

Thetford Planning Commission
September 4, 2012 – APPROVED Minutes

Present: Kevin O'Hara, Patrick Kearney, Patricia Norton, Liora Alschuler, Liz Cole (7:27), Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: Michael Schunk

Guests: None

(Numbers below refer to agenda items)

1. Kevin called the meeting to order at 7:21 p.m.

2. Public Comment - None

4. Review of the Minutes of 8/21/12

Liz Cole joined the meeting (7:27)

The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard report - None

5. Discussion – Reassignment of Terry Longo's Chapters (7:32)

Terry had been assigned two chapters: Education and Historic Resources. Kevin asked if Liz felt she was able and willing to take on both. Liz had a number of questions about the schedule and the level of detail in Thetford's Town Plan (compared to some New Hampshire Town Plans she had reviewed) and what that reflected about past decisions made by the Planning Commission to include so much. Kevin reviewed the activities of the commission over the past year, noted that Liora was the only current member remaining from the previous rewrite of the Town Plan, and briefly went over the current timeline, which aims for hearings on a final draft in November or December. He also noted that the timeline leaves many loose ends and no buffer. Liora discussed the current state of the drafting process, and there was a discussion of the sources of input for changes (including current zoning, open houses, and town plans of abutting towns). There was also a discussion of Thetford's relationship with the Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) and other state resources, such as the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and Agency of Natural Resources. Liz also asked about training possibilities; Kevin explained there were some, but they were catch as catch can. Finally, Kevin gave a brief summary of what the two chapters covered and Terry's latest report on his progress.

Liz accepted the assignment of both chapters, on condition that they weren't both on the agenda for the next meeting. Kevin assured her that only the Historic Resources chapter was up at this time.

6. Town Plan (7:48)

a. Scenic Resources – Characterize (Liora) – Liora said she was not yet ready to discuss Goals, Policies, and Recommendations but had comments to make and changes to suggest regarding the narrative. She proceeded to go through the narrative item by item. There was a lengthy discussion of scenic byways, views, ridgelines, steep slopes, and what to recommend and encourage in terms of preserving these features. The town's Telecommunications Bylaw and Driveway Standards regarding emergency vehicle access both affect development that would impact views. It was noted that it can be difficult to define ridgelines and also to balance priorities (e.g., on some parcels it might be preferable to build on a slope in order to preserve prime agricultural land on the flats). The discussion also covered the conflict between setting objective, measurable criteria as opposed to aesthetic criteria (which the commission has historically chosen not to do). It has proven easier to achieve general consensus with objective criteria. There was a brief discussion of lighting standards and Liora coordinating on such issues with Patricia to include appropriate cross-references to the Natural Resources chapter.

b. Utilities – 2nd Reading (Kevin) – Kevin handed out copies of the draft that he had emailed earlier that evening. He said the chapter will need another reading after this one, and more likely two. He highlighted the changes from the first reading, as a summary for Liz. There was a discussion of the differences between the terms "town facilities" (currently used to mean owned by the town) and "community facilities" (owned by other organizations in town but open for use by the general population of the town; for example, some of the churches and the old school houses owned by local community associations). The discussion included how best to describe churches.

Liora and Patricia took great exception to the first paragraph in section C, Town and Community Services, which made a useless comparison between Thetford and urban areas and seemed to imply that all Thetford offered to its residents was solid waste removal. Kevin noted that the paragraph had been penned by TRORC. He said he planned to write a new introduction to the section. There was a discussion of septic systems and the effect on development caused by the new state regulations and the transfer of regulation to state inspectors in 2007. The consensus of opinion was that the effect on the town had not been extreme.

There was a discussion of emergency services and the possible need to update the description based on the effects of Hurricane Irene and the comments taken at Open Houses about resilience and residents helping residents. Kevin will check with the Fire Chief. There were brief discussions about healthcare facilities and childcare facilities and the need to focus on actual Thetford numbers, as well as what's available in neighboring towns. Finally, there was a discussion of combining the small section on business development into the larger section in the Land Use Chapter. The commissioners agreed that the Land Use chapter was a more appropriate place for the business development chapter. Goals, Policies, and Recommendations were left to the next reading.

c. Transportation – 2nd read (Patrick) – Patrick noted that a new state law required class 4 roads to be inventoried, mapped, and submitted to VTrans or they would revert to private ownership. Kevin said he would check with the selectboard to see what action they were taking with regard to this. Patrick went down the table of mileages by type of road, noting that it now

reflected the state's mileage data and that the stretch of I-91 in town had been removed from the table (not from the town - it's still there). There was a discussion of the tables of annual budgets and expenditures; the column labels were confusing and some of the numbers didn't seem to add up, so Patrick will check those.

7. Old Business (9:46)

Kevin went over the timeline and pointed out which chapters would be on the next meeting's agenda.

8. New Business – None.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission