

Thetford Planning Commission
May 6, 2014 – APPROVED Minutes

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Patricia Norton, Michael Schunk, Liz Ryan Cole (7:35), Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: None

Guests: Jessica Eaton (7:22)

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Kevin called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m.

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of Minutes from the 4/15 meeting.
The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard Report:

Jessica did not have a report. Kevin noted that the Selectboard had discussed the issue of Dean’s dual role on the Planning Commission as recording clerk (paid by the town) and as a voting member (volunteer town resident). They now understand that Dean’s presence as a voting member is regularly necessary in order to achieve a quorum and agree that the situation should continue until such time as another volunteer member steps forward. At that time, Dean will resign as an active member and continue on the commission solely as the recording clerk.

Patricia asked for the best email address to use to contact Jessica. It is her Selectboard address, which is j.eaton@thetfordvermont.us.

5. Town Plan (8:20)

a. Education - Tabled until Liz’s arrival. See below.

b. Forward - Dean reported that he now had the latest draft of the Forward, which Kevin had obtained from Patrick. The Forward still lacks descriptions for Land Use, Education, Historic Resources, and Scenic Resources. Patricia was surprised that the Land Use description wasn’t included, since she had sent a paragraph to Patrick before he left the board. She will find the file and send it to Dean. Liz will review the current draft and write descriptions for her two chapters. Dean will take over the Scenic Resources chapter from Patrick and write a description.

c. Comment Resolution Document (7:30) - Patricia referred the commissioners to the new comment resolution document that she had created and emailed to the planning listserve on April 23. This document was modeled after those created by Liora Alschuler for the previous Town

Plan revision and the Zoning Bylaw revision. She said there were two questions to answer: Does it do what we want, and how will we share it, edit it, etc.?

Kevin noted that the old comment documents that Liora created had Town Plan and Subdivision regulation comments that needed to be reviewed to make sure they had been dealt with. If not, they needed to be merged into this new document. The commissioners should review the old documents for comments that apply to their chapters.

Kevin went on to say that he sees the comment resolution document as a tool that the commissioners will use internally to record comments and the commission's response to each comment. They provide a record of if and how the comment was applied to the revision of the Town Plan or other regulation, and what response should be given to the commenter. They can be shared with other people but are primarily a working tool for the Planning Commission.

Liz Ryan Cole joined the meeting (7:35).

There was a discussion about the need to be able to clarify the meaning of a comment by asking the commenter. The original emails or other source needs to be easy to access.

There was a discussion about using Google Drive or Dropbox as a source archive for the comment document and the source emails. Patricia had set up Google Drive, so she directed the other members with Google accounts there. She quickly converted the comment document to the Google spreadsheet format, while leaving the source documents in read-only format. The system was tested by going through the comments sent in by Steve Page and Tig Tillinghast to determine which could be quickly dealt with and which would need a longer discussion and more involved response. There was a brief discussion of the categories used to group and select comments according to the response given to each. The list of categories was taken from the old comment documents. Patricia noted that the categories could be renamed or added to as needed.

As each of the comments was discussed, Patricia typed in the response and assigned the appropriate category. It was determined that some of Steve Page's comments had already been dealt with in the Town Plan and Zoning Bylaw. Others were statements about the nature of planning rather than specific suggestions for changes. Tig Tillinghast's comment needed clarification regarding its intent. Kevin said he would contact Tig for clarification.

The test was successful and the group agreed to continue using Google Drive as a way to share the comment document. Everyone thanked Patricia for her work setting it up. Patricia offered to teach those not familiar with Google Drive.

a. Education (8:55) - Liz referred the commissioners to the latest revision of the Education chapter, which she had emailed April 13. There was a quick review of the final changes, indicating that the chapter was ready to post for public review. Liz will make a few minor edits and send the document to Patricia to format for posting and pass along to Dean to post and announce.

6. Subdivision - overview (9:05)

Kevin referred the commissioners to the latest revision of the Subdivision regulations, which he had emailed earlier on May 6. He asked members to review it before the next meeting, when the discussion would start in earnest. He took a few minutes to review the status of the regulations and the revision process. The regulation needs to be brought into concordance with

the current revision of the Town Plan and Zoning Bylaws. In addition, there are suggestions from the Development Review Board (DRB) and the Zoning Administrator (ZA) to incorporate. A working group made up of members of the Planning Commission and DRB, with input from the ZA, created the current draft, which is ready to be finalized by the commission. Kevin said he will try to encourage a member of the working group to attend the next meeting to jump start the discussion. He noted that this revision is a major departure from the subdivision regulation currently in use.

7. Other Business

a. Kevin reported that he had received a flyer about a planing workshop to be held in June. He will scan and send it to everyone.

b. Liz reported that she had invited two possible new members to come to a meeting but neither had accepted. Kevin reported the same for a person he invited. There was a brief discussion of ways to attract new members. Kevin said the discussion should continue in future meetings.

c. Kevin reported that there is money in the budget for editing the final revision. This led to a discussion of planning and scheduling for warned hearings and also the need to set a deadline for ending the current comment period. No deadline was set yet. That will depend in part on the time required to review and finalize the subdivision regulations.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Whitlock, Recording Clerk, Thetford Planning Commission