

Thetford Planning Commission
August 6, 2013 – APPROVED Minutes

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

Absent: Liz Ryan Cole

Guests: None

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Kevin called the meeting to order at 7:17 p.m.
2. Public Comment: None
3. Review of the Minutes of 7/16/13: The minutes were accepted as corrected.
4. Selectboard report: None
5. Town Plan
 - a. Response to published chapters - Dean reported that the chapters were not published yet. He had been trying to reach Tig Tillinghast with questions about the Web Site editing functions but had now sent a message to Donn Downey. Kevin suggested he included Stuart Rogers in all correspondence since Stuart was the commission’s liaison on the Selectboard. Dean said he also couldn’t find the email from Patricia with the latest draft of the Scenic Resources chapter and asked her to resend it. She did so immediately.
 - b. Land Use review - Patricia emailed the latest revision on August 5. It contained changes suggested by the Zoning Administrator and Dean. She has since received comments from Liz, who could not be present this evening, and has incorporated them. Referring to this latest revision, Patricia went from change to change, reading Liz’s suggested new text as well as the earlier changes. There were a number of changes that were discussed briefly and accepted as is, modified or rejected. Some specific points of concern:

Kevin suggested replacing the term “controlled” with “managed” and similar less rigid terms in several places.

There was a discussion of population growth trends and how best to describe them. It was decided simply to use the actual numbers rather than try to characterize them with terms that could appear to be opinions.

The description of the Land Use chapter (which is Chapter 1, the central chapter of the Plan) was clarified.

Michael pointed out that the table of taxable housing types uses different data sources than the housing tables in the Housing chapter. The Land Use tables use figures supplied by the

Listers, while the Housing tables use census data. The two cannot be compared directly, which might confuse readers. After some discussion, the commissioners agreed that the information being presented in each case required the different type of data. Rather than try to convert to a single data source, it was decided to clearly state the sources of the data.

The addition of agricultural land and forested land to the list of land capabilities led to many changes and also highlighted sections of the chapter that needed additional review.

There was a long discussion of the wording surrounding the recommendation to create a new land use district for the transition area between Village Residential and Rural Residential. The suggestion is to rename the current Village Residential to be “Village Center” and to name the new transitional district, which would allow less dense development and fewer commercial options, as “Village Residential.” Kevin noted that these were only suggestions and that the process of changing the Zoning Bylaw to implement these changes might result in different names being applied.

There was also a long discussion about including sections about how energy use and energy creation are affected by land use regulations. Much of this information is detailed in the Energy Chapter, but Michael pointed out that it was important to discuss the topic here, with cross references, since the Land Use chapter is the core chapter in the Plan.

The Business Development section and recommendations need more review, with input from residents who are experienced business people. The commissioners will send Patricia their recommendations of business people to reach out to. Kevin suggested that she also approach the regional planning commission for more information about what the Business Development sections should include.

c. Housing - Michael gave a brief update on his efforts to find data for the tables, his current area of focus. He reported that he had reviewed several other town’s plans, supplied by the regional planning commission, and that was helping him with his rewrite. He added that he had not received any response from the Energy Committee regarding a further trimming of the Energy Chapter.

d. Historic Resources - tabled due to Liz’s absence and the late hour.

Michael will not be able to attend the next meeting. Kevin said that Land Use would be on the agenda again, along with the Utilities Chapter.

6. Old Business - None

7. New Business: None

The meeting was adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission