

Thetford Planning Commission
February 19, 2013 – APPROVED Minutes

Present: Patricia Norton, Patrick Kearney, Liora Alschuler, Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: Kevin O’Hara, Michael Schunk, Liz Ryan Cole

Guests: None

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Patricia called the meeting to order at 7:22 p.m.

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of the Minutes of 2/5/13

The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard report: None

5. Review Notes from Post Mills meetings (7:32)

The notes were approved for distribution.

6. Town Plan (7:45)

a. Land Use - Liora: Liora referred the commission to the revision that she had sent by email 2/18. The major areas of change involved language regarding the boundaries of the Post Mills Village district and revised data in the three tables, copies of which had been sent in a separate email on the 19th.

The new language relating to the Post Mills Village district is in the section titled “The Future.” It is a response to two forums held in Post Mills and provides recommendations for adjusting the district boundaries to align more closely to the regional plan while still remaining appropriate to the unique qualities of Post Mills and the desires of the residents. The recommendations made in the Town Plan will direct changes to the town zoning map and Zoning Bylaw. The first change is the addition of this statement to address the concern over sprawl: “Thetford must plan for both sparsely and closely settled areas to minimize sprawl, preserve open space and privacy, and offer neighborhood living with the associated benefits and services.” This was followed by a new subsection, titled “Zoning Districts,” that reads: “TRORC has recommended differentiation within Post Mills to create two separate districts: a village center reflecting current Village Residential land use and a village periphery where close residential settlement is the norm and commercial development is more restrictive than in the town center. This differentiation should encourage commercial development in the village center and discourage sprawl outward from the village. Such differentiation should respect prominent village features such as the airport and church and the residents’ view of the effective limits of

the town center. Differentiation within Post Mills would entail renaming the current “Village Residential” districts to something like “Village Center” districts while reserving the term “Village Residential” to the newly created special area away from the village center of Post Mills.” There was also a specific recommendation added in the Goals/Policies/Recommendations section: “6. Differentiate between the village center of Post Mills and a newly created village residential area.” After a brief discussion, the members present expressed their agreement with the language.

Liora pointed out a few highlighted areas where additional research was needed, then passed around printed copies of the new tables. These show Taxable Property by Type, Approved Subdivisions, and Zoning Permits Issued, and now contain data up to 2011. Liora pointed out areas of interest, such as a major jump in residential properties between 1997 and 2005, which seems to be the result of a reclassification of Vacation properties and Miscellaneous properties to Residential. Whether this is this case is a question to address to the Listers. She pointed out questions and comments she had made on the table of properties, as a reference for the person who will be taking over this chapter after her term expires on Town Meeting Day. She noted that this was her last meeting and pointed out that there was very little left to be done on the land use chapter. There was a brief discussion of some of the questions and outstanding items, but the members present felt it would be better to wait for a later meeting with more members present before having a detailed discussion.

b. Implementation - Patrick (8:20): Patrick referred to the revision he had emailed to the group on January 27. The major change was the addition of a paragraph explaining the purpose of Act 250 and how the act affects development in Thetford. Dean suggested that he add a reference to the source for the paragraph (the website URL). With the addition of that paragraph, the chapter is finished, and there was a discussion of the approval process for the benefit of Patricia and Patrick, who were not members during the revision of the Zoning Bylaw. At a future meeting, the chapter will have a final reading for provisional approval, after which it will be distributed to appropriate groups for outside review.

7. Old Business (8:30) - None.

8. New Business

a. March 5 meeting: The members decided to meet on March 5 (voting day). Patricia will contact Peter Blodget to see if it’s possible to meet at the Latham Library.

b. Patricia noted the announcement from Donna Panella regarding an up-coming Act 250 hearing about a request to install wifi towers on Gove Hill. There was a brief discussion of who might be able to attend.

c. Patricia noted the request for comments on the Wilder Dam relicensing from Samatha Holcomb of the regional commission, and the comment sent in from Li Shen of the Conservation Commission. Liora reminded the commissioners of previous comments made by Bob Walker of the Energy Committee, which believes it would be in the town’s interest to have these dams be

under more local control (local/regional/state). Patricia said she would draft a response and run it by Bob and Dean for review before sending it to Ms. Holcomb.

d. Dean moved that Liora be given a vote of commendation for her grounded service to the town for so many years. The vote in favor was unanimous. Liora replied, for the record, that she is happy to be leaving, because she knows the Planning Commission is in such good hands.

In her last official act, Liora moved to adjourn. Patrick seconded, and the vote was again unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission