

**Thetford Planning Commission**  
**July 5, 2011 – APPROVED Minutes**

Present: Kevin O'Hara, Patrick Kearney, Liora Alschuler, Rick Howard, Dean Whitlock  
(Recording Clerk)

Absent: Michael Schunk, Terry Longo

Guests: Sally Hull (7:30 - 9:41)

(Numbers below refer to agenda items)

1. Meeting called to order by Kevin O'Hara at 7:27 PM

2. Public Comment: None.

3. Review of the Minutes of June 21 (7:27)

The minutes were approved as amended.

4. Selectboard Report (7:29)

Liora Alschuler and Rick Howard reported on the meeting of the District Uses Working Group on June 23. The workgroup discussed the suggested changes to the District Uses table in the draft zoning bylaw, which Liora said were actually very few. The selectboard members on the workgroup also wanted to discuss the other changes that the selectboard was proposing based on the comments collected during the hearing on the bylaw. Liora explained to them that she and Rick did not have authority to represent the Planning Commission on the other proposed changes, since the stated task for the workgroup was only to study the district uses. Instead, they brought the proposed changes and summary of the workgroup discussion to the commission for further discussion and decisions. A summary follows:

1. Increase the number of non-resident employees permitted for home business in rural residential from 2 to 4 (agreed). 2. Clarify wording on selectboard approval on access points in section 6.07 (agreed). 3. In the Glossary, rearrange the one that is out of alphabetical order (agreed). 4. Minor corrections to syntax and grammar (agreed). 5. Potential conflict with state law regarding revocation of conditional use permit (regarding lack of continued compliance over noise reduction); does the selectboard want the planning commission to look into this or will they? 6. Regarding the change in height of fences: the selectboard asked what was the rationale behind the change. (Confirmed it was to correspond with the change in the setback). 7. Changes to language in forestry sections proposed by Erhardt Frost (agreed). 8. Change allowable grade for driveway: after long discussion, the commission members agreed to consider allowing slopes greater than 12%, contingent on the case being reviewed by the Development Review Board. The commissioners also suggested applying an upper limit and asked Sally Hull to review upper limits in other towns' zoning. The commission will discuss this at the next meeting; members of

the selectboard are invited to join the discussion. 9. Connecticut River setbacks: no comment. 10. Duties of the Zoning Administrator: the selectboard was referred to Richard Blacklow.

#### 5. Town Plan Rewrite (8:10)

Sally Hull supplied the members with line-numbered copies of the current Town Plan that incorporated the comments from the plan review by the Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission. She went over a list of issues relating to 24 VSA section 4382, which sets the new requirements for town plans. There was a brief discussion of the first requirement, which is to have a statement of Objectives, Policies, and Programs. It is a matter of classification, since the current plan has Goals and Objectives and Recommended Policies (some of which are action steps rather than goals or policies).

The next requirement was to add statements of Prospective Land Uses. The current Town Plan lists the three Districts as they exist, rather than referring to them as prospective uses. It also uses the term "District," whereas the state format requires using the term "Area." ("District" is suitable for the zoning bylaw, which reflects the current legal situation. "Area" is used for planning, which projects the future situation.) Liora asked if this meant all parcels in town needed to be defined; Sally replied no, just the areas. Current districts can be described in the Town Plan, but all future uses must be clearly described as areas. Areas must be described by the proposed use (forest, recreation, agriculture, residence, industry, and/or public), along with location and amount, intensity, and character of the uses. The members raised the question of how they should approach adding new areas in addition to the 3 currently established districts, and how new planning areas would lead to the specification and regulation of new districts in the next version of the zoning bylaw. These will be discussed in a future meeting.

Sally briefly went down the other requirements from section 4382 and related TRORC comments, after which she went over a list of issues related to 24 VS section 4302, state land use goals. The new plan must be consistent with these goals. The first goal states, "To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside." She noted that the map of the Post Mills village district shows the district stretching too far along the major roads, potentially conducive to sprawl. Liora said that the intent was to make the village district larger so there was more room for business within the village rather than sprawling out on the roads. Rick pointed out that it is impossible to build on the steep hills along route 113, which restricted village development. There was also a discussion of the Thetford Hill village map, which showed the district extending all the way to the interstate. There was discussion on the uses allowed in village residential and how to specify high density in the plan, which would be implemented in zoning by allowing smaller lot sizes.

After briefly discussing the other consistency issues with 4382 (economic development, educational/vocational training opportunities, encouraging/strengthening agriculture and forest industries, wise natural resource uses, safe and affordable housing), Sally moved on to the issue of making the Town Plan consistent with the Regional Plan. In general, the current Town Plan is reasonably compatible, she said, but there were certain sections that were not. She listed four main areas that had to do with the definitions of the four village centers. Rick asked what would happen if the commission decided not to change the size of the districts. Sally replied that no Town Plan has ever been disapproved for not fully conforming with the regional plan, but that

the push from the state was to bring the towns into conformity. The sense of the members was that some of the requirements were based on Chittenden County and, as such, could not easily be applied to Thetford. There was also a discussion of the district maps in the current Town Plan, which don't appear to show the current reality of Thetford's villages. Rick said that somewhere in the Town Plan is language that discourages development at the interstate exit. Sally said the maps should indicate that, and that it would be good to project the maps so everyone could see them while discussing these issues.

Next steps: Liora suggested dividing the chapters among working groups, who would identify the issues that should be put out to a broader discussion with the general public. Rick asked for clarification on readopting the current plan. Sally said that process can start any time. Kevin said the commission should set a hearing, change the date on the plan, and keep all changes to a minimum. He asked Sally to determine what would be the bare minimum needed; for example, what old statistics to replace with new. Sally said we could just change the date and provide a report explaining why it was being done, as long as we advertised a warned hearing to readopt the current plan. She will send drafts of the warning, report, and plan to readopt before the next meeting (7/19).

The members discussed the goals of the work groups. Michael, Liora, and Rick will form the first work group, which will start by taking the current districts and redescrbing them as required by the state law. Kevin and Patrick will form the second work group, which will map the current district uses table to objectives, policies, and programs.

Sally left the meeting.

6. Reports (9:41): None.

7. Old Business:

The group discussed an email sent by Matt Fiskin on June 27, in which he tried to clarify comments he had made at the May 17 meeting about contradictions in the communications bylaw, draft zoning bylaw and state law. The members were still unclear on a couple of points, and Liora volunteered to speak with him about his meaning and his intent.

9. New Business: None.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission