

Thetford Planning Commission
November 5, 2013 – APPROVED Minutes

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Patrick Kearney, Michael Schunk, Patricia Norton, Liz Ryan Cole (7:25),
Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: None

Guests: Stuart Rogers, Li Shen (7:25-7:50)

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Kevin called the meeting to order at 7:23 p.m.
2. Public Comment: None
3. Review of Minutes from the 10/15 meeting.
 The minutes were accepted as amended.
 Li Shen joined the meeting. Liz Ryan Cole joined the meeting.

4. Selectboard Report

Stuart reported that the Selectboard had met recently in a Tri-Town meeting with the selectboards of Fairlee and West Fairlee to discuss the Lake Fairlee dam project. The current issue under discussion involves how real estate taxes of lake shore owners would change, if at all, were the the dam to fail and the lake shrink to its natural shorelines. This would affect most of the properties significantly, except for the shoreline in the cove fronting Camp Lochearn, which drops off precipitously. The repair of the dam is scheduled for 2015; however, there are still many legal hoops to go through before the work can begin.

Stuart reported that the Zoning Administrator, Mary Ellen Parkman, had run into problems with the current driveway permitting process. The driveway standards are printed on the permit application but are not in an ordinance or by-law, which means there is no formal appeal process. Kevin and Dean reviewed the process that resulted in the standards being removed from the Zoning By-law and put under the Selectboard’s sole responsibility. Several disagreements and complaints have come before the Zoning Administrator and at Selectboard meetings over permits.

Patricia asked what would happen to the ATV ordinance when the trial period ended in December. Stuart replied that it was on the Selectboard’s agenda, although a specific date for discussion hadn’t been set yet. The Selectboard can make it permanent without having further discussion or a town vote.

5. TRORC Workshop Possibilities (7:39)

Kevin laid out the flyers from Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) describe the planning workshops that were coming up. TRORC has offered to schedule

workshops in Thetford for us and surrounding towns if none of us are able to make it to the advertised workshops. Li Shen, chair of the Conservation Commission, reported that the Natural Resources workshop conflicted with the Conservation Commission's meeting date and time. Patricia, in charge of the Natural Resources chapter in the Town Plan, would also not be able to make the workshop. Dean and Liz both expressed interest in attending. Kevin will check with TRORC about scheduling a workshop in Thetford on January 14, 2014.

Stuart and Kevin are both interested in the Utilities/Facilities workshop but could not make the scheduled one. Kevin will check with TRORC about other dates already scheduled elsewhere or about scheduling a January date.

Kevin also presented a book on natural resources planning that he had received from the Vermont Natural Resources department (VNR). Li said she had also received one and had only had a chance to glance through it, but it was her impression that it dealt with most of the topics listed for the TRORC Natural Resources workshop. Patricia said if that was the case she would rather read the book than attend the workshop. There was discussion about the benefit of having other Thetford residents come to the workshop to hear what the experts had to offer, since almost all of the public comment so far had been related to the Natural Resources chapter. Kevin will ask TRORC how the workshop would differ from reading the book.

Li Shen left the meeting.

6. Town Plan

a. Historic Resources - Liz referred the commissioners to the latest revision of the chapter, which she emailed during the meeting. There was a brief delay due to a problem with the listserve. Kevin will make sure all of Liz's email addresses are known to the listserve. Liz then went down through the most recent changes. There were a few minor points of discussion and typographical errors to fix, after which the chapter was declared ready for public review. Patricia will put the document in the proper draft format and send it to Dean, who will post it on the Planning page of the town web site.

b. Housing - Michael referred the commissioners to the revision that he had emailed earlier that evening. He noted that the text had been rearranged as suggested at the last review. The members went through the chapter, noting changes that still needed to be made. There were several points of discussion, including the wording of the narrative explaining the rental statistics, the prices of residences shown in Table 4, and the details in the Affordable Housing and Elderly Housing sections, which were new. There was also a lengthy discussion of Goal 4, which is "To encourage the creation of additional rental properties throughout Town, provided that they do not put an undue burden on Town services and facilities." The sense of the meeting was that the narrative in the Rental section did not explain the rationale for this goal. Michael will make changes based on all of the suggestions and bring a new revision for review at the next meeting.

c. Facilities, Services, Utilities - Due to the late hour, this discussion was postponed to the next meeting. There was a brief discussion of what else would be on that agenda.

7. Old Business (9:35) - None.

8. New Business:

Patrick announced that he will not seek reappointment to the Commission when his term expires on Town Meeting Day. He and his wife are contemplating a move to be nearer to their children. He wanted to give a heads up in plenty of time so the commissioners could seek a replacement. The commissioners received the news with regret and thanked Patrick for the good work he had done so far in his term. Speaking for everyone, Kevin said he would be missed.

There was a very brief discussion of the other terms of office, few of which could be remembered right off the top of anyone's head.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission