

Thetford Planning Commission
November 2, 2010 – APPROVED Minutes

Present: Wayne Parks, Kevin O’Hara, Stuart Blood, Liora Alschuler, Lori Howard, Rick Howard (arr: 7:24), Dean Whitlock (Clerk)

Absent: None

Guests: Matt Fiskin (7:15-8:50)

(Numbers below refer to agenda items)

1. Meeting called to order by Wayne Parks at 7:15 PM
2. Public Comment: Wayne Parks introduced Matt Fiskin, who came to observe the meeting. He is considering becoming a member.
3. Review Minutes of 10/19/10 (7:18) - The minutes were approved as amended.

4. Zoning By-Laws Draft (7:20)

a. & b. Formatting, Grammar & Punctuation - Stuart Blood reported on the final changes. The formatting is now consistent. The editor found a few copy errors and suggested corrections, which he was able to approve on his own and reported to the members in his email of 10/28, which included the url for the posted draft. There were a couple of additional minor errors discovered since, reported in his email of 11/1, regarding the sizing of table cells and a typo. The current version is 46, which was posted to the url given in that email.

At Liora Alschuler’s suggestion, the version number will be printed on the draft.

c. Definition of “Stream” - Wayne Parks initiated a discussion on adding a definition for “Stream.” Stuart Blood had not found an official definition by the previous meeting, so there is no definition in version 46. He has since found a good definition, which he read to the meeting. A definition is referenced in Section VI. Stuart Blood noted that adding the definition would not affect the new formatting. Kevin O’Hara moved to adopt version 46 with the addition of the definition of “Stream”. Wayne Parks seconded.

As part of further discussion of the motion to adopt, Wayne Parks reported on his attendance at the last Select Board meeting, where he discussed the letter to them about standards for driveways and private roads. The letter refers to the existing the permit form for driveways and private roads, which has standards on the reverse side, and suggested that they update parts of those standards to match the standards suggested by the fire chief and currently in Section 3.13 of the draft bylaw. Those standards would then be removed from the bylaw, which would refer to their permit form instead for the latest standards. They agreed to this suggestion. Stuart Blood suggested that the standards be left in the draft bylaw so that comments about them could be collected during the hearing. The permit and bylaw could then be updated appropriately before the bylaw was submitted to the Select Board for final adoption.

Liora Alschuler commended the quality of the formatting by Diana Wright. It raises the median compared to the ordinances in neighboring towns with no impairment in the ability to read and use the text. Kevin O'Hara seconded the sentiment, and the commission as a whole agreed that Diana Wright deserved full credit for the quality of her work.

Since there was no further discussion, Wayne Parks called the question and the motion passed unanimously. Dean Whitlock noted that this was the culmination of three-and-a-half years of research, discussion, and careful deliberation.

Wayne Parks handed out copies of the latest version of the corrected zoning maps, color coded to show the old lines and the new lines. There was a brief discussion of some changes to be made, regarding these maps, in the report that will accompany the warning for the hearing. Stuart Blood moved to approve the draft maps. Rich Howard seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

There was additional discussion about the color coding on the maps. Liora Alschuler suggested having an old version of the maps on hand at the hearing so that the reasons for the changes could be more easily explained. Wayne Parks said he would also ask the Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) for large-scale maps to have at the meeting. It will also be possible to project them from digital files.

5. 11/30/10 Zoning By-Laws Hearing (7:52)

a. Warning - Stuart Blood went over the draft warning, which had been emailed to the members on 10/29. The members pointed out a few typos. Liora Alschuler suggested adding an email address where people who cannot attend the hearing could send comments. Dean Whitlock suggested putting the time of the hearing in the heading of the document.

b., & c. Notifications & Notices - Wayne Parks will post the warning in the town. TRORC will publish it in local newspapers and send it to abutting towns. Liora Alschuler suggested adding a sentence to the warning inviting people to attend the informational session at the 11/16 meeting. There was discussion about whether that was legal on a warning and also whether the warning could be posted earlier than 15 days prior. Stuart Blood would verify those points with TRORC.

