

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

Present: Laurie Burnham, Lori Howard, Rick Howard (7:28), Kevin O’Hara, Wayne Parks (Chair)

Absent: Liora Alschuler, Stuart Blood

Guests: Andrew Toler

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

7:21: Public Comment: None.

7:21: Review of prior minutes: The minutes of September 15, 2009 were accepted as written.

7:22: Organizational meeting: Wayne Parks reported that the Selectboard approved the reduction of the Planning Commission membership from nine to seven; and noted that all the positions remain the same, and the new quorum is four.

7:23: Review of Tracking Document: Tabled.

7:23: Review of Zoning Draft: Tabled.

7:24: Discussion of Timeline: The Commission noted that they are continuing to work on the big issues remaining in the re-write of the zoning regulations, however they are able to present parts of the completed draft document to the Selectboard and other Boards by December. Andrew Toler commented that the Selectboard would find it helpful to receive the completed draft sections, when available, prior to receipt of the whole draft document.

Zoning:

8:10: Wetlands, Riparian Buffers, Further Discussion, Laurie Burnham: In discussion of the width of riparian buffers, Laurie Burnham explained that they vary in different towns from 100 – 200 feet; and she noted that the VDEC standards vary based on objective, as follows: to preserve stability of stream: minimum 50 feet, water quality: 100 feet, wildlife protection: 150 feet.

It was commented by some commission members that riparian buffers do not work to stop erosion on the Connecticut River, because of other factors, including the daily changes in elevation due to the dam, and soil variation. Some members raised concern that riparian buffers would substantially reduce the useable land of some landowners; and it was noted that although the Town Plan is supportive of the idea, it does not define it.

In further discussion, one suggestion was to define streams, with a standard such as a certain width stream, which runs all year.

Regarding wetlands, the idea was suggested to consider presenting the wetlands regulations with the mapped wetlands only; with the ability to add other wetlands, which become mapped in the future. It was noted that the Conservation Commission is seeking a grant for mapping wetlands.

It was also discussed whether to include Class 3 wetlands in the regulations, as recommended by the Conservation Commission.

For next meeting, the Chair requested that each commission member come up with their individual arguments for each category of buffers: Lake Fairlee, Connecticut River, and Streams, with definitions for streams.

8:54: Wildlife Habitat and Forest Resources, Vote, Stuart Blood, Kevin O'Hara: Kevin O'Hara moved to postpone the vote until the November 3rd meeting. Seconded by Lori Howard. The vote passed unanimously. In discussion it was noted that a few members would be absent from meetings until November 17th. Kevin O'Hara amended his motion to postpone voting until November 17th. Lori Howard seconded. The vote passed unanimously.

9:00: Agricultural Land Protection, 2nd Reading: Liora Alschuler, Lori Howard, Rick Howard. Tabled. It was noted that Stuart Blood distributed electronically prime soils maps for each village. The Planning Commission briefly reviewed the printed color versions submitted.

9:02: PUD Standards- Affordable Housing, 1st Reading. Liora Alschuler: Tabled.

9:03: Signs Report, Liora Alschuler: Tabled.

9:05: Time Line Reviewed: Kevin O'Hara will forward the revised time line to Stuart Blood, for drafting of the next meeting agenda.

9:10: 2010 Budget Discussion: Wayne Parks reported that the Selectboard has requested draft budgets by October 16th; and are requesting that departments and Boards submit two versions: one with a 5% decrease, and one with a flat budget.

The Planning Commission reviewed and drafted their budget proposals. Kevin O'Hara moved to accept the 5% reduced budget, and the flat budget option, as stated. Rick Howard seconded. The vote passed unanimously. Wayne Parks will send the draft budgets to Andrew Toler electronically.

9:25: 2012 Town Plan, Discussion of Time Line: It was noted that the town plan needs to be adopted by March 2012. It was commented that other options would be to readopt the old one as is, or with a few changes. In discussion, it was considered to request money at Town Meeting 2010 for a survey. It was also discussed to form a working group, to start by looking at the survey done by West Fairlee prior to writing their last town plan; and to research whether the town is bound by law to have a town plan for five years, or could they readopt the old one, and then revise it sooner than five years. Selectperson Andrew Toler volunteered to serve on the working group, and noted that the Selectboard is interested in helping by facilitating discussions with other groups, such as Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission.

9:30: Assignments for next meeting (October 20, 2009):

- Riparian Buffers: further discussion re: categories of Lake, River, Stream (see above): All members should prepare to discuss.
- Agricultural Land: Second Draft: Liora Alschuler, Lori Howard, Rick Howard
- PUD/Affordable Housing: First Draft: Liora Alschuler
- Signs: Need to assign a volunteer at next meeting

9:33: Reports:

- Selectboard: Andrew Toler reported that the Selectboard has been updating ordinances. In discussion of the sign ordinance, he suggested that the Planning Commission draft the ordinance, and pass it to the Selectboard for review.
- Two Rivers: None.

9:35: Old Business, New Business: None.

9:35: Motion by Kevin O'Hara to adjourn, seconded by Rick Howard. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Fenton
Recording Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission