

Thetford Planning Commission
June 21, 2011 – APPROVED Minutes

Present: Kevin O'Hara, Patrick Kearney, Liora Alschuler, Michael Schunk, Terry Longo, Rick Howard (7:45), Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: None

Guests: Sally Hull (7:27 - 9:21)

(Numbers below refer to agenda items)

1. Meeting called to order by Kevin O'Hara at 7:19 PM

2. Public Comment: None.

3. Review of the Minutes of June 6 (7:19)
The minutes were approved as amended.

4. Selectboard Report (7:27)

Liora Alschuler reported that the District Uses working group had tentatively scheduled a first meeting on Thursday, June 23 at 7:30 PM. She asked Kevin for a clarification about whether the working group would be working on the uses table only. Kevin replied that that was the focus at the selectboard meeting he attended and that he hoped it would remain the primary focus, if not the sole focus. This will be up to the selectboard to decide, although the planning commission members of the working group would be able to give input. Liora said she and Rick Howard had had a preliminary discussion and felt the process should be straight-forward.

5. Town Plan Rewrite (7:27)

Liora set up her laptop with a projector so the members could review the comment documents together. She gave a brief review of the documents: town plan hearing (the bulk of the comments) and flood plain and communications ordinances (very few comments). There is a master document containing all comments, but she suggested starting with the town plan comments document separately and reviewing them one-by-one. She would then compare that to the combined document to make sure it is complete.

Sally Hull joined the meeting.

Liora went through the town plan comments in order. (The document, with responses from this meeting, was posted by Liora on the Planning Commission listserv after the meeting. It is available to the public on the listserv archive.)

Waste Management Section: Comment 1 - regards making solid waste facility being conditional use in Rural Residential. Response: Review language regarding solid waste facilities. Liora to research the document referenced in the comment.

Comment 2 - Moved to Environmental section (now comment 16)

Business development/village centers section: Comment 3 - regarding inns, B&Bs, etc. to allow as CU outside Community Business. Response: addressed in draft zoning bylaw; make Town Plan consistent.

Comment 4 (split into two sections: now Comments 4 and 5) - regarding three-person limitation for rented rooms in owner-occupied dwelling. Response: compare Town Plan to Draft Zoning; clarify language and make consistent.

Comment 5 - regarding no rooms in non-owner-occupied dwellings shall be leased. Response: not addressed in Draft Zoning; review in Town Plan (too restrictive?).

Comment 6 - regarding parking ban in front of Wing's Store in E. Thetford. Response: review language in Town Plan (purpose?).

Comment 7 - regarding integration of commercial and residential development. Response: Sally Hull said new town plans, by state law, must now have economic development sections. Must review Town Plan language in late of new law and also how to encourage mixed use.

Comment 8 - "It would be nice to create "real" villages where the residents can get many of their needs met." Response: Review section RP 10.b in Town Plan.

Comment 9 - regarding adding a section on local economy. Response: Will review Town Plan with regard to new state requirements. Sally will research sample language.

Environmental section: Comment 10 - regarding inventory of Connecticut River tributaries. Response: Has been done.

Comment 11 - regarding riparian buffers. Response: The draft zoning bylaw sets standards for riparian buffers; review Town Plan language to see how well they match and if language on restoration should be added.

Comment 12 - regarding restricting access to wetlands by domestic animals. Response: Rick Howard said this would have a negative impact on dairy/cattle farming; review in light of state's Accepted Agricultural Practices.

Comment 13 - regarding uses that can potentially damage groundwater (e.g., spillage of gas/oil at a garage, commercial or private). Response: the state regulates commercial handling; review for private handling of potentially damaging chemicals, etc.

Comment 14 - "Desirability of conservation not defined or constrained: how much should be conserved? At what cost to the town?" Response: review in Town Plan.

Comment 15 - regarding lighting ordinance. Response: review Town Plan, draft zoning bylaw, site plan review.

Comment 16 - (moved from comment 2) regarding vigilance in protecting the town's subsurface and surface water resources. Response: review Town Plan and compare to standards in draft zoning bylaw.

Energy section, Comment 17 - regarding wind generation. Response: Michael Schunk said there were now maps showing zones in the state that had potential for wind generation; not many local areas do; review language in Town Plan.

Comment 18 - regarding negative impacts (pros/cons) of all energy sources. Response: some discussion regarding how to document pros and cons and give rationales for any recommendations; consider pros/cons in terms of commercial/residential/municipal investment.

Land use section, Comment 19 - regarding outright ban on building in flood plain. Response: addressed in flood plain regulations; review town plan language and make consistent with regs.

Comment 20 - regarding farming above a certain slope percent. Response: Rick said this was addressed in the state's Accepted Agricultural Practices; review Town Plan and make consistent.

Comment 21 - regarding hill-top development. Response: Not addressed in the draft zoning bylaw due to lack of specific direction in the town plan. The commission did not want to legislate aesthetics; hoped the driveway standards would limit it; felt that subdivision regulations would discourage it. Now it's necessary to reconsider the language in the plan and develop a clear policy.

Recreation section, Comment 22 - regarding Vermont Fish & Game access point. Response: Assumed to mean the one on Lake Fairlee, since there isn't one in town. Because it is not in the town, the town plan is not an appropriate place to address the issue.

Comment 23 - regarding banning all motorized recreational boating everywhere. Response: defer to the regional planning commission and Lake Fairlee Association.

Miscellaneous section, Comment 24 - regarding subdivision not for building construction. Response: review town plan language to make sure it covers this case.

These were all of the comments from the town plan hearings. The members continued with the comments from the flood plain reg hearings. After all comments are reviewed, they will be sorted according to the sections of the town plan and then the sections will be assigned to different members to research and develop recommendations.

Flood Plan Reg comments:

Comment 20 - regarding critical facilities. Response: Suggest adding examples given in the FEMA "Floodplain Management Requirements" guide.

Comment 29 - regarding restatement of the definition of "Floodway Fringe Areas". Response: Add to the definition; review the town plan section on riparian flood plain zones.

Telecommunications Reg comments:

Comment 13 - regarding standards for lighting telecomm towers. Response: The state has control over tower lighting; Sally will review whether the town has any discretion.

Draft Zoning Bylaw comments:

Comment 57 - regarding no mention of vernal pools. Response: It's true, they aren't mentioned; review plan and draft language to cover them.

Comment 61 - regarding insufficient protections for agriculture, farmworker housing, and economies of scale. Response: review town plan for all three points.

Comment 67 - regarding support of local agriculture by relaxing certain restrictions. Response: review town plan language.

Comment 78 - similar to 67, reference another part of the draft bylaw. Response: refers to exemptions from site plan review; discuss broadening exemptions; invite commenter, Tara Bamford, to attend and clarify her intent.

Comment 16 - regarding land required for churches. Response: this was not changed in the draft zoning bylaw due to lack of direction from town plan or input from churches; review rationale for this language and change if appropriate.

This completed the review of all deferred comments. Liora will post the documents to the PC listserv [done on 6/21 - see above]. Sally will sort the comments into the appropriate sections of the town plan and post the sorted list to the PC listserv. She will also add line numbers to the town plan document (digital version) before the July 5 meeting to make referencing easier during discussions. The sections will be divided up among the members at that meeting. Liora asked everyone to consider what important issues should be brought to the town first to get personal involvement. Terry Longo said he will not be at the July 5 meeting but will bring his “mission statement” to the July 19 meeting.

Kevin asked Sally if there were funds in the municipal planning grant to cover informational mailings to the citizens. She said that there was.
Sally left the meeting.

6. Reports (9:21)

Terry Longo gave a brief summary of the Town Trails meeting on June 9. After presentations by professional trail developers, three groups split out and each came up with a list of the types of trails they would like to see in town. The lists were remarkably similar. There was also a discussion of the trails already in existence and how they could be linked. Terry said a lot had already been done. The next step was to decide which projects to pursue. About 30 people attended. Michael asked if there had been any discussion of widening roadways for sidewalks. Terry said no, it was mostly about trails.

7. Old Business: None.

9. New Business: None.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission