

Thetford Planning Commission
June 2, 2015 – APPROVED Minutes

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

Absent: Liz Ryan Cole

Guests: Jessica Eaton (Selectboard liaison), Dori Wolfe (7:18 - 7:47)

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Kevin called the meeting to order at 7:18 p.m..

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of the minutes from 4/21/15
The minutes were accepted as written.

4. Selectboard Report: Jessica reported that the Selectboard had voted to discontinue four town roads. They will now be private roads, to be maintained by the residents living along them. They are Amasa Bond Road, Lower Cream Street, Evans Road, and Berger Road.

Jessica reported that the Selectboard had attended a training about new planning regulations, given by Chris Sargent of the Two River Ottauquechee Regional Planning Commission (TRORC), which has to approve our Town Plan. She said he had mentioned a few concerns about our Town Plan, which Jessica forwarded to the Planning Commission listserv. Kevin remarked that we were aware of some of their concerns, and that Item 5 would be the best context in which to discuss them. He then asked Dori Wolfe to make her presentation, so she could leave as early as possible.

Dori Wolfe, of Strafford, came to report on the Elizabeth Mine Solar Project. She is the principle at Wolfe Energy, a consulting firm, working with Brightfields Development in Wellesley, MA to plan and build a solar-voltaic installation on the Elizabeth Mine superfund site. She has presented to the Thetford Selectboard and Energy Committee, and the Strafford Energy Committee. All three of them have given their approval of the project and agreed to write letters of support. She is also reaching out to the Historical Societies of the two towns, since the mine was such an important part of the region’s history, and the site contains historical structures. Dori passed around brochures and other information about the project, showing the proposed installation. They now have agreements with the land owners and have solved a couple of technical problems: how to provide foundations for the solar panels without digging footings through the cap on the tailings pile, and how to get high-transmission lines into the site. If the project comes to fruition, the project would maintain the fenced portion of the cap and would also install a Man and Nature information panel about the solar farm. They have the support of the federal superfund officials and are working out details with the necessary state agencies. The project must be completed by the end of 2016 to take advantage of the existing federal energy credits. These credits will be important in gaining the interest of investors, who would create a company to build the solar farm and maintain it. They had hoped that the Green Mountain

Development Corporation would take on ownership of the land, but their process is taking too long. The state must maintain the cap on the tailings pile in perpetuity, but the project would perform and pay for the maintenance of the fenced portion for the period of a 25-year lease. There will be significant investment to bring in the 3-phase wiring, so the site will most probably wind up being an energy site beyond the project. All costs would be born by the development corporation, which would make back its investment by selling energy to the regional grid. The panels are warranted for 25 years to 80% of power. The Commissioners unanimously expressed their support for the project. Dori thanked them and said that, if all of the approvals come through, she might come back to request a written letter of support. She left the meeting at 7:47.

5. Town Plan Discussion

a. Status update on draft - Michael had sent a new version of his chapter, with pictures, which Patricia had been able to insert into the most recent full version. There was a discussion of the update process going forward. All changes must be sent to Patricia to insert into the working version. Commissioners should not make any more changes to their separate chapter documents. The final draft that Patricia creates will go to the copy-editor for formatting and proofing.

Patricia then went down through the document, reviewing the changes that had been made at the last meeting and making sure that Michael's changes were properly incorporated. Then the group moved on to the chapters that had not yet been reviewed as a group. Jessica noted that the Pleasant Ridge Cemetery in North Thetford had been given over to the Town, which required a change in the Facilities section. Jessica left the meeting at 9:28.

b. Photos update: Postponed till a later meeting.

6. Subdivision - Dean reported that he had combined the two versions into one and received comments on the combined version from the Zoning Administrator. He forwarded the comments and combined draft to the Planning listserv. Further discussion was postponed to the next meeting.

7. Other business (9:45)

Michael raised the question of how the final version of the Town Plan would be presented to the Selectboard. He felt it would be important to explain the forums and comments from both citizens and TRORC that were the impetus for some of the changes. There was a brief discussion of the review process that would take place before the public hearing was warned.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

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