

**Thetford Planning Commission**  
**March 1, 2016 – APPROVED Minutes**

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Michael Schunk, Patricia Norton, Jamie Thaxton (7:38), Liz Ryan Cole (8:04), Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: Jason Crance

Guests: None

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Kevin called the meeting to order at 7:22 p.m.

2. Public Comment: None

3. Review of the minutes for the 2/16 meeting  
The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard Report: None

5. Town Plan (7:30)

a. Maps update – Dean reported that he had contacted Pete Fellows at the Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) earlier in the day. The changes to the maps have been made and a draft will be sent later in the week. Dean said he would forward them to the Planning listserve as soon as he received them, so everyone should have plenty of time to review them before the next meeting.

b. Write a section of the Town Plan report, to accompany the warning – Dean reread the email received from Chris Sargent of TRORC explaining the legal ruling that affects how the warning report for the draft Town Plan should be prepared. Patricia volunteered to take notes and write the text as it was discussed.

Jamie Thaxton joined the meeting.

Kevin suggested that the group focus on the changes in the Land Use Chapter. The evening’s goal was to write a draft of one section of the report so it could be sent to Chris Sargent for his review and comments, which would guide the writing of the rest of the report. Using a projector, the guidelines were projected on the wall to be used as a template. There was a brief discussion about the legal opinion, which Jamie had found on the web. He also found the specific section of Vermont statute referenced in the guidelines so the group could review the goals that had to be addressed. The goals that applied to the Post Mills land use change were discussed and potential text inserted into the document. Dean suggested using the text in the draft Land Use Chapter, Future section, which describes the changes being made. Chris Sargent had already made the comment that these should be used in the report rather than included in the Town Plan, which

should describe the status of the Town's Land Use areas as proposed. The before-and-after maps showing the proposed changes should also be in the report rather than in the Town Plan itself.

Liz Ryan Cole joined the meeting.

Jamie proposed a question for Chris Sargent: Do we need to give the acreage of the areas being changed, and if so, can he or Pete Fellows provide them to us from their mapping database?

There was a discussion of changes that might need to be made to the Energy Chapter in light of the current statewide controversy over the siting of community solar arrays on prime farm land and also regarding the selling of energy credits to utilities in other states. Patricia pointed out the current Recommendations in the Energy Chapter already encourage the protection of prime agricultural land by referring to the recommendations in the Natural Resources chapter. Solar energy is encouraged, but not everywhere in town. The energy credits issue will need more discussion.

There was further discussion of the legal decision regarding what the report should include, because it involved a lawsuit over a wind farm development on a ridgeline in a neighborhood that was not specifically protected in the town's plan. It was noted that the report, not the Town Plan itself, was used by the plaintiff to argue against the town's zoning board, and that the plaintiff won. Dean pointed out that Thetford was not considered a suitable spot for large wind turbines due to its geography and prevailing winds. Kevin suggested that the issue should be addressed in the next Town Plan cycle, when the Planning Commission could review Thetford's neighborhoods to see which might be affected and make sure that the justification for protection was clear.

There was some discussion of other changes in the Town Plan that might need to be discussed in the report. Kevin raised another question to be put to Chris Sargent: What is the precise definition of "Vacant Land" in the guidelines, and how does it apply to the changes made to the Thetford Hill Village Residential area and the new Post Mills Neighborhood Residential area?

Dean will send the draft report text and the questions to Chris Sargent.

Kevin wrapped up the discussion and asked all members to review their chapters for significant changes that might need to be addressed in the report and during the warned hearing.

6. Other Business (9:28): None

The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

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