

**Thetford Planning Commission**  
**August 16, 2011 – APPROVED Minutes**

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Patrick Kearney, Michael Schunk, Terry Longo, Liora Alschuler, Rick Howard (arr. 7:27), Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: None

Guests: Wayne Parks (7:18-8:34), Don Fifield (7:18-8:34)

(Numbers below refer to agenda items)

1. Meeting called to order by Kevin O’Hara at 7:18 PM

2. Public Comment: None.

3. Review of the Minutes of 8/2/11:

The minutes were accepted as amended, with 1 abstention (Liora).

4. Selectboard Report: None.

5. Zoning follow-up (Report required) (7:26)

Wayne Parks and Don Fifield joined the meeting.

Kevin reported that, after discussion of the driveway standards (in section 3.13 of the draft zoning bylaw) at the previous selectboard meeting, the selectboard decided to retain the changes they had made. Don responded with a letter to the planning commission on August 12, in which he expressed his concerns over several issues in the proposed language. His primary concern had to do with the change in the allowed slope to be 15% over a distance of 100 feet, with no review by a qualified person such as the fire chief. The issue is public safety, and whether an emergency vehicle would be able to get in and out in all seasons. There was an extended discussion of the legal requirement for objective standards and the need to have clear guidelines for landowners, but also the importance of review by someone who could judge whether other issues affected access, such as having a curve too near to the slope, having adequate room to turn around, passing places, etc. Don was also concerned by the increase in the maximum allowed slope, and that the standards apply to the complete length of the driveway, and also to a network of driveways off a private feeder road. Kevin clarified that the current standard was 12%, not 10%; also that the standard did apply to the entire driveway.

There was also a discussion of the process to suggest alternate language now that the selectboard had warned a hearing (or were about to) for August 29th. There is also the fact that new state zoning regulations go into effect on September 1 and will supersede our current zoning bylaw, so it is important to pass the draft bylaw as quickly as possible. Don said he did not want to hold up passage of the bylaw. The group spent a long time working on the draft of a change that would include clear guidelines and also review by an emergency responder, but that would

not represent a significant change that would delay passage. The solution was to add a subsection C that specifically addressed reviews. The final draft, prepared by Liora, read:

C. Review of Driveways.

If any of the standards above, singly or in combination, raise doubt over the viability of the drive from a public safety vehicle perspective, the ZA will require review by an emergency services provider (Fire Chief or other) to make a determination.

Kevin moved that the text be accepted. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Wayne and Don left the meeting at 8:34 PM

6. Town Plan Rewrite (8:35)

a. Survey discussion - Sally Hull sent an email on August 15 with a cost estimate for producing, running, and analyzing a survey of the town. After some discussion, the sense of the meeting was that a survey would be too expensive and take up too much time to do properly. The schedule set by the Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) did not allow enough time. There was further discussion of how best to poll the townspeople about their interests and issues regarding the town plan. Kevin reported that he and Liora had already gone through the lists of issues raised in previous public hearings (current town plan, draft zoning bylaw, etc.), which provides a starting list to put before the town. The MPG implementation plan specifies holding an open house, which was chosen as the best way to get opinions from the town. The Open House was tentatively scheduled for the second Planning Commission meeting in September, 9/20. Kevin will confirm that date will work for Sally Hull. If it is, Liora will post a save-the-date announcement on the town listserv. She will also pull the key items from the list of comments for the members to review at the 9/6 meeting. Michael suggested that everyone read over the various comment capture documents beforehand so they can suggest other topics to include. Part of the 9/6 meeting will be devoted to finalizing the list, creating a flyer to post around town, and planning the process of the open house. Food will be served.

b. Discuss "vision" of town (8:55) - Terry suggested that this discussion be integrated into the open house, asking townspeople what they wanted Thetford to look like in five, ten, 15, etc. years. Liora said her vision of Thetford was as a place where people can grow up in a family, get an education, maybe go away, come back, raise a family, work, and age; in other words, a place for all generations. You don't have to go away to get your first job or afford your first home; it works for a whole life span.

c. Progress with current working groups (9:00) - 1. Goals, Objectives, etc. Terry passed around three sheets: definitions of goal, objective, program, policy, and guiding principle; and two possible formats for tables that would clearly list these items in each chapter of the town plan. For his sample tables, he had used the Transportation chapter (because it was relatively short). There was a discussion of the definitions, related to the samples, with other examples thrown in by Dean. The group suggested some clarifications to the definitions of Program and Guiding Principle. Next Terry will finalize the definitions and the sample formats, based on this discussion, and he will send the revised documents to all via the PC listserv. He will also ask Sally Hull to vet the documents for the regional commission. Michael suggested the other workgroups use the new format in order to become proficient with the concepts. He will take a

stab at the land use chapter. Members will use the PC listserve to discuss progress before final discussion and approval at a future meeting.

d. Look at MPG task chart and set some dates (9:31) - Liora suggested it would be a good idea to have a timeline for completion of the town plan to bring to the open house. The sense of the meeting is that the MPG implementation plan does not allow enough time to complete the revision, and that we might not have as much leeway in the grant end product as Sally had originally stated. The group needs to determine exactly what to produce to meet the requirements of the MPG and then how much time will be needed to complete the full revision, to the point of warning a hearing. Liora suggested setting Town Meeting 2013 as the day for final vote/approval by the town and then counting back from there, which would yield holding the hearing in November 2012 at the latest. That yields 8 months to prepare a draft for the MPG, and another 7 months to do more research, fill in details, and finalize formatting before the hearing. The next step will be to review and finalize the goals of the MPG draft with Sally.

#### 7. Old Business (9:38)

Liora went over the wording of the open house announcement for the listserve. There was a brief discussion of menu. Dean suggested that a gluten-free item be available, and was immediately volunteered for the task of preparing one. He mentioned chocolate zucchini cake as one option, which was greeted with lip-smacking acclamation.

There was a discussion of the level of detail that the members wanted to see recorded in the minutes. The sense of the meeting was that all decisions should be recorded, and the rationale for those decisions, but not necessarily every detail, since it was impossible to record the meetings verbatim anyway. State law requires that all motions and votes be recorded. Kevin said he will look for guidelines. In order to speed discussion at meetings, Liora had suggested that members post suggested changes on the PC listserve. Final discussion would take place and all final changes recorded at warned meetings. Dean will send out the draft minutes in Word doc format, and members will use Word's comment and tracking features to suggest their changes.

#### 9. New Business (9:53)

None

The meeting was adjourned at 9:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission