

**Thetford Planning Commission**  
**February 15, 2011 – APPROVED Minutes**

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

Absent: None.

Guests: None

(Numbers below refer to agenda items)

1. Meeting called to order by Kevin O'Hara at 7:28 PM

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review Minutes of 2/1/2011 (7:28)

The minutes were accepted as corrected.

4. Town Plan Rewrite (7:31)

Kevin O'Hara reviewed the situation: The Town Plan expires on 3/19/2012. The new municipal planning grant runs through May of 2012. The Two Rivers Ottawaqueche Regional Commission (TRORC) will act as the grant manager, with Sally Hull as our liaison. The work plan indicates that there are many activities beyond changing language, including community open houses and forums. Kevin suggested that the Planning Commission first establish what can be completed in the available time period and create a timeline to guide the work on each issue.

There was a general discussion of the contract with TRORC and how they would be involved in the actual planning process beyond administering the grant. Liora Alschuler will contact TRORC and the selectboard regarding TRORC's role as consultant and the Planning Commission's view of the process and schedule.

There followed a discussion of the time period. Given the need for 2 warned hearings held by the commission and at least one by the selectboard, and the selectboard's focus on budget and town meeting from December-February, a draft of the new Town Plan would need to be ready for hearings by October of this year. Stuart Blood suggested holding a forum of the major stakeholders as soon as possible to determine the scope of changes that will be required. This would include the selectboard, the Development Review Board (DRB), the Conservation Commission, and other affected town bodies. Liora Alschuler said she thought the commission should first develop a list of priorities and a suggested scope to give the stakeholders a starting point for discussion.

The members discussed items that needed to be addressed, starting with the comments that were deferred from the hearings on the current town plan (of 11/2006). There are also statistical data that must be updated; comments deferred from the hearings on the current draft zoning bylaw (of 11/2010); issues brought by the town committees and public agencies; and suggestions

from citizens. Stuart Blood added that any of recommendations made in the current Town Plan that have not yet been implemented should be reviewed to see if they are feasible or still considered desirable. Why were they not implemented?

Liora pointed out that the grant implementation plan envisions a very collaborative and deliberative process with the public, which will be hard to achieve in the existing timeline without deferring many items or readopting the current Town Plan as is to gain more time. For this go-round, she suggested focusing on bringing the Town Plan and draft zoning bylaw into line. Stuart agreed that it made sense to start work with the intention of readopting the current Town Plan, with the statistical updates, and with the commitment to achieve a deliberated new Town Plan within another year. This would allow making full use of the grant's time period and resources (saving enough funds to print copies and produce the necessary maps at the end). Rick Howard agreed, and suggested it would be even better to take two-and-a-half years (half the usual period) in order to get it right.

The members then discussed when it would be possible to meet with TRORC and the selectboard. They can be invited to the 3/1 meeting; however, Liora will be out of town and Lori will no longer be on the commission, so there will not be a quorum at that meeting. This led to a discussion of the need to recruit new members. Kevin will request the selectboard to adopt a resolution to reduce the standing membership of the commission to five, at least until new members are appointed, so that a quorum can more easily be reached.

There was further discussion of the changes needed to the Town Plan, including places where the language is too vague to provide clear guidance on issues. Liora then opened the spreadsheet of deferred comments from 2006 and led a quick review of each one. It was clear that some had already been addressed but that others would need discussion and final action. She will post the file to the commission's listserv so members can review it in more depth before the next meeting. There was also a discussion of other stakeholders, including the Energy Committee, the Fire Department, and the Highway Department. Finally, the question of changing the number of zoning districts was added to the list of issues to discuss.

#### 5. Subdivision Regulations (8:29)

Stuart Blood repeated his comment that most of what remains to address in these regulations are the procedures, which should be simplified. He suggested setting up a workgroup with 2 members of the DRB and a member from the commission and a member of the general public. He and Kevin O'Hara had each separately discussed this idea with members of the DRB, who felt it would be a good way to proceed. With formal agreement from the DRB, this would allow the subdivision revision to take place in parallel with the Town Plan review. Kevin expressed his willingness to act as the commission's representative at the outset. He and Stuart will approach the DRB.

#### 6. Reports (8:38) - None

#### 7. Old Business - None

#### 9. New Business (8:38)

The members discussed how to attract new members. Liora and Kevin will work on an announcement to post to the town listserve. There was discussion of approaching Thetford Academy to see if it would be possible to have one or two student representatives involved in the town planning process as a civics project. Liora will follow up with the Academy.

Town Meeting is close at hand. The members discussed setting up a table with the full-size zoning map and copies of the Town Plan and the draft zoning bylaw. Members volunteered to be on hand to chat with potential new members about the need, duties, time commitment, intellectual pleasures, and sense of achievement involved.

This was Lori Howard's final meeting as a member of the commission. Speaking for the other members, Kevin thanked her for her good work and years of dedication to the task. The other members all expressed their appreciation.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission