

**Thetford Planning Commission
Minutes – January 6, 2009**

Present: Stuart Blood, Laurie Burnham, Dennis Donahue (7:25), Mike Fernandez, Lori Howard, Rick Howard (7:24), Kevin O’Hara, Wayne Parks (Chair)

Absent: Liora Alschuler

7:15: Meeting called to order by Wayne Parks, Chair.

7:16: Public comment: None.

7:18: Review of prior minutes: Kevin O’Hara made a motion to accept as amended the minutes of December 16, 2008. Seconded by Stuart Blood. The vote passed unanimously.

Notes from the Planning Commission’s meeting with the Development Review Board, December 9, 2008, were recorded and distributed by the Planning Commission Recording Clerk. Wayne Parks noted that since they are not official minutes of the meeting, they do not need to be approved.

7:19: Zoning:

a. Assignment Reports:

1. 7:20: Wetland Protection: Laurie Burnham reported on her research as follows: Wetlands, which include rivers and swamps, are a complex issue. Grants are available for mapping. Wetlands are a priority of the Conservation Commission. Laurie Burnham is continuing her research, and plans to contact the Lake Fairlee Association for input, and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns regarding regulations.
2. 7:30: Site Plan Review: Kevin O’Hara reported that he and Liora Alschuler do not have a report yet. They may be able to report at the next meeting, January 20th.
3. 7:35: Continuing Care Retirement Communities: Mike Fernandez reported that he will have a written report for the next meeting. His research so far has been on line, looking at zoning in surrounding towns, including Norwich, Randolph, and Windsor. He noted that he has not found much text, except in Hanover’s zoning and town plan.
4. 7:45: Child Care Facilities: Wayne Parks noted that he has not done much research yet, but has concerns about liability. In discussion, it was commented that approving the existence of a facility on a property should not create liability, since it is separate from licensing, which is done by the State.
5. 8:00: Ridgelines/Steep Slopes: Dennis Donahue: In continued discussion, it was noted that erosion and safe access are primary concerns. Regarding how to certify that there is no erosion, it was noted that in most cases it would be too much of a burden on property owners to require that they hire an engineer, which few towns require; and that the town does not have the resources to oversee that development is done to engineering specifications.

Dennis Donahue noted that septic design requirements, which are regulated by the State, prohibit steep slope.

Regarding how to regulate the steepness of access roads, it was commented that the driveway permit process covers only the curb cut. It was noted that driveway permits are under the authority of the Selectboard, and in the review process the Road Foreman looks at the driveway site, regarding erosion control and drainage, as it effects public highways.

It was the consensus, regarding development on Steep Slopes and Ridgelines, to focus on steepness of access roads.

6. 8:25: Review of Bylaws Draft (red sections): Stuart Blood reported that, as assigned, he checked with Chris Sargent, regarding sections 2.07, 3.13, and 6.02. The Planning Commission reviewed the proposed changes, and reached consensus on the language. Stuart Blood will make the changes to the draft, and post the revised draft to the Planning Commission site.

7. 8:40: Planned Unit Developments: Stuart Blood noted that he was asked at the November 18th meeting to, as a next step, research models of PUD Zoning in other towns. He reported on his research as follows: The best model is Norwich, since their revised zoning, approved last month, was written after the Vermont Supreme Court decision last summer, that Zoning must provide standards that are clear. Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission Planner, Kevin Geiger is working on PUD model language, but it is not done.

In discussion, the following possibilities were suggested: Encourage PUD's in certain sections of town, in order to protect certain features, and be harmonious with surroundings. Offer incentives, to allow a developer to modify some of the requirements that typically apply in the district, such as a density bonus.

Stuart Blood will continue to research the Zoning Ordinance of Norwich as a model.

- b. 9:05: Report/Assign: Home Occupations: Stuart Blood reported that, as requested he asked Chris Sargent for clarification of the definition of home occupations. In discussion, the Planning Commission concluded that they should further research which types of home occupations a permit is needed for. Stuart Blood noted that the Norwich Zoning Ordinance has a large section on home occupations. Stuart Blood and Mike Fernandez will further research.

9:12: Reports (Selectboard and Two Rivers): None

9:13: Old Business: None.

9:14: New Business: None.

9:15: Motion by Rick Howard to adjourn, seconded by Dennis Donahue. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Fenton
Recording Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission