

**Thetford Planning Commission  
November 17, 2015 – APPROVED Minutes**

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

Absent: Liz Ryan Cole

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 11/3 meeting  
The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard Report: None

5. Town Plan

a. Economic Development Chapter (1<sup>st</sup> look) – Jamie emailed his first draft earlier that evening. The narrative can be summarized to create a descriptive paragraph for the new Intro/Summary chapter. There were some minor comments on wording in the narrative, particularly about the differences in meaning between “growth” and “development”. This was followed by an extensive discussion of the best wording to use concerning the intent to apply for Village Center Designation for the five villages. There was constant referral to the supporting Goals, Policies, and Recommendations. Some of these had been copied from the Land Use Chapter. Each was reviewed separately to decide if it should remain in the Land Use Chapter instead of Economic Development, be included in both chapters, or be removed from the Land Use Chapter and only appear in Economic Development. In some cases, a cross-reference would be sufficient rather than appearing in both.

In reference to avoiding the impact of commercial development on municipal services and infrastructure, Kevin suggested using the phrase “any undue burden” rather than simply “burden,” which he felt could be interpreted too restrictively. There was also a discussion of proper wording to encourage home-based occupations in the Rural Residential District, as opposed to small business. The two are described differently in the Zoning Bylaw. Home businesses are permitted, while small businesses require conditional use approval.

Patricia pointed out some language in the narrative that made recommendations, which should be added to the list in the Recommendations section. There was a discussion of a recommendation to form a town committee or working group to develop and guide town-wide economic development. Jaime will add a recommendation to consider whether such a group was needed.

Jamie will contact Chris Sargent of the Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Planning Commission (TRORC) to get data for the tables illustrating recent business growth, and also to

clarify some terminology related to commercial development. He will contact the administrators of the Village Centers program for more information about proper wording to go into the Town Plan, indicating the intent to apply, and what level of history of revitalization efforts they will need. He will prepare a second draft for the next meeting, along with the paragraph for the intro/summary. Meanwhile, Patricia will prepare a clean draft of the new Intro/Summary, with placeholders for the new chapters being added (Economic Development and Flood Resilience), and send it to the Selectboard so they can review it prior to the next Planning Commission meeting.

b. Flood Resilience (9:00 p.m.) – Kevin referred the group to the draft he had emailed on November 11. It was based on the Flood Resilience Chapters in several other town plans in the TRORC region. He said he incorporated many of the suggestions given at the previous meeting except that he did not take up the issue that Federal flood insurance might be discontinued. He felt that there was not enough information available yet about what, if anything, would take its place.

The group reviewed the Goals, Policies, and Recommendations, noting that some were duplicated in the Land Use Chapter. They were reviewed to see which should remain, be referred to, or be removed. Patricia pointed out additional Land Use recommendations that could be included in Flood Resilience. Jamie suggested that wetland buffers, which are referred to in the Zoning Bylaw, be referred to in Flood Resilience, in the policy that deals with with riparian zones. There was a discussion of having a policy or recommendation about limiting impervious surfaces and retaining storm runoff on site as much as possible, using all reasonable efforts.

Kevin will make the suggested changes and also create a descriptive paragraph for the intro/summary chapter. Patricia suggested that he look over the subsection headings in the chapter to see how well they worked in the outline.

#### 6. Subdivision (9:25)

This item was skipped for the moment.

#### 7. Other Business

a. Kevin passed out copies of the previous two budgets and current budget, which the group reviewed to make recommendations for next year's budget. After discussing current and upcoming activities, Kevin suggested that the 2015 budget be resubmitted as is for the 2016 budget. Dean so moved, and Jason seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Kevin will present the proposed budget to the Selectboard for their consideration.

b. Patricia presented a quick update on the progress with the Town Nurse project. A Town Nurse has been hired: Joan Cook. The position is being funded by grants administered through the Ompompanoosuc Trust. They sent a thank-you note to the Planning Commission for inserting support for the project into the draft Town Plan. They have been able to use the language in their grant applications. Patricia explained the project to Jamie and Jason, pointing out that the Thetford model is unique and has drawn a lot of interest from other towns considering town/community nurses.

#### 6. Subdivision

Kevin reported that the Zoning Administrator, Mary Ellen Parkman, had sent a draft with more comments, including some that had been in an earlier version but were lost at some point in

the editing process. She addressed one of the major changes, which involved the differentiation between major and minor subdivisions. The working group was tasked with removing that distinction; however, they want to make it possible for certain straightforward applications to be processed quickly and with fewer fees. Kevin has reviewed the minutes from the working group meetings to clarify the reasons behind the change. Kevin also reported that he had received an email from Mary Ellen, in which she mentioned that Chris Sargent of TRORC preferred a unified bylaw combining the Zoning Bylaw and Subdivision Regulations. Kevin said he felt this was not the time to consider merging documents into a unified bylaw. He suggested that it would be best to complete the Town Plan and Subdivision Regulations so the town would have a statute-compliant set of documents supporting development decisions. Once the Town Plan and Subdivision updates are complete and adopted, the Planning Commission could take up the notion of a unified bylaw. Jason said that the process in Fairlee of combining Subdivision with Zoning might apply in Thetford. He will get their latest version for the group to review for ideas.

Kevin reminded the group that representatives from the Selectboard would be at the next meeting to discuss the draft Town Plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:39 p.m.

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