

Thetford Planning Commission
July 16, 2013 – APPROVED Minutes

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Patrick Kearney, Michael Schunk, Liz Ryan Cole (7:22), Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: Patricia Norton

Guests: Stuart Rogers (7:22)

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Kevin called the meeting to order at 7:18 p.m.

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of the Minutes of 7/2/13

The minutes were accepted as corrected.

4. Selectboard report:

None. Stuart asked what the Planning Commission needed at this time from the Selectboard. Kevin replied that review drafts of several chapters would soon be sent to the Selectboard for their review and comment. He explained that all appropriate town committees and the regional planning commission would also receive copies, and that copies would also be available on the town website and from the Town Clerk.

5. Town Plan

a. Review chapters for publication. Patricia had emailed formatted drafts of the Implementation, Relationship to Region, and Transportation chapters for a final review. The Implementation Chapter was ready to go. Detailed proofreading for all of them will wait until the final drafts for the public hearings. The Relationship to Region chapter was also ready to go as is.

The Transportation needed a closer review. Patrick reported that he had one more item to add regarding new bike parking provisions that the Selectboard had recently made and reported on the town listserv. These won’t go into this revision but will be put into the next one, along with changes due to comments from the public review. Kevin noted that the header did not match the format of the header in the Implementation Chapter. Dean will make sure they are consistent before publishing them on the town website and distributing them.

Dean reported that he had checked with the Town Clerk about her role in providing digital files or hard copy to people who couldn’t access them otherwise, and she had responded that she was ready and waiting.

Dean will write the announcement for the listserv and post it on the Planning Commission listserv so the other commissioners could comment before he posts it on the town listserv. Liz suggested that he use the Introduction as source text for the announcement. Patrick will send him

the latest revision to draw from. He said he would be able to post the chapters and announcement by next Tuesday.

Liz reported that she had come across what appeared to be a good article on how land use regulations can inadvertently interfere with energy efficiency projects. If it lives up to its promise, she will forward it to everyone once she has read the whole piece.

b. Land Use Review - discussion of this chapter was postponed again until Patricia could be present.

c. Scenic Resources - There were a number of changes suggested for the wording in the introductory paragraph, the description of the change to the Thetford Hill Historic Preservation Overlay District, to the section on views, and to the goals. There was a more lengthy discussion about the recommended publication on scenic resource preservation. It is 20 years old, but nothing newer appears to be available, and this is still the publication recommended by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. The Zoning Administrator was able to order a used copy online.

There was an even lengthier discussion of the final recommendation, on scenic viewscapes and ridgelines. Some rewording was suggested. Once Patrick has made the changes discussed this evening, he will send the chapter to Patricia to format for public review. She will then send it to Dean to include in the announcement and on the town website.

d. Energy Chapter (8:36) - Michael reviewed a correspondence he had had with Bob Walker, the chair of the Energy Committee, who had approached Michael about making the Energy Chapter even shorter. Michael went to the regional planning commission to confirm what information was absolutely required by the regional plan. There are only four required points regarding how energy is provided to the town: community needs, costs, resources, and renewables. The chapter could focus on these, and we could remove a lot of the rest. Given the Planning Commission's own deadline, Michael reported the requirements to the Energy Committee and gave them a tight deadline to decide if they wanted to take the time to make the chapter shorter.

Michael then led the discussion of the sections of the current revision of the chapter that remained to be reviewed by the commissioners. These included recommendations regarding changes to land use regulations, use of town-owned properties for sustainable community woodlots for firewood, and the possibility of a photovoltaic farm to offset electricity use in town facilities. Stuart reported that one was already being considered at the Elementary School to provide electricity for both the school and the town hall. One concern is that the town is not allowed to make a profit on such ventures. Dean pointed out that the town would not be selling electricity, and that any excess electricity would be channeled back into the power grid, running the town's meters backward for a credit but, again, not resulting in real income.

Michael said that the next step is to wait for the response from the Energy Committee. He will ask them to consider the current list of goals, policies, and recommendations as a guideline for what is required to be included in the chapter. Each of them should be supported by discussion in the narrative.

Kevin led a brief discussion of the chapters that would be on the agenda for the next meeting.

6. Old Business - None

7. New Business: None

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission