

**Thetford Planning Commission**  
**May 7, 2013 – APPROVED Minutes**

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Patrick Kearney, Liz Ryan Cole, Michael Schunk, Dean Whitlock  
(Recording Clerk)

Absent: Patricia Norton

Guests: None

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Kevin called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m.

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of the Minutes of 4/16/13

The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard report: None

5. Town Plan

a. Energy Chapter. Due to a problem with email, the latest revision, which Michael had sent that day, did not arrive. Michael reported that he had incorporated the changes from the last discussion of the chapter. He had also made some typographical changes supplied by Dean. Dean had also made some suggestions for changes to the text. Michael read the changes to the commissioners to get their feedback and additional suggestions.

The intent of most of the changes was to remove wording that expressed opinions rather than facts or was not applicable to Thetford’s energy resources and needs. This served to make the chapter more succinct. Liz referred to the recent national controversy over the large quantities of natural gas that are now accessible through the use of fracking. Kevin pointed to the guidance document from the Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC), which directs planners to be aware of issues that are political and to take the “safest” approach by focusing on goals that save money for the community and residents. Kevin said he was not averse to expressing opinions, but the focus should be on town issues, not national and state policy. Michael noted that the plan names many opportunities for wise energy use no matter what sources are available.

Regarding the appendix of information about energy production and state/national issues, Kevin said he felt it was too long to include in the Town Plan except as a reference and suggested proposing to the Energy Committee that they maintain the document for people who are interested in more detail. Michael said he would propose that to them.

Michael reported that the Energy Committee had been in favor of keeping the list of town bodies responsible for each of the policies and recommendations in the chapter. They had taken

the idea from the first draft of the Natural Resources Chapter. That list has already been removed, but Michael didn't want to remove it from the Energy Chapter without first getting the opinion of the Energy Committee.

Michael then continued his reading of specific changes and questions about some of the suggestions Dean had made. The commissioners noted several places where the text was slanted by opinion and even "ominous" in tone. Liz asked about the editing process, proposing that a second person be assigned to each chapter to review the text for factuality, opinionated wording, tone, grammatical errors, etc. rather than doing it in the group process. Kevin said he felt it was important to discuss what the group as a whole wanted to put into the plan. Dean noted there would be final copy-editing, but the more people who considered the text, the better it would be for the final product.

Points of discussion included:

What is the allowable height for towers to support private residential-scale wind generators? The Zoning Bylaw refers to 30 VSA 248, which Liz looked up. It states that towns cannot pass regulations that would limit an individual's ability to make use of renewable energy sources.

What is the fate of the dam just upstream of the old Malmquist Mills site in Post Mills? The table in the chapter lists the potential kWh capacity of all of the town's dam sites except that one. Dean said he remembered hearing a comment by Li Shen of the Conservation Commission that that dam was likely to be removed in order to reestablish natural water flow. Michael said its impoundment was being considered as a water source for the proposed Senior/Affordable Housing project there. He will check with Li about her comment.

Energy audits have been completed on all municipal buildings. The wording should be changed to encourage the town to follow-through on all of the improvements recommended in the audit reports.

The PACE loans are being roadblocked by the big federal lenders, who want to maintain first position on defaulted mortgages. This will have to play out at the national level.

There is a statement recommending the creation of a capital budget for energy. Michael needs to verify the reliability of the statement. Kevin suggested checking with selectboard members Stuart Rogers or Donn Downey.

The discussion continued through the Goals and Policies, leaving the Recommendations still to be discussed at a future meeting. Michael will incorporate all of the suggestions made at this meeting and send around a new draft.

## 6. Town Plan -Further discussion of the process

a. Review Timeline and work on some overall draft publishing goals. Draft publishing goals were tabled due to Patricia's absence. Liz said the Historical Resources Chapter was ready for review at the next meeting. Kevin said he will be absent on May 21 and briefly went down the timeline.

7. Old Business - None.

8. New Business - None.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission