

**Thetford Planning Commission
December 15, 2015 – APPROVED Minutes**

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Liz Ryan Cole, Michael Schunk, Jamie Thaxton, Dean Whitlock
(Recording Clerk)

Absent: Patricia Norton, Jason Crance

Guests: Jessica Eaton (Selectboard liaison)

(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 for the 11/17 meeting
The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard Report:

Jessica reported that the Selectboard was currently focused on the 2016 budget.

5. Town Plan

a. Review and take comments from the Selectboard – None of the Selectboard members other than Jessica had arrived yet so this item was skipped for the moment.

b. Economic Growth Chapter – Jamie reported that he had received comments from Chris Sargent of the Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC), which he had incorporated into the next draft of the chapter. He had emailed the draft, along with some tables prepared by TRORC. He noted that the tables were in XLS format and might require some reformatting for the final draft. He directed the commissioners to the introductory paragraph he had written to include in the Foreword. He had emailed the intro paragraph on 12/1; it is not yet included in the latest draft Foreword, which Patricia had emailed earlier in the day. The commissioners noted some minor grammar errors and also proposed rewriting Goal 1. There was a brief discussion about expanding internet access as a recommendation to be mentioned in the introduction. Dean moved to accept the introductory paragraph as amended and include it in the Foreword. Liz seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The commissioners then read through the chapter while Jamie took notes. They suggested minor changes to the table. There was a discussion about the paragraph supporting the establishment of a food processing center in town, noting that the first recommendation for this came from the Pompanoosuc Agricultural Society and was put forward at one of the open houses held earlier in the Town Plan process. Liz moved to add the Economic Development Chapter, as amended, to the latest revision of the draft Town Plan. Michael seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

5a. Town Plan, Selectboard comments (8:00 p.m.)

Since no other Selectboard members had arrived, Jessica provided her comments. Kevin started the discussion by describing how the new Introduction/Forward, now including the list of goals for each chapter, had developed from earlier comments from the Selectboard. He said it was a great suggestion that really added to the usefulness of the Town Plan and hopes it addresses the Selectboard's concerns on that point.

Jessica had three concerns about text in the Natural Resources chapter. The first concerned language about All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), which she felt focused too much at ATVs as a source of problems that were also caused by other activities. She felt that the negative points were stated too forcibly and with too much unnecessary detail that wasn't supported by citing of the sources. There was a long discussion about how much detail was appropriate to include on a single issue, particularly since the town has passed an ordinance regulating use of ATVs since the first draft of the chapter was written. Jessica felt that the text should be left out or rewritten to provide more balance and to focus on recreational use and uncontrolled use specifically in terms of natural resources rather than use on roads. Dean said he would work with her on redrafting the language.

Jessica also pointed out that the Gillette Swamp was referred to as the Gillette/Levin Swamp, which she believed was not its official name even though the Levins now own part of the swamp. She asked that the name be confirmed.

Jessica's third concern related to recommendations in the wildlife section. Recommendation 3 recommends not cutting undergrowth along roadways, as it provides cover for deer. She pointed out that this conflicts with the highway maintenance practice of cutting undergrowth along roadways in order to improve sightlines at intersections, driveways, and curves. There was a brief discussion, and a note was made for Patricia to add a clause noting that highway safety must be taken into consideration. Recommendation 8, which encourages farmers not to mow grassland areas until after mid Summer conflicts with standard haying practices. Local farmers need to cut hay twice a year in order to have enough. After a brief discussion, it was decided that the recommendation should be reworded to refer specifically to fallow grasslands and meadows rather than hayfields.

Jessica also had a comment to make about the cemetery information in the Facilities chapter. She noted that the table has errors, with some of the cemeteries being misnamed and there being an extra cemetery listed in the Rice's Mills district. Kevin said that the information had been reviewed by the Cemetery Commission, which provided the final list. Jessica referred him to the register of Thetford's cemeteries compiled by Robert Bacon in 1977 and available from the Historical Society. Kevin said he would check it and review again with the Cemetery Commissioners. Dean suggested that the table of cemeteries include both the name and the location of each cemetery.

Jessica suggested that, once the final draft is ready for consideration by the townspeople, copies be made available on loan at town meeting and at the town libraries.

c. Flood Resilience Chapter – Kevin directed the commissioners to the current drafts of this chapter and its introductory paragraph, both of which were available on Google Docs. He reminded them that this version of the chapter had been approved at the previous meeting, but the introductory paragraph had some final changes and was now ready for review and approval. The members read the paragraph, and Jamie moved that it be accepted as written and

incorporated into the Introduction/Foreword. Michael seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Subdivision (9:07)

Kevin noted that zoning administrator Mary Ellen Parkman had emailed an updated version on 11/17 for the commissioners to review; however, the message had not gone to the entire Planning listserve. Dean forwarded the email to the listserve to make sure everyone had access to it, but, given the lack of time to review the extensive comments, Kevin felt it was best to postpone discussion until the next meeting. At that meeting, the agenda would also include a review of changes made to the Town Plan draft in response to the latest discussions. Jessica will provide cemetery information and also ask the other selectboard members to email any additional comments they have.

Liz had been recording Jessica's comments to include in the comment document and will send them to Dean.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

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