

**Thetford Planning Commission  
November 3, 2015 – APPROVED Minutes**

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Patricia Norton, Michael Schunk, Liz Ryan Cole, Jason Crance, Jamie Thaxton, 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 the minutes for the 10/20 meeting  
The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard Report: None

5. Town Plan

a. Review new foreword/intro – Patricia and Jason referred the group to the new version of the combined Foreword and Introduction, which Patricia had emailed on October 28. This document contained comments entered by Kevin. There was a discussion of several small changes to the wording, followed by a longer discussion of the best order of presentation of the individual parts and how to label them. The most obvious change was the insertion of the chapter goals after each chapter’s brief description. There were also some now-redundant sections that, after discussion, were removed or shortened. There are some new chapters or sections that will probably be added, based on the review by the Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Planning Commission (TRORC): Economic Development and Flood Resiliency. Patricia made the suggested changes as they were discussed and emailed a new revision to discuss at the next meeting.

b. Economic Development Chapter – Jamie described the research he had completed so far to use in creating the Economic Development Chapter. He hoped to be able to create a table of the data that seems to be required. He said he thought this chapter would be the best place to include the information about Village Center Designations and also which villages to focus on for future economic development. There was a discussion comparing the benefits of including the Economic Development discussion as a section in the Land Use chapter versus making it a separate but short chapter. Jamie referred to the Bethel Town Plan as an example of a short separate chapter. Thetford was contrasted to both Bethel and Fairlee, which each have one distinct village instead of five, each with some level of small business, when you include the schools and post offices. General language to cover all five might say something like “...small, spread-out, home-based businesses with supporting utilities and infrastructure...” The first step will be to set general goals and then goals specific to each village. Jason suggested that primary

retail (that is, chain box stores) should be excluded from all villages except perhaps East Thetford, which is already zoned as a Community Business district.

Jason left the meeting at 8:16

Jamie will proceed with putting together general language for a separate chapter. There was a discussion of the level of economic development the town would want to encourage. Kevin referred to the Land Use table in the current Zoning Bylaw to show what is already being allowed, conditional, or not allowed. As an example, Jamie asked the group to consider what the community's response might be to the building of a multi-unit hotel/conference center beside the pond on Route 113 opposite Sawnee Bean Road. Currently, it would not be allowed in Rural Residential but would be a conditional use in four of the villages, and a permitted use in East Thetford. Other industries considered were small manufacturing, like Pompanoosuc Mills, small high-tech businesses, such as software development, B&Bs, and home business. Solar farms were also discussed, as was senior and affordable housing, including assisted living facilities. It was the sense of the meeting that the town should encourage development that provides employment in Thetford and that provides services to residents. Jamie pointed out that there were already recommendations in the Land Use chapter that apply. There was also a discussion of the possibility of a developer changing the use of the development project after it was well underway; for example, starting a multi-unit affordable housing development but changing it to high-rent apartments or condos midway through. We need to be careful that our wording is not too general because the Town Plan will be referred to as support for development in Act 250 deliberations. Michael referred to a current case in Randolph, where the aspirational rather than prescriptive wording in their town plan seems to support a large multi-use development on prime farm land very near the interstate exit. Act 250 makes their zoning moot. Jamie will have draft language ready by the next meeting.

c. Flood Resilience – Kevin referred the group to a Brookfield chapter recommended in the TRORC review. Kevin said he wants to avoid including a complete flood history for Thetford but still have flood resilience be a separate chapter. Liz recommended that the chapter discuss the likelihood that the federal flood insurance program will be stopped, making it impossible for residents to get insurance and lowering the future resale value of their homes, particularly on the Connecticut River. There are also houses close to the Ompompanoosuc River, as well as to brooks and culverts than can flood. Kevin will have a sample chapter ready by the next meeting.

d. Village Centers – Jamie recommended borrowing from the Bethel Town Plan for basic wording. He also recommended that the Town Plan say that we are considering applying for Village Center Designation for three villages and possibly all five. He hopes to have the language ready by the next meeting, as part of the Economic Development Chapter.

Kevin noted that Stuart Rogers and Jessica Eaton (selectboard members) will not be able to attend our next meeting, so the discussion of selectboard comments on the current revision of the Town Plan will be moved back to the first meeting in December. The commission will review the new introduction at the next meeting, and send it to the Selectboard if it looks okay.

6. Subdivision (8:57)

Kevin reported that Zoning Administrator Mary Ellen Parkman was too busy to provide new input on the current draft of the Subdivision Regulations so this discussion would have to be postponed.

#### 7. Other Business

Kevin reported that he had received a big package of official documents about the Elizabeth Mine solar project, including maps and pictures, along with two notifications for community solar projects in Thetford, one on Quail John Road and on Route 5 in East Thetford.

Liz reported that the Vermont Law School would be hosting another PACE land use conference. She said she would send the schedule to the planning listserv. Kevin noted that there was some money in the budget for planning education, which might be available for those wanting to attend this conference.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

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