

Thetford Planning Commission
October 21, 2014 – APPROVED Minutes

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

Absent: None

Guests: None

(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 10/7/14 meeting.
The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard Report: None

5. Subdivision (7:24)

a. Review draft subdivision regulation. Kevin reported that he had queried the Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) regarding the Plan/Plat Mapping Requirements given in Table 2.2, Subdivision Application Requirements. They replied that Digital Data should be required with the final plat, at the discretion of the Development Review Board (DRB). Sometimes this data will be useful, sometimes not, and the DRB should have the authority to request it when they see the need.

The review resumed at section 3.5, Community Services and Utilities. Dean proposed new language for the third objective: To consider the effects of development on the need for childcare services. There was a discussion of three terms that appear often: growth, development, and subdivision. In this case, subdivision would be most appropriate. Patricia pointed out that the current Town Plan discusses childcare services in a way that supports this statement.

The table of road standards (Table 3.1) will be removed. For a long time, the Selectboard has voted to use the VTRANS road standards rather than develop separate town standards. Language will be added referring the applicant to state sources for the standards, which will likely be more up to date than a table in these subdivision regulations. Dean will check online and with the Zoning Administrator to find the best sources to include.

Several section headings under Roads, Driveways, and Pedestrian Access had no content under them. Dean will determine if the topics are covered in the VTRANS standards. If so, the headings will be removed. If not, they will be discussed further and removed or described, as appropriate.

The language protecting existing water supplies was discussed and reworded for clarity.

Section 3.8: Utilities. The language in the current regulations was discussed. Kevin will draft a new introduction that provides appropriate discretion to the DRB and will incorporate the current standards into the next draft.

There was a long discussion of open space and common land, which the DRB can request to be set aside in subdivisions that produce several lots. The current and draft Town Plan and the current Zoning Bylaw encourage clustering of residences to leave more open land. Michael will draft new language to clarify the discretion allowed the DRB in these cases.

Article 4, Administration & Enforcement, was based on the subdivision regulations from the Town of Windsor. Kevin will ask TRORC to review the entire article to confirm that it is appropriate as is for Thetford.

Definitions: Patricia will verify that all of the defined terms are actually used in the regulations. She will also verify that the definitions here are consistent with those in the Zoning Bylaw.

There was a discussion of Slope, which was listed but not defined. After a quick search of the regulations used in neighboring towns, Liz was able to find a clear definition, which will be included in the next revision.

Patricia emailed a clean copy of the new draft to each of the members to review before the next meeting.

6. Town Plan (8:30)

a. Map – further discussion. The group discussed the changes proposed for the Post Mills Village Residential area and the Thetford Hill Village Residential area. Dean reviewed the last two discussions, which determined the uses that would be permitted, conditional, and not permitted in the new land use area being proposed for Post Mills. The commissioners then reviewed the proposed changes to the zoning map for Post Mills and agreed where the proposed boundaries should go. They also reviewed the proposed boundaries for the Thetford Hill area. Patricia will write new language for the Land Use Chapter that clearly describes the proposed boundaries and the list of uses for the proposed Post Mills area. After further discussion, Patricia proposed that the new area be called Village Residential x (VRx). This would not require a name change to any existing district and could easily be applied in other villages should a similar situation arise there.

Kevin noted that the old Post Mills landfill property was colored green, indicating it was town-owned. Recent exploration of that property by the Energy Committee (as a potential site for a solar collector array) indicates that the ownership of the property may still be held by the heirs of the landfill operator. This will need to be cleared up before new maps are made for the Town Plan. Dean will follow up with Bob Walker of the Energy Committee.

b. Discuss comments (9:00) – A couple of the comments related to the Education Chapter were discussed. Liz will study the others and propose resolutions before the next meeting.

There was a lengthy discussion of a comment from Tom Norton related to the Energy Chapter and referring to a statement regarding the ability of the Town to provide wood heat for all residences through sustainable use of the forest land in the town. Michael had found data indicating how many acres of woodland are required to sustainably heat a single home (with wood

as the primary source), but the true situation involves pellet stoves as well as cord wood, many residences where wood is a backup instead of the primary heat source, and many residences that would need to get their wood from Town-owned land or another landowner.

Tom Norton joined the meeting (9:28).

After further discussion, Michael said he will work on a recommendation that the Town create a working group to explore all of the issues surrounding sustainable wood heat in Thetford to see if it would be a feasible project.

7. Town Nurse Discussion - Deferred to the next meeting.

8. Other business - None.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

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