

Thetford Planning Commission
July 7, 2015 – APPROVED Minutes

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Patricia Norton, Michael Schunk, Liz Ryan Cole, 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 6:21 p.m..

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of the minutes from 6/14/15
The minutes were accepted as written.

4. Selectboard Report:
None

5. Town Plan Discussion

a. Version six (V6) - Chapter III follow up

Patricia led the group in a review of the outstanding comments, starting with where we had left off in Chapter III, Facilities, Services, and Utilities. (There are still outstanding comments in Chapter II, Education, which Liz will report on at the next meeting.) Kevin reported that there was new text for the sections on the fire department and FAST Squad, received from the current fire chief. He is still waiting for a response from the recreation director. The new text from the fire chief was accepted with minor editing. A quick review of the few comments in the Natural Resources Chapter (4) followed.

b. Chapter 5, Energy, was next. Michael will create a pie chart to better illustrate the town’s current energy demands, described in section 5.1. There was a long discussion of how the percentages of energy obtained by different types of production were changing due to the closing of Vermont Yankee. A lot of the replacement energy is coming from the Seabrook, NH nuclear plant, and the Solarize initiative has also had a major impact. Some of the wording in the narrative was changed to better support the recommendations at the end of the chapter about controlling commercial solar development in Thetford. The number of residential installations in the town was updated (40 new sites since 2013), and the outdated map from the old energy atlas was removed. There was also a long discussion of the importance of grid-tied photovoltaic connections and possible push-back against these from utilities.

The next three chapters (Chapter 6, Transportation; Chapter 7, Historic Resources; and Chapter 8, Scenic Resources) had already been completed or had only minor formatting issues to

deal with.

Chapter 9, Land Use began with a long discussion of population growth rates in the past 100 years, as shown in the graphs in the chapter. The population is dropping in Thetford, which will affect development, as will the slow rebound from the deep recession. An increase in affordable housing could stimulate population growth here.

The review continued quickly through the final two chapters: Relationship of the Plan to the Region and Implementation of the Plan. There was a brief pause to celebrate, then Patricia and Kevin went over the very few items that were still outstanding and would be followed-up on by the next meeting.

c. Photos update – The members reviewed the photos that had been proposed so far. Most of them are in a Dropbox folder that Patricia created. Liz and Dean directed the group to the Historical Society web site, where many historical photos are available for download. Liz will go through these and download one or two before the next meeting. The other members will finalize their photo selections by the next meeting, and either upload them to the Dropbox folder or bring them on their laptops for final review.

Patricia will incorporate all of the changes made this evening and send that draft to the editor to start on. The final issues and the photos will be sent to her after the next meeting.

6. Subdivision - Postponed due to the late hour.

7. Other business (9:20)

There was a brief discussion of an email received from Libby Chapman about the Village Centers program, which could make some grant funds available to the town. Kevin and Dean reported that the program had been reviewed by the commission several years ago. At the time, it didn't seem a good match for Thetford's villages. Libby is going to do some more research.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

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