

**Thetford Planning Commission
July 8, 2009 - Minutes**

Present: Liora Alschuler, Stuart Blood, Laurie Burnham, Lori Howard, Rick Howard, Kevin O'Hara, Wayne Parks (Chair)

Absent: Ben Pershouse

Guests: Milly Archer, Richard Blacklow, Stephanie Carter, Li Shen

7:17: Meeting called to order by Wayne Parks, Chair.

7:18: Public Comment: None

7:19: Review of prior minutes: Stuart Blood moved to accept the amended minutes of June 30, 2009. Rick Howard seconded. The vote passed unanimously.

7:23: Laurie Burnham introduced the guest speaker, Milly Archer, Water Quality Coordinator, Vermont League of Cities and Towns, which offers technical writing assistance to Municipal boards wishing to strengthen bylaws enhance and protect waterways. Laurie Burnham explained that the goal of the discussion is to draft a set of regulations to protect water quality, reflect current thinking, and be compatible with the needs of the Town.

Milly Archer explained that her presentation plan is to provide an overview and then receive tasks from the Planning Commission to take home to work on. She submitted a CD of her presentation, and two papers: Municipal Assistance Center Technical Paper #2, Creating an Effective Riparian Buffer Ordinance, April 2007; MAC Technical Paper #5, Managing Stormwater through Low Impact Development (LID) Techniques, May 2008.

Milly Archer made the following points in her presentation:
Stormwater:

- Stormwater is regulated for subdivisions in the Act 250 process
- Standards are available online: VT ANR, Water Quality Division, Stormwater Management handbook.
- Incremental, small development (under one acre) can be regulated with Low Impact Development (LID) Techniques/VLCT model Bylaw.

Riparian Buffers- Rivers:

- The Rivers Corridor Management Department, which regulates floodplains, uses calculations, which are available online at their website.
- Towns could add a vegetation standard, as the Town of Bolton has.

Riparian Buffers- Lakes and Ponds:

- The VLCT Model Buffer Ordinance is recommended. Milly Archer is designing this year a Model Shoreline Overlay District. The other option is a Shoreline Sole District with Low Impact Development (LID) Techniques, which could be designed as a Conservation District or Design Review District.

Wetlands:

- The State has passed new legislation to allow changes to the maps, but the completion of the project will take four years.
- Without mapping, another option is Site Plan Review, as part of Conditional Use Review.

In discussion the following points were made regarding trigger and enforcement mechanisms:

- How does the Zoning Administrator determine which sites to visit?
- The State Wetlands Office is available to visit sites, on request.
- The Conservation Commission intends to seek a grant to map Wetlands
- When is the building permit application considered complete, at which time the applicant has 30 days to complete the application process: Is it before or after the site inspection, which could take time, particularly if a review by the State has been requested.
- The Town could require site visits for all building permits, as with subdivision applications.
- How are wetlands identified if an application is made in the winter? Richard Blacklow will ask Norwich how they deal with slope calculations in the winter.
- Enforcement as a tool: If an applicant falsifies their application, a stop work order can be issued, and if the applicant does not comply with order their property title would have a note attached.

In further discussion, pervious road surfaces were recommended as a good solution for storm water control in certain applications, such as parking lots and driveways, but not roads that get high traffic.

Milly Archer noted that Alan Quackenbush, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Wetlands Division, would be offering a wetlands training session for Thetford. Milly Archer would like to attend the training, and work with Alan Quackenbush to organize it. She suggested that the town invite neighboring towns.

9:07: Review of Tracking Document: No changes.

9:07: Review of Zoning Draft: No changes.

9:10: Municipal Planning Grant: Wayne Parks reported the following: 1.) It is allowed to have overlap of two grants, as long as the grantee can prove they are making progress on the first grant, when the second one is applied for. 2.) A town cannot have bylaws approved if they do not have a Town Plan in effect.

Wayne Parks asked for a count of Commissioners in favor of applying for a Planning Grant. Six were in favor (Laurie Burnham was out of the room).

Regarding selection of a Planning Consultant, the Commission decided to wait until after the application is granted to decide whether to have a competitive bid or hire Two Rivers.

In follow-up, Wayne Parks will review the on-line application, and contact Two Rivers to ask if they would write the proposal.

9:20: Zoning:

General Standards: Agricultural Land:

In discussion of the definition of prime agricultural land, three approaches were identified.

1. Farming: Both prime and non-prime soils can be worked well, depending on the farmer. Agricultural land that is left alone becomes brush in the first year, beyond mowing in the second year, and quickly forested; however without houses it is still reclaimable.
2. Soil type: Act 250 uses soil type to define prime agricultural land.
3. Agricultural Use: The State Housing Conservation Board definition has an equalizing gap value calculation for agricultural use and agricultural development.

In follow-up, a working group of Liora Alschuler and Rick Howard will further identify how to move forward on general standards for agricultural land.

10:06: Reports: None.

10:06: Old Business, New Business: None.

July 21st agenda: Wetlands draft language; General Standards, Wildlife Habitat 1st reading; General Standards, Forest Resources 1st reading.

10:07: 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