

**Thetford Planning Commission
Minutes – January 20, 2009**

Present: Stuart Blood, Laurie Burnham, Mike Fernandez, Kevin O’Hara, Wayne Parks (Chair)

Absent: Liora Alschuler, Lori Howard, Rick Howard

7:20: Meeting called to order by Wayne Parks, Chair.

7:21: Public comment: None.

7:22: Review of prior minutes: Stuart Blood made a motion to accept as amended the minutes of January 6, 2009. Seconded by Kevin O’Hara. The vote passed unanimously.

7:23: Correspondence: Wayne Parks reported that he received a resignation letter from Dennis Donahue. Stuart Blood commented that he is very appreciative of Dennis Donahue’s thoughtful work on the Planning Commission, and the length of time he served. The Planning Commissioners commented that he will be missed, but they understand his resignation.

7:30: Zoning:

Assignment Reports:

1. 7:30: Planned Unit Development, Wildlife Habitat, Home Occupations: Stuart Blood and Kevin O’Hara reported that they met with the Norwich Zoning Administrator and the Norwich Planning Commission Chair regarding PUD, wildlife habitat, and home occupations.

Regarding PUD, Stuart Blood explained that the mechanism Norwich uses that allows for waiving of certain requirements to get the type of development wanted is density, using a formula. He noted that the Norwich Zoning Administrator and Planning Commission Chair felt they handled the regulations the best they could, but are hoping in the future to improve the procedure by adding map overlays, with the help of the Conservation Commission.

Kevin O’Hara commented that Norwich’s Wildlife Habitat regulations are a good example of an improvement to zoning. He noted that Thetford is on a similar path. He is working on a recommendation, and plans to borrow language from Norwich. O’Hara commented that contiguous forestland needs to be considered and “Critical wildlife habitat” needs to be defined, with the help of the Conservation Commission.

Stuart Blood noted that another important resource is the guide “Conserving Vermont’s Natural Heritage” produced by the Vermont Biodiversity Project six years ago.

Kevin O’Hara reported that he would have recommended language ready for next meeting, February 3rd.

2. 7:55: Site Plan Review: Kevin O’Hara reported that he spoke with Liora Alschuler regarding suggested wording and structure; and plans to have recommended language for next meeting.
3. 8:00: Wetlands: Laurie Burnham reported that she is still trying to contact the Vermont League of Cities and Towns for professional assistance.

4. 8:05: Mobile Home Parks: Laurie Burnham distributed a report. She explained that she distilled examples from Norwich and Hartford's zoning. She also researched Woodstock, but their zoning did not address mobile home parks. Regarding Thetford's town plan, Burnham noted that mobile home parks are covered in recommended policy #10C, stating that the density can not be more than one family per 10,000 square feet.

Laurie Burnham noted that Thetford's current zoning draft states that mobile home parks may be permitted in the Rural Residential District. She commented that a rationale is needed for why rural and not village.

Laurie Burnham will send her report electronically to members not present. Wayne Parks asked Commission members to reflect on the report, to discuss next meeting.

5. 8:20: Continuing Care Retirement Communities: Mike Fernandez distributed a report covering the issues, definitions, types of housing, benefits, designs, and provisions; and a copy of Hanover's Zoning Ordinance; and information on the two examples he found in the State: Kendal at Hanover and Shelburne Bay Senior Living Community. He noted that Norwich and Lebanon do not cover CCRC in their zoning ordinances.

In discussion, it was commented that this type of facility is usually expensive, and usually near a city. Mike Fernandez noted that he has not found examples of a smaller type model.

The Planning Commission agreed that Thetford does not have the infrastructure or resources to support a continuing care retirement facility. This decision should be noted in the tracking document.

The Planning Commission noted that they would like to start a document/log listing Recommended Policies not taken, and the rationale for the decision. This will be discussed at a future meeting.

Mike Fernandez will submit his report electronically, to be posted to the Commission's site, and send the report to the members not present.

6. 8:50: Child Care Facilities: Wayne Parks reported that he researched zoning in Norwich and Woodstock. He proposed the language from Norwich, which he will compare to the language in Thetford's current draft zoning, and report back to the Commission.
7. 8:55: Home Occupations: Stuart Blood and Mike Fernandez reported that they looked at the ordinances in Pomfret and Woodstock, which are quite restrictive; and Norwich, which has three levels: 1.) Home Office: no permit required. 2.) Home Business: Permit required. 3.) Home Industry: Conditional Use Permit required.

In discussion, the Planning Commission agreed that they like the structure and language of the Norwich Ordinance. In discussion of the particular language, it was agreed to remove the words "small portion" and leave the number 50%.

As a next step, Stuart Blood will make amendments to Norwich's language, as recommended language for discussion.

9:07: Selectboard/Budget Report: Wayne Parks reported that Selectperson Andrew Toler gave him a revised budget, and asked him to make further cuts, explaining that all departments and committees are being asked to make cuts. Wayne Parks returned the budget, asking for reinstatement of certain items with reasoning for the request, and noting areas that could be cut. The Selectboard agreed to make the cuts in the areas discussed.

9:15: Old Business: Laurie Burnham asked that the Planning Commission to look again at Ridgelines and Steep Slopes; though the Commission had decided it might be too difficult to define and regulate, with the resources available, other than in the regulation of driveway permits/curb cuts. She commented that there is already development on ridgelines, and asked what impact continued development would have on Thetford if there were no regulations. Kevin O'Hara noted that Norwich regulates building on ridgelines and steep slopes, though they do not prohibit it. They have a ridgeline overlay district. Mike Fernandez offered to further research.

9:25: New Business: None.

9:27: Motion by Kevin O'Hara to adjourn, seconded by Stuart Blood. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Fenton
Recording Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission