

**Thetford Planning Commission**  
**June 17, 2014 – APPROVED Minutes**

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

Absent: Patricia Norton

Guests: Wayne Parks and Mary Ellen Parkman (Zoning Administrator) (7:16-8:46); Stuart Blood (7:31-8:46)

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Kevin called the meeting to order at 7:16 p.m.

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of Minutes from the 5/20 meeting.

The minutes were approved with corrections.

Review of Minutes from the 6/3 meeting.

The minutes were accepted as is. (Note that there was no quorum at the 6/3 meeting.)

4. Selectboard Report: None

5. Subdivision (7:20)

Wayne Parks and Zoning Administrator Mary Ellen Parkman joined the meeting. For their benefit, Kevin reviewed the history and current status of the draft revision of the Subdivision Regulations, including the specific areas of change requested by the members of the Development Review Board (DRB). He referred the group to the most recent draft, with change tracking, which he had sent via email on May 6. The commission had made a preliminary review of the major changes on the meeting of May 16. None of the members offered any comments or questions so Kevin quickly went over the substantive changes that had been accepted, up to section 3.4 in the original document, Energy Efficiency. The working group had recommended deleting this section, but Michael had raised some objections and suggested retaining and rewording the text so that the state energy standards would be acknowledged and referenced as the minimum standards, with text to encourage voluntary achievement of higher standards. He also felt the bullet point regarding “Protection of solar access for existing buildings from shadows cast by new structures” should be retained.

There were lengthy discussions of both of these points. At issue are setbacks, density of development, state regulations that exempt solar collectors from setbacks, hardships imposed on neighbors/abutters, and the need for subdividers and neighbors to be aware of solar access rights. Mary Ellen noted that these regulations applied to all development, not just subdivisions, and therefore should be in the Zoning Bylaw. She noted that having “optional standards” (that is, higher standards that developers can aim for above the minimum) are helpful to the DRB when

abutters bring up issues but that they don't often apply to every subdivision. The building envelope is often not discussed during subdivision, so building location, height, and solar corridors are usually not discussed. Wayne stressed that any standards put into the Subdivision Regulation or Zoning Bylaw should consider the rights of abutters fairly; for example, requiring that a minimum setback be maintained so that solar collectors would not be placed right on a property line. Dean noted that the Zoning Bylaw could be amended at the same time that the new Subdivision Regulations were adopted so that the two would be in sync from the start. There was general agreement to include some reference to the state standards and solar access requirements so people applying for subdivisions would be directed to more information. Michael will follow up with the regional planning commission and also check other towns' regulations, then write a first draft of this section for review.

Kevin then directed the group's attention to Section 3.8, Roads, Driveways, and Pedestrian Access. The working group had stalled on this section, in part because they thought the town did not have any road standards to refer to. Mary Ellen reported that to be a misunderstanding. The town has not drafted its own road standards, but each year the Selectboard votes to adopt the state road standards set by the Vermont Transportation Department (VTRANS). By adopting the VTRANS standards, the town becomes eligible for some municipal road grants. This has been the case for a number of years. These standards also apply to driveway access points onto roads, though not to the driveways themselves. The town has a set of driveway standards; however, they are not being rigorously enforced. There is no process in the Zoning Bylaw that covers applying for or granting driveway permits. Kevin noted this as an issue to resolve in the next update of the Zoning Bylaw.

Getting back to the road standards, Kevin said that the issue was when to require that a road be upgraded. Since development usually happens incrementally, one or two lots at a time, traffic density builds up slowly until suddenly the road is no longer adequate. At that point, the next applicant for a subdivision could be asked to bear the entire burden of upgrading the road. The burden should be distributed more fairly between the applicant and other recent developers. The case of a failed subdivision on Garey Road was discussed as an example. Mary Ellen said that the Subdivision Regulations should refer to the town's adopted standards rather than have the standards inserted into the regulations, and that there needed to be a defined threshold for upgrading. She will get a copy of the VTRANS standards for the commission to review. Kevin will contact the regional planning commission to see what they recommend.

There was brief discussion of clarification of processes for the DRB and further discussion of the driveway permitting issue. Kevin asked Mary Ellen to provide feedback on other sections of the Zoning Bylaw that will need more work. She said that two areas needing work relate to noise control and daycare/preschool applications. She also noted that the new Shoreline Protection law recently passed by the state can be administered locally. She recommended that Thetford write an ordinance or insert standards into the Zoning Bylaw for this.

Other areas of the Subdivision Regulation that need further review or section 3.11 on Open Space and Common Land, and the Definitions.

Wayne, Mary Ellen, and Stuart left the meeting.

## 6. Town Plan (8:50)

a. Education – Liz reported that she had rewritten the section on Thetford Academy to incorporate the comments made at the previous meeting by Stephen Page. She referred them to the new revision, which she emailed that evening. The sense of the meeting was that the new section accurately reflected the content of his comments without taking on an editorial tone. Liz will send this revision to Patricia to format for posting for public review. Dean will announce the new version on the town listserv and make sure the Town Clerk has a copy of the file.

b. Review Comment Resolution Doc – Dean described the progress made at the previous meeting. It was agreed to wait for Patricia to return before reviewing any of the other comments.

c. Introduction – The group made a quick review of the version Patrick Kearney had started before retiring from the commission. Dean noted that Patricia had volunteered to combine his introductory text with an updated version of the discussion of history and process. Michael noted that the list of contributors should include the Thetford Elder Network, Senior and Affordable Housing Committee, and their funding agency.

## 7. Other Business (9:13)

a. New Maps – Michael reported that he had contacted Heather Carlos, who explained the situation with mapping software. He lacks the technical expertise and software required to create new maps. Heather recommended that he contact Pete Fellows at the regional planning commission and advocate that they provide us with new maps at an acceptable level of quality. Michael will contact Pete Fellows. First the commissioners will mark the necessary changes on a set of the current maps.

b. Land Use Areas – Dean volunteered to work with Patricia on updating the land use areas in that chapter based on the desires of Post Mills residents at the two forums last year and also to shorten the east branch of the Thetford Hill district so it doesn't reach all the way to the I-91 exits.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

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