d. Copies of Draft and Zoning Maps - Stuart Blood went over the Report that must accompany the warning and the draft. He and Liora Alschuler prepared the report on an official form provided by TRORC, which was included with the warning in the email of 10/29. He proposed a change regarding the maps, which was approved. Liora Alschuler suggested flipping two sentences at the end of page 1, for purposes of clarity. This was also approved. There was a brief discussion of reformatting to make the required text on the form stand out better from the descriptions of the changes to the bylaw.

e. Procedure at Hearing - Wayne Parks will open the meeting, introduce the members, and set the ground rules for the discussion. Stuart Blood suggested having an introduction to explain the rationales for all the changes. The ensuing discussion led to the decision to reuse the presentation from the informational meeting in April, with updates to incorporate the changes made since then. Liora Alschuler will make the updates and send it to the members via the planning listserve for their review and comments. She would prepare a second draft to use in a

dry run during the information meeting on 11/16. To be sure that the presentation clearly explains how the bylaw expands what is permitted in each district, Stuart Blood will highlight the significant changes in table 2.1 for Liora Alschuler to work with while updating the presentation.

There followed a discussion of the best method to capture comments at the meeting and hearing. Dean Whitlock will be the primary note-taker, but the other members will also take notes on issues that affected the sections for which they were responsible. Liora Alschuler displayed the grid that has been used in past hearings and will prepare copies for all to have at the informational meeting and hearing.

6. 11/16/10 Informational Meeting (8:30)

This will be a dry run of the warned hearing, using the same procedure and presentation. There will be a special invitation on the Thetford town listserv in addition to mention on the warning. Wayne Parks will set the length of the information portion, since this is also a regular meeting night. A summary of the comments will be given at the warned hearing. Stuart Blood will send the warning to town committees and interested parties as soon as he hears from TRORC regarding timing.

7. Budget (8:40)

Wayne Parks reported his discussion with the Select Board regarding the budget. He is asking the same amount this year as last year, but pointed out to them that there was no specific line item to cover the review and update of the Town Plan. They understand that the grant in process will be needed to fund it (see next item).

8. MPG (Municipal Planning Grant) Update (8:42)

Wayne Parks pointed out that the due date for the grant application is the same date as the bylaw hearing. TRORC is working on the application, and Tig Tillinghast as the town's grant guru is now involved. Wayne hopes to have a draft of the application by the 11/16 meeting so the commission can discuss it after the informational meeting on the bylaw.

9. Future Agenda & Time Line (8:44)

Then next meeting after the hearing is 12/2. It's possible, though not likely, that all the comments could be incorporated and the changes ready to approve by that meeting. More likely it will take another meeting or two to finish that process. There followed a discussion of what would be the next projects for the commission. Wayne Parks reminded everyone that he will be stepping down as soon as the Select Board adopts the new bylaw. Lori Howard and Stuart Blood will also be leaving. There was a discussion about whether someone else should take over as chair of the commission immediately. Stuart Blood disagreed, saying that it would be important to have advice from all experienced members on weaknesses in the old town plan, places where more planning needed to be done, holes that needed filling, unnecessary material that should be removed, etc.

Liora Alschuler pointed out that the subdivision regulations would be out of sync with the new zoning bylaw. There was some discussion about how to get that done while also updating the town plan. She suggested that the subdivision regs be scanned side-by-side with the new

bylaw to clarify how they interact and determine what items should have priority for changing. A timeline could be developed early. Stuart Blood suggested focusing on procedural items such as the Development Review Board (DRB) has complained about. It will be important to get them more involved.

Wayne Parks expressed some concern that there were not any new planning commission member candidates before the Select Board as far as he knew. (All eyes turned toward Matt Fiskin, who had the good manners not to run screaming from the room.) Kevin O'Hara said the commission needed to approach the Select Board about this again and suggested that Wayne Parks send a letter to the town listserve. Wayne said an appeal could also be put into the Planning Commission report in the Town Report, which will go on the agenda in December. The members discussed a couple of other possible candidates.

10. Reports: See references above.

11. Old Business: none.

12. New Business: none.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Dean Whitlock, Clerk
Thetford Planning Commission