

**Thetford Planning Commission**  
**November 6, 2012 – APPROVED Minutes**

Present: Kevin O'Hara, Patricia Norton, Michael Schunk, Patrick Kearney, Liz Ryan Cole (7:20), Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: Liora Alschuler

Guests: None

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Kevin called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of the Minutes of 10/16/12

The minutes had been taken by Patrick in Dean's absence. They were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard report

There was no report. Patricia asked how often there was a report. Kevin provided background on the situation, which is currently that the selectboard liaison, Donn Downey, has asked to be invited at any time the commissioners feel his input would be useful, rather than his coming to every meeting. Kevin said he planned to ask Donn soon, and more frequently, to make sure there was a reliable line of communication.

Liz joined the meeting.

5. Subdivision (brief discussion re: future meeting) (7:20)

Kevin gave background regarding the makeup of the workgroup and their task to make recommendations to the Planning Commission for revising the subdivision regulations. He reported that they had been stymied on the road regulations for awhile but are again moving forward, wrapping up the substantive issues. (The rest of the regulations are legal boilerplate.) The workgroup feels that now is the time to bring the draft to the Planning Commission for their reaction. Mary Ellen Parkman, the Zoning Administrator, has raised some questions regarding property line adjustments (instead of full subdivision proceedings). The current regulations (passed in 1995) are out of date and unclear. Tim Taylor, chair of the Development Review Board (DRB) has also raised specific concerns in a recent subdivision about noise levels. Kevin would like to schedule time at the next meeting (11/20) with both of them. The subdivision regulations are out of sync with both the Zoning Bylaw and the Town Plan, but Kevin is concerned about the challenge of finishing both of them in parallel. He will send the draft to the commissioners so they will have a chance to review before the next meeting, then all can discuss options for getting it finished after the meeting with Mary Ellen and Tim.

## 6. Town Plan (7:34)

a. Housing - 2nd Read (Michael): Michael reported that he had not gotten a lot done due to work commitments. He described his meeting with the Senior and Affordable Housing Committee and their consultant regarding the Malmquist Mill site. That site now appears to be the most suitable for development. The mills site is not a serious brownfield, but the town/committee can't get funding for the cleanup until there is a formal purchase/sale agreement with the owner. The owner appears to still be willing, so that is the next step. The consultant's analysis has indicated that 15 units would fit on the piece, but there is a good possibility that density adjustments related to leaving open space in the steep and narrow areas could allow for a few more units. The S&AH committee and Thetford Elder Network are proceeding with their plan to create a non-profit organization to allow fund-raising. They have support from the town (though no funds from the town). Michael said there are still many questions to be answered, but he can begin to synthesize this information into the Housing chapter.

Michael said the source tables for this chapter have not been updated with 2010 census data, and it is proving difficult to find the same data (number of residences without toilets, for example). There was a brief discussion of changes made in the data and reporting of the 2010 census. Michael has tried to reach the Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) about this but has yet to receive a reply to his queries. Liz suggested a couple of possible resources and offered to take Michael to a breakfast presentation by the Upper Valley Housing Coalition. This item will be rescheduled to a later meeting.

b. Regional Relationships (8:50) - 2nd read (Patrick): Patrick went over the latest changes, noting that Norwich's town plan labeled Union Village as a hamlet rather than as a village, but that the description matched our description of a village, so our two plans seem to be compatible. There was a discussion of potential problems that might arise if our plan does not include all of the suggestions made by TRORC, particularly regarding the boundaries of the Post Mills village district. They want to decrease the length of the district along the two main roads (113 and 244), arguing that the current boundaries encourage sprawl. Dean noted that the district was expanded slightly in the most current zoning bylaw to include an isolated wedge at the Lake Fairlee end of the West Fairlee town line. The other lines were not changed. There was a long discussion of the need to carefully explain to TRORC why the boundaries should stay as they are, including the fact that the residents of the village have not shown any interest in changing them. Liz suggested that the commission hold a meeting in Post Mills, inviting all village residents and representatives from TRORC (with their large map showing their proposed boundaries). Patricia and Dean volunteered to organize the meeting. She will contact the village residents who organized their open house last spring, and Dean will contact the minister of the Post Mills church to find out what dates in January would work.

Liz asked why Lyme was not included in the discussion of neighboring towns. There was some discussion about it being in New Hampshire and not technically in our Vermont planning region (TRORC). Everyone acknowledged that there was a clear relationship between Thetford and Lyme - TA students, use of the businesses, commuter link, etc. Liz suggested adding a sentence acknowledging Lyme's presence at least. This will be followed-up in old business at the next meeting.

c. Education - 1st read (Liz): Liz explained the changes she was making and what was still needed, asking for guidance. She reported that Thetford Academy is still redoing their own strategic plan, which may not be completed by the time we wrap up the Town Plan. We will have to include what we can. She said the current Town Plan lists two challenges to education, and she asked the commissioners to weigh in on whether they were still challenges: Are the schools adequately preparing Thetford's children for their adult lives, and are the funding models at the state level working? After some discussion, the sense of the meeting was that the first issue of adequate preparation is always an important challenge and should be included, while the second issue was not such a challenge any more. (Act 60 seems to be working.) There was also discussion of a third issue/challenge to include: decreasing enrollments. The sense was that this was a big issue now and needed to be addressed. Liz also brought up how the education chapter cross references to other chapters (for example, facilities and utilities). There was some discussion of including mention of access to higher education, continuing education, and preschooling. Finally, Liz brought up the issue of the importance of broadband Internet access for residents who want post-secondary education at home or in low-residency programs. Liz said she will get final descriptions from the town's schools and would be ready to discuss the chapter again in December.

## 7. Old Business (8:53)

a. Kevin reviewed the timeline. Liz reported that she would be absent on December 18. Kevin reminded everyone to send comments to Michael on the Energy chapter and to Patricia on Natural Resources.

b. There was a brief discussion of the various definitions of Goals, Policies, and Recommendations, which Patrick and Kevin had emailed on 10/17 and 10/18, respectively. The commissioners agreed that the final version (Patrick's email) was the best.

8. New Business (8:58)

Liz suggested using the 5th Tuesday in January (1/29/13) as the date for the village meeting in Post Mills.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission