

Thetford Planning Commission
March 5, 2013 – APPROVED Minutes

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Patricia Norton, Patrick Kearney, Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: Michael Schunk, Liz Ryan Cole

Guests: None

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

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

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of the Minutes of 2/19/13

The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard report: None

5. Town Plan (7:22)

a. Utilities Chapter - Kevin: Kevin referred to the version that he had emailed on 3/3. Patricia had added comments to the Word document on 3/5. Kevin said that, following the last discussion of this chapter, he had accepted most of the previous changes. This evening, he went down through the chapter to discuss the new changes and the comments that Patricia had made. The group identified areas that need clarification from the organizations responsible for certain buildings or services (e.g., needed more information about the daycare being operated at the Post Mills Church). He will also look for more information about public hiking trails and town-owned tracts of land. There was no discussion yet of the Goals, Policies, and Recommendations. Kevin said he had been separating them into subtopics and would have a draft ready for discussion by the next meeting. He said he was looking forward to the group’s reactions to them.

There was a discussion on the cemeteries in town. There were some possible errors in the current list, both in the names and areas given. Kevin will check with the cemetery commissioners. There was also a discussion of whether the chapter needed a more in-depth discussion of septage treatment (what to do with the stuff that is pumped from septic tanks). Given the lack of sewage treatment facilities in the town, this is potentially a topic of future concern. Patrick reported on information he had received from the Zoning Administrator, Mary Ellen Parkman, who is certified in that field. She indicated that the engineering and regulatory requirements for septage treatment by spreading or in ponds etc. are so extensive that it would be premature to elaborate on the topic in the Town Plan.

b. Energy - Michael: This was postponed due to Michael’s absence.

6. Town Plan - Going Forward (8:15)

Kevin said it was time to review the status of each chapter, along with the other parts of the Town Plan that would need review and revision (Purpose, Background, etc.). After a quick listing of the extra items, Kevin went down the list of chapters, briefly noting the status of each one.

Land Use - There was a brief discussion of who would take over the chapter now that Liora's term had expired. Patricia volunteered to follow-up with Liora about what changes remained to be completed and to take it on. She will report back on April 2.

Transportation is essentially done. Patrick will contact Tig Tillinghast to get help with the tables.

Utilities is very close to being finished, with just a few items identified at this meeting, plus the Goals, Policies, and Recommendations. It will be discussed at the April 2 meeting

Historical Resources: Liz is away until early April. We will get a better idea when she returns, so will put it on the agenda for the April 16 meeting.

Natural Resources has gone through several revisions and has momentum. It will be discussed at the April 2 meeting.

Scenic Resources is essentially done.

Education is in the same situation as Historical Resources; we await Liz's return and will discuss this at the April 16 meeting.

Energy still needs a lot of work. It is greatly expanded from the version in the current Town Plan, and Michael is working with the Energy Committee to trim out a lot of background detail that should be referred to rather than spelled out. We will discuss it at our next meeting.

Housing: Michael is also making headway here. It will be discussed at the April 16 meeting.

Kevin will update the timeline and send it around.

There was a discussion of the value of sending separate chapters out for review by appropriate bodies before incorporating them all into the full document. Past experience doing this with the Zoning Bylaw indicates that it does not always result in much response from the Selectboard, though Dean noted that the regional planning commission always provided detailed feedback eventually. The discussion then focused on how to get input from the general public before the warned hearings. The sense of the meeting was that this would result in useful feedback and also reveal areas of concern. It would be best to clearly invite townspeople to meetings where a near-final draft of a chapter was on the agenda and to post each chapter in PDF format on the Planning Commission page on the town web site before the invitation went out. The Town Clerk should also have the digital file available to print for people who come to the Town Hall in search of a copy. Each new draft should be clearly labeled with chapter title, date, and the label "Working Draft," both in the file name and in the text.

7. Old Business (9:03) - None.

8. New Business

Kevin notified the members of the upcoming 68th Annual Town Officers' Education Conferences, to be held in April. He passed around the brochure in case any members were interested in the planning workshops being offered.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission