

**Thetford Planning Commission
February 16, 2016 – APPROVED Minutes**

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

Absent: Patricia Norton, Jamie Thaxton

Guests: None

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Kevin called the meeting to order at 7:17 p.m.
2. Public Comment: None
3. Review of the minutes for the 2/2 meeting
The minutes were accepted as amended.
4. Selectboard Report: (7:29) – None

5. Town Plan (7:30)

a, b, and c. Update on maps and Town Plan Report, Warning, Printing Options – Dean reported that Pete Fellows had been able to upload the parcel data from the Listers and was working on the maps.

There was a long discussion of the requirements for the report. Chris Sargent of the regional planning commission has sent an email including a description of what the report was supposed to include; however, he noted that a recent court case resulted in a judicial decision indicating that the report wasn’t specific enough. He included an example of a portion of a report created under the guidelines we had sent (now considered not detailed enough), but added that the report only had to cover land use areas that had changed. The guidelines indicate that recommended changes must match the planning goals of the town and the state (as given in statute). Kevin said that this would affect the Land Use Chapter, Energy Chapter, and perhaps the Natural Resources Chapter. Kevin noted that a second concern raised by the court case was that of lawsuits being brought against the town by developers. The Town Plan needs to provide support to Zoning and Development Review Board decisions. Jason suggested that we invite Chris Sargent to the next meeting to work on the report for the Land Use Chapter, which could then be used as a guide for the other chapters. Jason and Liz found the court case in question on line (Hawk Holdings vs Town of Newark) but their quick review did not indicate a better way to proceed. The warning cannot go out until the report is ready, so that is on hold for now. Dean will invite Chris Sargent to attend the next meeting.

There was a second discussion of the warned item in the Town Report asking if the Town should approve new Town Plans by vote at a town meeting or special town meeting. Liz, who had not been present at the previous meeting, when it was first discussed, said she was in favor because townspeople who came to town meeting knowing there would be a vote would take the

time to educate themselves about the issue. Kevin pointed out that the turnout at Town Meeting went down after the vote on the school budget was changed to be by Australian Ballot. Liz said she thought the Town Plan vote would be by voice vote or show of hands at the meeting, but a re-reading of the warning showed that it would be by Australian Ballot. Liz said she could not support that, as it meant there would be little real discussion during the Town Meeting itself. Kevin repeated his concern that the Town Plan was too complicated to discuss in the middle of a meeting that included many other items to discuss. At this point, much of the discussion of the previous meeting was reviewed for Liz's sake. Jason noted that the outcomes of the current hearing process and a town vote should be the same in a perfect system, but that real life was not perfect. In Fairlee, the process of discussing each chapter on a separate evening did reach a number of residents, but it was most effective because the Fairlee Zoning Administrator had created and given very effective presentations at each meeting. The problem was the amount of time it took, during which the town was without an up-to-date plan.

6. Subdivision (8:25)

The commissioners took up their review of the Zoning Administrator's comments in the current draft from the place where they had left off at the last meeting. Dean accepted the comments or took notes for the DRB to review.

Jason Crance left the meeting at 8:33 p.m.

All of the remaining comments were addressed. Liz moved to send the draft Subdivision Regulations, with notes, to the DRB and Zoning Administrator for their review and comment. Michael seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Other Business (9:10)

Kevin reported that he had received an additional notification regarding the SunCommon CSA 60 proposal for a community solar array project off Route 5. There was a brief discussion of the controversy over siting of community solar arrays and also the practice of selling the energy credits to out-of-state utilities.

Kevin reminded the commissioners of the presentation about resiliency to be held the following Tuesday, Feb. 23, at the Town Hall.

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

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