesthetics. Dennis

Donahue noted that septic design requirements prohibit steep slope. Kevin O'Hara noted that in some towns, the only regulation of steepness is of access roads. It was the consensus to regulate the steepness of access roads.

It was discussed that if steep access is dealt with, then the remaining issue regarding ridgelines is aesthetic. A possible standard discussed was that the structure not be visible from the road. The consensus was to focus on the steepness of access roads, which will probably address issues of both steep slopes and ridgelines; and to punt on ridgelines.

3. 8:50: Wetland Protection: Laurie Burnham reported on her research as follows: Wetlands are defined by Act 250, as class 1 and 2 types. There are many wetlands in Thetford. One issue is to define setback and buffer zones. Another issue is whether to do a wetland survey of those wetlands currently not plotted. Laurie Burnham noted that the Vermont Wetland Office would do a wetland survey for a property, free of charge. She also noted that in some cases, a town would take a section of property out of the tax base, if designated as wetland. The rationale is water quality, and wildlife. She noted that the Town Plan states that wetland protection is a priority. The problem is how to classify the size, type of habitat, etc. Laurie Burnham is continuing her research.
4. 8:55: Habitat Protection: Kevin O'Hara reported on his research as follows: The Town Plan directs Zoning to protect wildlife habitat, and corridors. Regarding implementation in other towns, Norwich regulates habitat protection in their Planned Residential Development section, and Lyme uses a wildlife habitat map. Kevin O'Hara commented that if the language is not specific, it is unenforceable. It was discussed that if the Conservation Commission did maps of critical habitat areas, it could be helpful. Kevin O'Hara will contact Li Shen, Conservation Commission Chair; and will continue his research.
5. 9:15: District Boundary Lines: Working Group, Lori and Rick Howard, and Wayne Parks: The group explained the revised district boundary lines. There was consensus on the changes, with amendments to the maps in East Thetford, and Post Mills.

9:55: Reports:

- a. Selectboard: None
- b. Two Rivers: None.

9:56: Old Business: None.

9:57: New Business: None.

10:00: Motion by Rick Howard to adjourn, seconded by Wayne Parks. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Fenton,
Recording Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission