

**Thetford Planning Commission**  
**September 6, 2011 – APPROVED Minutes**

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Patrick Kearney, Terry Longo, Liora Alschuler, Rick Howard (arr. 7:35), Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: Michael Schunk

Guests: Sally Hull (7:33 - 9:00)

(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 8/16/11:  
    The minutes were accepted as amended.
4. Selectboard Report: None.
5. Town Plan
  - a. Reschedule and Plan Open House - Kevin reported that the selectboard had, unwittingly and with apologies, warned the zoning bylaw hearing on 9/20, displacing the Planning Commission's open house.

Jumping ahead to Item 7, there was a brief discussion of potential problems with the warning of the bylaw hearing, since the latest draft was not yet available. Kevin also reported that he had received several comments pointing out flaws in the change to the driveway standards adopted at the last commission meeting. Kevin said he will try to arrange a workgroup meeting to draft acceptable language that can be proposed as a non-substantial amendment at the warned hearing on 9/20 (assuming the new language is in the warned draft).

Sally Hull and Rick Howard joined the meeting

Back to the Open House plans, Kevin reviewed the discussion of the last meeting for Sally: the plan is to review the existing comments and ask the towns people for new ideas. A survey was ruled out as being both too time-consuming and costly.

Sally said her goal for this meeting was to map out a timeline for the Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) implementation plan and determine who would be in charge of each task. She announced that she was leaving the regional commission (TRORC) on 9/30 to take a new job with a consulting firm, and that her replacement as Thetford's liaison with TRORC had not yet been chosen. However, a TRORC representative would be at the open house.

The date for the open house was set for Tuesday, October 4 at 7:30-9-ish PM at the Town Hall (the first commission meeting scheduled in October). Sally noted that the MPG budget includes \$150 for materials, which could include flyers and advertising to publicize the open house. Liora will place transaction ads in the Valley News on the Thursday and Monday before the open house. Sally will create a draft flyer and send it to the members to finalize. At the open house, Liora will use a laptop and projector to show the existing comments and collect suggestions. There will also be 2 easels and flip-charts for collecting ideas and comments. Liora reported that she had already combined the existing comments into a single document and sorted them by categories: nature of villages (e.g., sidewalks, economic encouragements, restrictions such as land required around churches); nature of rural residential district (e.g., tension between conservation and development, vernal pools, hilltop development and steep slopes, what is shared value, what constitutes a "taking" and, by contrast, a "saving", more differentiation of uses/areas within RR); agriculture (e.g., how to further support it and make the town more sustainable; worker housing, economies of scale); natural resources (e.g., define the term, water/aquifer protection, restoration of buffer zones, habitat, solid waste, recreation); energy policy (e.g. encouraging independence and conservation); lighting. She said she felt that the open house should not deal with legal details (which is what zoning does), but with higher level questions and broader issues regarding the future of land use in the town. She suggested that the commission develop a list of contrasting statements that would provoke responses: I would like to see more density in villages by reducing lot size and increasing multi-unit dwellings; or I would like to see the villages stay at the same density level.

b. Publicity - There followed a discussion of ways to publicize the forum and inspire debate by including some of these contrasting statements on flyers and in sequential posts to the town listserv. The members are each to come up with some contrasting statements and send them to Liora before the next meeting, on 9/20. Sally will provide some ice-breaker activities she has used at open houses in other towns. Liora suggested it would also be good to provide a big picture of the timeline for developing the plan

#### 6. Town Plan Rewrite (8:15)

b. Timeline - Sally handed out a very rough draft timeline for completing the MPG schedule and then carrying on to the end of the rewrite. She noted that one item involved a review of energy issues by the Sustainable Energy Resource Group (SERG), and said that TRORC had money from another grant that would pay for SERG's consulting services.

There was a brief discussion of the meaning of "Village Center Designation" and the benefits it would provide. Sally explained that all businesses within a designated village center area were eligible to apply for tax credits for work that they had done to "invest" in their own business; for example, by upgrading their building. The state has a list of eligible investments. She will send details to the members. Designating village centers in a town plan is not required by the state, but discussing whether to do it is a task in the MPG plan. In those meetings, people could also discuss the nature of the villages (see Liora's category of comments, above).

Sally then went down each of the tasks on her time line, briefly explaining some of the details of each. Sally will work with TRORC and the relevant committees (SERG, Conservation Committee, etc.) to complete the outside reviews by January or February of 2012.

Regarding the chapters of the town plan that are not specifically mentioned on the MPG plan, Sally said that TRORC will continue to provide support for those rewrites after the MPG schedule (and a first draft of the new plan) has been completed in May 2012.

There was a brief discussion of the job of creating and maintaining revisions to the town plan digital files. Sally said that a TRORC intern would enter changes and maintain drafts in the proper format.

Regarding the comments on the old plan submitted by TRORC, Liora noted that the changes required by new state law could be incorporated quickly, but that all other comments would require input from townspeople before the commission could decide whether and how to revise existing policies. Summarizing the basic steps: Get input from the town, SERG, etc. now, prepare a partial draft by Feb/March of 2012, then divide into subcommittees to continue with the remaining chapters, as listed in Sally's draft timeline.

Before leaving, Sally said that there is information and guidelines on emergency resources and planning available on the TRORC web site. Sally left the meeting at 9:00 PM.

#### 7. Driveway Section of the Draft Zoning Bylaw (9:00 PM)

Kevin said that the report accompanying the draft zoning bylaw needed to be amended to refer to the changes in the driveway standards, because the change to the maximum slope was a substantive change. Not knowing which language was in the latest draft (the selectboard's revised language or the new language proposed by the commission at its last meeting) made writing the amended report difficult. The commission is responsible for providing the report (since it is their bylaw), and the selectboard is responsible for distributing the report (since it is their hearing). It must be available at the town clerk's office by the day of the hearing. Liora suggested amending the date on the report and stating that the maximum allowed slope had been increased from 12% to 15%. Liora proposed a simpler statement: "The selectboard has made a change to the driveway slope requirement." Rick moved this language be accepted and that the date and title be amended. Patrick seconded; the vote was unanimous in favor.

Terry offered to sit in on the workgroup developing final language to propose at the hearing.

Liora left the meeting at 9:10 PM.

#### 6. Town Plan, Workgroup reports

Terry referred to the document he had emailed on 9/5, further defining and describing Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Programs. Patrick asked for more clarification regarding the difference between an Objective and a Program. Terry explained that a Program was a series of related Objectives and the tasks necessary to achieve the objectives. He asked the members if the document provided enough structure and process to direct the rewriting of the chapters of the town plan? He asked them to read it through carefully and suggest improvements. Kevin said it thought it was a good starting point that could be edited as work on the plan proceeds. Terry said he will also get feedback from Sally before she leaves TRORC.

There was a brief discussion of the workload required to maintain the drafts of the new Town Plan. Kevin said he would check with Stuart Blood regarding his experience in

maintaining the drafts of the Zoning Bylaw. Kevin's sense was that the Town Plan wouldn't be as complicated.

8. Old Business (9:26)

None.

9. New Business

None.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission