

Thetford Planning Commission
October 7, 2014 – APPROVED Minutes

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

Absent: None

Guests: Jessica Eaton, Joanne Sandberg-Cook, Sarah Jo Brown (all 7:15-8:12)

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Kevin called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of Minutes from the 9/16/14 meeting.

The minutes were accepted as written.

4. Selectboard Report: Jessica reported that the Selectboard had extended an offer to one of the candidates for Police Chief and was waiting for a response. Liz asked about the status of the plan to install solar-electric collectors on the old landfill site in Post Mills. Jessica replied that there was enough ground area available but that the electric transmission lines serving that area of the town were not adequate to carry the peak load that would be produced by the array, and that the cost of upgrading the power lines was prohibitive.

5. Town Nurse update and town plan discussion

Joanne Sandberg-Cook and Sarah Jo Brown are members of a working committee formed by the Thetford Elder Network (TEN) to study the feasibility of establishing a town nurse (or community nurse) in Thetford. They are asking to have the topic described and supported in the Town Plan to help in funding requests for grants and town support. The topic had been described and discussed by TEN member Dale Gephardt at an earlier meeting. Joanne provided a printed description of the project and gave a verbal introduction, which included a summary of the need discovered by the committee and the goals of the project. Several towns in the region have a town nurse in some capacity. Accessing health care has become increasingly complicated in the past half century, particularly for the older population, which tends to have more health conditions that need to be addressed and is often limited in mobility and transportation options. In a town survey, 90% of seniors said they would prefer to age in place at home with family or paid caregivers. Visiting Nurse services are very regulated under Medicare rules to specific “skilled-care” conditions and hospice services. A town nurse would serve the elder population by providing additional routine care at home. They could also serve the general population with well-patient services such as blood-pressure clinics, counseling and liaison for residents with medical conditions, and follow-up care for people who have been discharged from a hospital

after in-patient surgery or treatment.

There was a discussion of the town nurses in neighboring towns. Funding for most town nurses comes from the towns, grants, foundations, churches, and donations from citizens. Cost is primarily the salary of the nurse and depends on number of hours per week. Lyme's nurse is currently contracted for 15-20 hours per week. Hartland has budgeted \$15,000 per year. Lyme's nurse is supported by a system of volunteers, who help support elderly and disabled people in their homes with services such as stacking wood, making small repairs, installing handrails, etc. The nurse is able to coordinate help for these people and also support their families, who sometimes live far away and are overwhelmed by the problems of caring for their elderly parents. The town nurse operates as a complement to town volunteers, the visiting nurses, and the FAST squad, and provides an important service in Senior Housing. It does not replace any of these services.

Joanne said that the need in Thetford is not obvious without an in-depth analysis of the town's demographics. For example, they have not yet determined the exact number of people over 65 living in town, which is around 400 and growing. (The planning commission provided contact information for the Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission, which has detailed access to local census data.) 70 Thetford residents were discharged from DHMC in 2013, but the numbers discharged from other health centers isn't known. Long-term care and assisted living expenses run from \$6,000 - \$10,000 per month per individual, and a town nurse can help people postpone their need of these services.

Kevin asked Joanne and Sarah if they could provide a simple bullet list summary of the need and the proposed services to be provided. There was further discussion of sources of data and also of funding sources from grants and foundations as well as town funds. Patricia noted that there is already a brief description and statement in favor of the town nurse concept in the narrative of the draft Town Plan, in the Housing chapter and the Facilities, Services, and Utilities chapter. She asked if the commission was willing to consider adding a recommendation to show stronger support. After a brief discussion, the sense of the meeting was affirmative. Joanne and Sarah said they would provide the summary of need and services as soon as possible.

The three guests left the meeting.

Patricia offered to draft a recommendation expressing strong support for establishing a town nurse, to have on the table for further discussion when the summary was presented. Michael suggested that the main narrative description and recommendation go into the Facilities, Services, and Utilities chapter, with a cross-reference from the Housing chapter. There was a brief discussion of how need for a town nurse fit in with other needs in the town (food shelf, etc.).

6. Subdivision (8:20)

a. Review draft subdivision regulation. Patricia and Dean had prepared the new revision 0.9 by accepting or rejecting comments and revisions that had been discussed, leaving only a few items still to be addressed. The new file was sent to the Planning listserv by Dean on October 4. Patricia led the discussion, proceeding down the document, comment by comment. As each was discussed, she adjusted the text or deleted the comment, as appropriate. There was a lengthy discussion of the language regarding how wetlands and areas with steep slope (greater than 25%)

should be regarded when calculating minimum lot sizes and density. The statements were reworded to improve clarity. There was a brief discussion of how the new state shoreline protection law would affect the subdivision standards regarding Lake Fairlee and other lakes in the town. There was a long discussion about the wording in Section 3.5 to describe the effect of development on the need for childcare facilities. Due to the lateness of the hour, Kevin ended the discussion before a resolution was reached. He asked the commissioners to review the language again before the next meeting.

7. Town Plan (Maps and comments) - Deferred till next meeting.

8. Other business.

a. Kevin presented a letter of notification from Norwich Technologies with the Certification of Public Good regarding the solar array project for the elementary school.

b. Kevin presented an announcement about the state's Fall Planning and Zoning Conference, to be held in Montpelier on October 29.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

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