

Thetford Planning Commission
January 6, 2015 – APPROVED Minutes

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Patricia Norton (7:15 - 9:00), Michael Schunk, 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 7:23 p.m.

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of Minutes from the 12/16/14 meeting.
The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard Report: None.

5. Town Plan (7:28)

a. Energy Chapter (Sources for statistics) - Michael reported that he had found several references to a source for the statistics comparing the economics of locally produced wood fuel to those of fossil fuels but had not been able to obtain a copy of the source document to confirm if the analysis still applied. After some discussion, the commissioners agreed that the basic concept still applied: For every cord of fuel wood bought locally, more of the money stayed in the local region than it did when fossil fuels were purchased. Kevin suggested a rewording that would retain the concept and refer to the original source while acknowledging that the specific percentages given would most likely be out of date. There was a brief discussion of other changes, which were accepted as written. Michael said he has two more sections to address before all of the comments will have been incorporated.

b. Editors - Dean reported that Stuart Blood and Liora Alschuler both supplied the same name of an additional editor to consider for the Town Plan. He has not completed the Request for Proposal (RFP) but will send the draft out next week for a quick proofread before sending it to the list of editors.

c. Appendix A, preservation tools - There was a long discussion about the suitability of this appendix as an inclusion to the Town Plan. Most of the tools listed apply specifically to the preservation of historic buildings. A few refer to scenic resources. None of the other chapters have a related appendix or a similar list of tools. Michael was strongly in favor of keeping the appendix because he had found it useful when he first moved to Thetford Hill. He brought up the

point that the only guidelines for historic preservation are in the Zoning Bylaw, Subdivision Regulations, and guidelines developed by the Thetford Hill Historic Preservation District committee. Dean pointed out that the Historic Resources chapter in the Town Plan was sparse on details and suggested that the list of tools could go there more appropriately than in a separate appendix. Similarly, the few items that related to scenic resources could go into that chapter. Patricia used the Internet connection to look up the Town Plans of adjoining towns and noted that, while they didn't have similar lists of tools, they did have statements regarding the need to balance historic preservation with energy needs; that is, they encouraged renovating historic buildings to be energy efficient rather than razing them to build new energy efficient structures. Dean noted that the language to address this in our own Town Plan was not as well written. There was a long discussion of how this related to using new building technology to achieve energy efficiency while still maintaining an appropriate appearance suited to the Thetford Hill district. Dean said he would rewrite that statement in the Historic Resources chapter and incorporate the preservation tools into the appropriate chapters. Michael said he would help confirm that all of the tools listed were still available and that the contact information was correct.

c. Appendix B, maps - Dean reported that he had just received an email from Peter Fellowes of the regional planning commission saying that there would be no cost for their preparing new maps as long as we would use their standard formats and did not have a substantial amount of editing to propose. He then directed the commissioners to the web site of the regional planning commission, where there were PDF copies of the maps of all of the towns in the region. After reviewing many of them, the commissioners agreed that they preferred the cartographic style maps to those that were overlaid on an aerial photo. The Strafford maps were named as the best examples. Dean will contact the regional planning commission again to ask which of the maps were required and which were optional, and to find out what it would entail to have all of the Thetford maps prepared as cartographic maps.

Patricia left the meeting.

6. Subdivision (9:07)

a. Open Space Definition - Liz referred the commissioners to the new definition that she had emailed earlier in the evening. There was a long discussion of the phrase “. . . free from intensive development for residential, commercial, industrial or institutional use.” The point of argument was the adjective “intensive.” How much development is intensive? Should any development at all be allowed, other than that related to agriculture (e.g., a garden shed) and recreation (e.g. a play structure), which are the two uses generally accepted as appropriate for open space? In the end, it was decided to delete “intensive.”

b. Section 3.6, Roads and VTrans standards – Dean reported that the Public Works Commissioner had pass the question along to the Selectboard. Dean had described the issue to Stuart Rogers and emailed the text being considered. Dean had tried to reach Stuart again that afternoon with no success.

7. Other Business (9:28)

Liz asked if the others had seen the three recent posts on the town listserv about Thetford Academy tuition. There was a brief discussion, but it was agreed that these posts repeated concerns that had already been expressed in comments emailed to the commission after the first revisions of the Education Chapter had been posted on the town web site.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

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