

Thetford Planning Commission
December 17, 2013 – APPROVED Minutes

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Patrick Kearney, Michael Schunk, Patricia Norton, Liz Ryan Cole (7:27-8:45), Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: None

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 Minutes from the 12/3 meeting.
The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard Report: None.

5. Town Plan (7:24)

a. Facilities, Services, Utilities – Kevin referred the members to Revision 11, which the group had been working on two meetings past. The discussion picked up where it had left off, in the Goals, Policies, and Recommendations section, at the bottom of page 18.

Liz Ryan Cole joined the meeting.

The discussion started with Recommendation 2 under Cemeteries (consider expansion as needed...). Dean asked Kevin if he had any more information about the request from the Evergreen Cemetery Board that the town take over the Thetford Center Cemetery (behind the church and Town Hall). Kevin said no. There was a discussion about whether the language in the recommendation adequately covered the situation of the town taking over management of a cemetery, with no purchase of land required. The sense of the meeting was that the term “acquire” covered both purchasing new land and taking over existing cemetery property.

Several other recommendations required rewording for clarity.

Michael wondered if the goals/policies/recommendations on water quality should be moved to the Natural Resources chapter or vice versa. Currently, there is a cross reference to Natural Resources. After some discussion, it was decided that these goals referred specifically to potable water (wells and the aquifers around them), while the goals in the Natural Resources chapter applied to all of the water in Thetford. Having the discussion in both chapters, with cross references, makes sense.

There was a brief discussion of the duties of the health officer now that the State was responsible for approving septic systems.

Regarding Recommendation 3 under Solid Waste and Septage (study feasibility of curbside pickup), Dean asked if that had not already been done and, if so, has the solid waste situation changed enough to warrant repeating the study to see if it were feasible now. It was decided to leave the recommendation in.

There was a brief discussion of the location of the recycling center and the concept to move it and the town garage to a single location outside of the village center.

Patrick suggested that the goal under Police Protection (Maintain a visible police presence) was too vague. Kevin will clarify the intent. There was also a brief discussion of the police department's chronic need for more office space. Kevin will reword that recommendation also.

Regarding Fire and Emergency Services, Patrick suggested that there be a policy or recommendation that the town provide more support for the Fire Department, saying that, given what they did for the town, they shouldn't have to stop traffic once a year to ask for spare change. This led to a discussion of how the town already provided financial support for the department. Other fire department items discussed included providing support for education efforts and determining if the study of a wet hydrant system in East Thetford had been undertaken. Kevin will follow through on these two issues. Some of the other items were reworded slightly.

Liz Ryan Cole left the meeting.

Under Child Care, the Goal to Support private sector child care services and facilities was reworded by dropping the final qualifications. There was also some rewording suggested under Telecommunications and Recreation, and Recommendation 1 under /Recreation was changed to a policy. Also under Recreation, there was a discussion about the trail system and how it might conflict with some of the goals in the Natural Resources chapter. Finally, Recreation Recommendation 8 (cooperative development of an indoor recreation facility with neighboring towns) was removed in favor Recommendation 7 (Encourage the schools to make their facilities available to the community at large.)

Kevin said he will incorporate the suggestions and check on the questions raised. He expects the next revision to be ready for public review.

b. Housing (8:54) - Michael referred the members to the latest revision, which he had completed and emailed that afternoon. He had incorporated all of the changes suggested at the last review and filled in some more of the data. He pointed out one more change he needed to make, rearranging one paragraph. There was a lengthy discussion about the comparative percentages of vacation homes and second homes (seasonal, recreation, or occasional use) and how they differed according to the U.S. Census. Michael will clarify this in the next revision.

The Rental Housing section was much clearer but Patricia requested adding an explanation of why 30% of income was referred to as a guideline for affordable rents.

There was also a long discussion about the various levels of nursing homes and residential care facilities in the region. This section also needs further simplification to clarify its intent.

Discussion was stopped at the end of the narrative; Goals, Policies, and Recommendations will be discussed at the next meeting. Michael noted that Policy 8 and Recommendation 4, which referred to state energy codes for residences, were both new.

6. Old Business: None.

7. New Business: None

The meeting was adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Whitlock, Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission