

Thetford Planning Commission
September 7, 2010 – APPROVED Minutes

Present: Wayne Parks, Kevin O’Hara, Liora Alschuler, Rick Howard, Lori Howard, Dean Whitlock (Clerk)

Absent: Stuart Blood

Guests: None

(Numbers below refer to agenda items)

1. Meeting called to order by Wayne Parks at 7:28 PM

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of Minutes of August 31 (7:28)

Lacking a quorum of members present on 8/31, the minutes were reviewed, but approval was postponed till the next meeting.

4. Review of Zoning Draft (7:31)

Wayne Parks reported that Stuart Blood has incorporated the last set of changes. Article 7 is complete and ready for review by the Two Rivers Ottauquechee Commission (TRORC).

5. Article 2 Draft (7:32)

a. District Uses - Kevin O’Hara provided background of the discussion at the previous meeting for those who had been absent and explained the rationale for using categories of uses instead of listing individual uses. He handed out the draft document and described the categories and matrix by district, showing what was allowed and, where applicable, limits to square footage. Liora Alschuler stressed that the group needed to be sure that all currently listed uses in each district were included in one of the categories, and that those categories were listed for the right districts. The meeting then continued down the list of categories in the samples from Bethel and Randolph, starting from the point where they had left off at the last meeting.

The group discussed commercial kitchens; the differences between home business-office-occupation and where they fit in; whether an agricultural category needed to be included, since they are regulated by state law; and the differences between light and heavy industry, particularly in regard to sawmills.

Liora Alschuler pointed out that the group needed to follow the goals of the Town Plan, but also wanted to make the lists more general, not more restrictive. She suggested that the group should expand the allowed uses carefully where there is clear direction from the plan. Where there is no clear direction, it should be left till the next cycle of the plan.

There was discussion of whether to create a Rural Industrial category that could include sawmills and contractor’s yards, for example. The working group will continue to refine the

categories based on this evening's comments. Regarding the square footage limits in the table, which were a first pass made by Stuart Blood, the working group will start with the Randolph examples, being sure to note where limits are not appropriate.

b. Professional Review Comments (8:20) - Wayne Parks led the group through a comment-by-comment review of the comments from TRORC on Article 2. There was a lengthy discussion of the percentage of coverage allowed in each district, and whether parking areas should be included. TRORC recommended that impervious areas should be included. Liora Alschuler suggested adopting their recommendation and provisionally adopting the percentages. There was also some discussion of the comment regarding lot width in Rural Residential, a change intended to limit thin "spaghetti lots". Several members felt that the TRORC suggestion did not handle large lots well. These comments should be discussed with Kevin Geiger of TRORC at the next meeting, which he is scheduled to attend.

7. Article 5 Draft - Professional Review Comments (8:52)

This item was taken next because the comments were in the same document as those for Article 2. The group discussed several of the comments in some depth: Hours of operation of a business (sand and gravel removal); size of signs for home occupation (under control of the selectboard now); overlap of meanings for home occupation and home business (suggested to change all to be home occupation with two levels of permit requirements). The group postponed voting approval until Stuart Blood could be present and voice his reactions.

6. Article 6 Draft - Professional Review Comments (9:17)

The first 46 comments had already been reviewed at the previous meeting. The group continued the comment-by-comment review with number 47. There was a discussion of septic setback, which is regulated by the state. The town bylaw could be applied only by defining a septic system as a structure and establishing a setback width for all structures. This was another item to discuss directly with TRORC. The reviewed continued until 9:50. Wayne Parks will ask Stuart Blood to send the group's response to TRORC before the next meeting, when Kevin Geiger will be present.

8. Bridge Specs (9:50)

Rick Howard reported that he had still not received a reply from the fire chief. He said he will get the specification before Stuart Blood returns, so it can be included in the draft before the next meeting.

9. Time Line Review (9:52)

Kevin O'Hara went down the time line, noting items scheduled for each meeting. The next meeting will be devoted primarily to discussing TRORC comments with Kevin Geiger.

10. Reports: None

11. Old Business

Wayne Parks reminded the group that they would be attending the DRB meeting on 9/28 and we're on the agenda at 8 PM. There was no need to post public announcements of this as a Planning Commission meeting.

12. New Business: None

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission