

**Thetford Planning Commission**  
**June 5, 2012 – APPROVED Minutes**

Present: Kevin O'Hara, Patrick Kearney, Terry Longo, Liora Alschuler, Michael Schunk (7:30),  
Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: Patricia Norton

Guests: None

(Numbers below refer to agenda items)

1. Kevin O'Hara called the meeting to order at 7:16 p.m.

2. Public Comment - None

4. Selectboard report - None

4. Review of the Minutes of 5/15/12

The minutes were accepted as amended.

5. Zoning Administrator applicants discussion (7:24)

Dean Whitlock left the meeting.

The commission went over the resumes and discussed the applicants for Zoning Administrator. There were 8, several of whom were very experienced. Four were chosen to forward to a still-to-be-formed interview committee. Donn Downey has suggested that the interview committee include 2 Planning Commission members, 2 Development Review Board members, one Selectboard member, and the Zoning Administrator Assistant, Diane Osgood. By law, new Zoning Administrators are supposed to be submitted to the Selectboard by the Planning Commission; however, it was felt that input from the DRB and assistant would be good to have, since they must deal with the ZA on a day-to-day basis. Michael and Kevin volunteered to serve on the interview committee.

Dean returned to the meeting.

6. Town Plan (8:17)

a. Review regional plan - tabled.

b. Plan chapters

Transportation (first reading) - Patrick had emailed his first draft rewrite. He reported that he had spoken to the former Road Commissioner about data for the tables and learned that no new roads were added and no existing roads dropped to Class 4, so the mileage figures in the first table were still valid. Regarding tables 2 and 3 (highway expenditures and town highway maintenance costs), Patrick had found the new figures except for total moneys voted, which he would be able to get from the Town Clerk soon. He would then calculate the remaining

percentages and costs per mile. There was a brief discussion about whether to remove the old figures (2000-2004), so the table would show only 2005-2010 (the latest year available), or to keep the old data and expand the table to encompass 2000-2010. The sense of the meeting was that having the entire range of years was helpful when looking at growth trends. Patrick then went down through the chapter, discussing each of the changes or issues he had uncovered.

In the Safety section, there was mention of statistics about "High Accident Locations" from the VT Department of Transportation (VTRANS), but Patrick had not been able to find any such report on the VTRANS web site. The current town plan says there are no Thetford Roads on this list and identifies state standards for driveway access on state highways, recommending that these standards be applied to all driveways. The plan also describes two intersections in town as being dangerous (Rt. 113 at Rt. 5; Rt. 113 at Houghton Hill/Academy Road) and the commissioners identified a third (Rt. 113 at Rt. 244). The first two are discussed in detail in the town plan, with specific suggestions for ways to alleviate danger. This led to a discussion of whether there was a need for clear data indicating unsafe conditions (i.e., number of accidents) before taking corrective action and also whether the details of distances etc. were appropriate to include in the plan. Patrick will continue to look for accident data. He will also research how many of the recommendations regarding driveway and intersection safety had already been incorporated into the zoning bylaw and other town regulations or policies (e.g., trimming shrubbery at intersections). Several other references in regard to road standards and traffic generators that may already have been adopted were noted for Patrick to research with the subdivision regulation working group.

Liora pointed out the distinction between describing what currently existed in the town and what the plan foresaw or recommended for the future. In the Land Use chapter, these are two distinct sections. Patrick said he preferred to see the current/future for each issue placed together, so he would not have to refer back and forth.

Patrick had added a new section about the increase in bicycling, not only for recreation but also for commuting as gas prices rise. One part of this encouraged town support for an inter-village trail system that was bicycle friendly and kept open all year long. Terry referred Patrick to the trail master plan and working group to get their plans. Another part included a recommendation that the town install four-foot-wide paved shoulders on Routes 5 and 113. Michael brought up the up-coming improvements to Rt 113 over Houghton Hill and said it would be a shame if the town did not put in wide shoulders as part of this project. He said his inquiries about this with a member of the selectboard had met with the response that it was too expensive. This led to a discussion about the difference between policies (which encourage consideration of actions that should be done, such as installing wide shoulders) and recommendations (which specify that certain actions shall be done, such as requiring driveways that access town roads to use state highway driveway access standards).

Patrick will create a second draft to review at a future meeting, along with the rest of the goals, policies, and recommendations.

Housing (characterization) - Michael reported that he had gone through the tables and now has data for 2001-2010. The commissioners again voiced a preference for adding the new years to the table along with the old years so trends could be tracked. Michael noted that there were

some data that referred to types of dwellings that were very outdated (those without plumbing, for example). The numbers were so few, that it seemed unnecessary to keep those items in the tables. He said he wanted to incorporate the information from the Senior and Affordable Housing Committee and was referred to Dale Gephart as the best person to contact. He will prepare a draft revision for a later meeting.

Land Use (partial first reading) - Liora said that she was still awaiting the new data and would consider bringing the tables up to 2010, retaining the earlier years as had been discussed. She didn't know if 2010 data would be available. She pointed out text that will be updated from the new zoning bylaw and flood plain regulations. She went over several changes she had made in the Future sections regarding Land Capability, Natural Resource and Open Space Protection, and Business Development. Patricia had emailed a question regarding the description of "good access" as applied to Post Mills (regarding small business development). There was a brief discussion of how good the access was in terms of distance from I-91. The commissioners quickly scanned her first pass at Goals, Policies, and Recommendations and responded favorably. She will prepare a second draft for a later meeting.

7. Old Business - None. (9:52)

8. New Business

1. Kevin referred to a memo sent by Tara Bamford, the town's representative to the regional planning commission, asking for nominations for a Thetford resident to join the Upper Valley River Subcommittee. Linda Matteson is the only current representative from Thetford, the other having recently resigned. The subcommittee advises permitting authorities of Vermont and New Hampshire on matters affecting the Connecticut River in our local region. The Planning Commission is to submit names to Donn Downey. Representatives should represent at least one of six categories: riverfront landowner, local government, local business, agriculture, recreation, and conservation. Several names were mentioned, and Kevin asked the commissioners to send other suggestions to him in the next few days.

2. Terry Longo reported that he will be living in St. Johnsbury for the next two years, beginning in mid August, and felt he must resign from the commission. The news was met with expressions of great regret. Kevin expressed the hope that this would be a hiatus rather than a permanent departure, or that maybe Terry could take part long-distance. There was a brief discussion of who might take over his chapters in the plan rewrite but no decision was made.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission