

Thetford Planning Commission
December 2, 2014 – APPROVED Minutes

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Patricia Norton, Michael Schunk, Liz Ryan Cole (arr. 7:26), Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: None

Guests: Jessica Eaton (Selectboard liaison)

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Kevin called the meeting to order at 7:22 p.m.

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of Minutes from the 11/18/14 meeting.

The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard Report: Jessica reported that the selectboard was currently working on the next year’s budget, the lease for the firing range, and Treasure Island facilities and management. There were no concerns about the Planning Commission’s proposed budget for 2015.

5. Town Plan (7:28)

a. Review Comments – The review started at line 69 in the comment spreadsheet on Google Drive. The comment, from Libby Chapin, addresses the protection of the aesthetics of each village. As examples of aesthetic protections and activities, she cited the Historic Preservation district on Thetford Hill and the village green and community garden in Thetford Center. She felt that Post Mills and East Thetford deserved similar attention. As examples of ways aesthetics could be compromised, she give the Malmquist Mill site and the old store building on Route 113 in Post Mills. The commissioners discussed the issue at length. The Zoning Bylaw in Thetford does not attempt to address aesthetics. Jessica pointed out that “one man’s pile of old cars is another man’s spare parts depot.” Dean noted that Thetford Center residents had voted down an attempt to establish a historic preservation district there, and that the Thetford Center green and community garden had all been initiated by private citizens. Patricia reported that her inquiries into state law showed that the town could not manage derelict properties unless they had been abandoned by the owner, and that state law did not require any corrective activity unless the property created an immediate danger to public health or safety. The selectboard has spoken to the two owners, who have secured the properties against trespass but no more. The best course of action suggested by a contact at the state level was for the neighbors to put pressure on the landowners. The commissioners agreed that these two cases created an aesthetic problem, but that there was no appropriate insertion into the Town Plan. Line 90 - Libby Chapin expressed her interest in developing shoreline guidelines for Lake

Fairlee, which could be applied to other shorelines in town. Because the state has recently released new state guidelines for shoreline development, and because of the time that would be needed to draft town guidelines, the commissioners agreed that it made sense to defer this comment to the next revision of the Town Plan, which will allow time to analyze the affects of the new state guidelines and carefully draft new town guidelines, if needed.

Line 91 - Tom Norton provided the correct term, which is “polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons”. The correction was accepted.

b. Town Nurse language – Liz commented that she had recently been in another meeting about town and parish nurses, where it was pointed out that every town in the region is currently very interested in the potential benefits of having one. Patricia referred the group to the document she had sent on November 18, containing comments and proposed language for the Housing Chapter and the Facilities, Services, and Utilities Chapter. The sources of the comments and suggestions were primarily the Thetford Elder Network, its subcommittee addressing the creation of a Thetford town nurse, and Mariah Whitcomb, representing the town’s fire and EMT squads. The commissioners accepted the new language. Kevin and Michael will make changes to the current versions of their chapters.

There was a discussion of next steps for the Town Plan. The next revision will be renumbered as rev20.1, to distinguish it clearly from the version that was posted on the Planning Commission web page for public review. The new revision will be compiled into a single document and sent to the regional planning commission and selectboard for review. Suggested changes from these reviews will be discussed and dealt with, and the next version will be sent to a copy-editor. The next step will be public hearings of the clean revision. Everyone will bring names of possible copy-editors to approach for bids.

c. New Energy Chapter language – Michael reported that he has been incorporating the responses to the comments and has completed those in the narrative section. He is still working on the changes to the goals, policies, and recommendations. He will have it finished in time for the next meeting.

6. Subdivision (8:23)

a. Review Definitions – Patricia referred to group to the Definitions section that Kevin had forwarded via email on November 18. She lead a discussion of each of the highlighted definitions and its accompanying comments. Some definitions were changed from the original, some were added, and some of the defined terms where not in the new revision.

There were long discussions about the definition of the Development Review Board and its duties (with the best language being found on the town website) and the definition of Open Space, which did not match the definition in the Zoning Bylaw. Liz proposed changes that the group thought were heading in the right direction. She will reconcile the two definitions and propose a final definition at the next meeting. Due to the late hour, the rest of the definitions will be discussed at the next meeting.

b. Section 3.6, Roads and VTrans standards – Dean reported that upon reviewing the

document about VTRANS road standards that the selectboard readopts each year, it was obvious that it did not cover any of the information described in the table or narrative sections in the current subdivision draft. Looking more closely at the Windsor subdivision regulations, which appear to come from the same boilerplate source and also refer applicants to the VTRANS road standards as being adopted by the town, he noticed that the table and sections are presented as “minimum standards”. He will contact the Director of Public Works to determine if these minimum standards are appropriate for Thetford or if the subdivision regulations should merely refer the applicant directly to the VTRANS road standards.

7. Other Business (9:25)

There was a brief discussion about the correct procedure to request reimbursement for attendance at a planning training seminar.

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

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