

Thetford Planning Commission
May 21, 2013 – APPROVED Minutes

Present: Patricia Norton, Liz Ryan Cole, Michael Schunk, Patrick Kearney (7:48), Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: Kevin O'Hara

Guests: Donn Downey

(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 5/7/13

The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard report: Donn Downey joined the meeting. There was no formal report. Patricia asked Donn if, based on the new draft ATV ordinance, he could comment on the section of the Natural Resources chapter that mentions ATVs and off-road vehicles. Donn explained that the current draft of the ATV ordinance is intended to address the original request from a resident to permit access to property on a Class 4 section of a Class 3 road. There was a brief discussion of the mention of ATVs in the Natural Resources chapter. Those present agreed that the ATV ordinance and the current language in the Town Plan did not affect each other. Michael then asked Donn about the capital improvement budget language in the Energy Chapter. Donn said he had not seen the latest draft of that chapter, but that there was currently no capital improvement plan for the Town Hall or Town Garage. Michael explained that the language in the Energy Chapter related to budgeting to implement the improvements for energy efficiency listed in the recently completed energy audit of town buildings. He will send a copy of the chapter to Donn to review. Donn Downey left the meeting.

5. Town Plan

a. Historic Resources. Liz referred to the draft chapter that she had sent via email on Monday, 5/20. The members reported that the message had not been delivered for some reason, but they were able to follow along on the previous draft or by getting online. There was a discussion of the quote by Yogi Berra about the value of planning, which replaced the original quote by Daniel Boorstein about value of considering history when planning. The main discussion centered on the Goals, Policies, and Recommendations. (Patrick joined the meeting at this time.) Because Liz had not been on the commission at the time that these terms were defined, there was a lengthy discussion about how they applied to planning and how they compared to the terms suggested by the Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Planning

Commission (TRORC), as well as to terms used in other planning contexts (e.g., grant proposals). The other members provided some examples to help clarify the use of the terms.

There followed a discussion of the usefulness of comparing the Thetford Town Plan to the Town Plans from several other Vermont towns of similar size. Patricia provided a list, which included Norwich (larger) and Fairlee (smaller, but with a paid planner). Patricia noted that some of the plans had time lines illustrating the town's history. There was some discussion of including such a time line for Thetford, as well as including historical photos.

This led to a discussion of the purpose of the the Town Plan and the planning process, which came down to educating and finding consensus or a majority desire among the residents about how they wanted to town to look in five years, then putting that desire into directions that would achieve it. The members discussed briefly the efforts that had been made to reach out to the residents (open houses, village meetings, the recent Post Mills forums, working with appropriate town committees, etc.) and agreed to make this an agenda item at a future meeting when some of the draft chapters were ready for public review. Dean said he would locate the minutes from the earlier meeting when this topic was discussed.

The focus then returned to the Goals, Policies, and Recommendations in the current draft, which were essentially unchanged from the current Town Plan. The members began an analysis of each one in terms of their current applicability to the town's direction and also in light of the new definitions of the terms. There was a brief discussion of the current function and rules of the Thetford Hill Historic Preservation District (THHPD). There is a recommendation to explore creating similar districts for Thetford Center and Post Mills. Dean pointed out that Thetford Center's residents had turned down that offer several years ago and that the current situation in Post Mills regarding the proposed changes in land use districts made that an unlikely prospect. Michael suggested that Liz contact the current leaders of the THHPD for their input as well as members of the Thetford Historical Society.

b. Land Use. Patricia reported that she was not able to discuss the chapter yet because Liora had not been able to pass along the latest draft of the chapter and the list of items that still needed to be addressed.

6. Town Plan -Further discussion of the process

a. Review Timeline and work on some overall draft publishing goals. Patricia went over the timeline for the next few meetings. The June 4 meeting will include Utilities and the introductory pages, comparative Town Plans, and the process of bringing the draft chapters to the town for further review. The draft publishing goals were again postponed until all of the members were present.

7. Old Business - None.

8. New Business - None.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission