

**Thetford Planning Commission**  
**June 21, 2016 – APPROVED Minutes**

Present: Kevin O’Hara, Michael Schunk, Patricia Norton, 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 7:21 p.m.

2. Public Comment: None

5. Town Plan

Jamie and Liz were expected later so the review of the minutes was postponed.

c. Publicity Campaign – Jason and Patricia reported that they will be meeting on June 23<sup>rd</sup> to create a plan for publicizing the warned hearing in order to attract participation. Jason suggested creating an aerial fly-over with help from the pilots and balloonists at the Post Mills Airport.

Jamie joined the meeting.

3. Review of the minutes for the 6/7 meeting

The minutes were accepted as amended.

4. Selectboard Report

None.

Liz joined the meeting.

5. Town Plan

a. Notice wording approval – Jamie reported that Chris Sargent of the Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission said the notice looked great. Jason reported that he had obtained a copy of the notice sent by the Town of Fairlee and that our notice was more detailed. The members agreed to proceed with the notice as written.

b. Discuss warning and hearing process – Patricia reported that the draft Town Plan can be downloaded from three different pages on the Thetford Town web site: the Home Page, the Documents Page, and the Planning Department Page. The date, time, and location of the hearing are listed on both the Home Page and the Planning Department Page. Town Clerk Tracy Borst is working on getting printed copies of the draft and the report, and she will take care of sending them to the necessary places by July 16<sup>th</sup>, one month before the hearing, which is on August 16<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. at the Town Hall.

## 6. Subdivision update (7:40)

Using the projector to display the draft Subdivision Regulations document, Kevin continued the review from section 3.2 (B)(7), which sets the minimum width of road frontage as 25% of the depth of the lot. There was a lengthy discussion of the purpose and effect of this standard, which is to prevent the creation of extremely narrow “spaghetti lots” but could also make it difficult or impossible to provide access to better building sites away from the road when a lot wraps around an existing lot. Zoning Administrator Mary Ellen Parkman had inserted a comment asking if this requirement could be waived by the Development Review Board (DRB) when appropriate. There was also a question whether a private road leading in a narrow easement could be used to provide frontage. It was decided to refer this question to the DRB.

3.2 (B)(8) and (9) concern whether wetlands are included in the calculation of total lot size for the purposes of meeting the minimum size requirement (no) and density of planned unit developments (yes). Patricia pointed out that the Town does not have a complete wetlands inventory or a map that shows all wetlands. Liz reported that the definition of wetland for the purposes of zoning and subdivision has been changed by the legislature and now includes more types of wetland than previously. The Zoning Administrator inserted a comment noting that determining if a lot included one or more wetlands involved an assessment by a wetlands specialist, which would increase the cost of preparing the plat needed for the application. Jason said he felt that was a necessary expense. There was a lengthy discussion, during which the wetland standards were compared to the slope standards in 3.2 (B)(10), which specified that areas having a slope of 25% or greater are included in calculating both minimum lot size and density in planned unit developments.

Jason left the meeting.

After some further discussion of the purpose and effect of the standards, the commissioners decided to ask the DRB why wetlands and slopes are treated differently and if these standards could be waived in certain conditions.

3.2 (C) is a requirement to Establish Development Envelopes when applying for a subdivision permit. Kevin noted that requiring that the plat show the possible building envelopes forced the developer to consider wetlands, slopes, setbacks, access from roads, and other features that showed which sections of the lot could actually be developed. There was a discussion of the term and whether Building Envelope was more appropriate, but the commissioners decided to continue using Development Envelope because it clearly covered roadways, parking areas, and structures other than what are commonly recognized as “buildings”. The term is defined in the Zoning Bylaw but not in the Subdivision document. Jamie will copy it into the Definitions section.

3.2 (D) concerns energy standards and siting with respect to solar power generation. After a brief discussion, the section was edited slightly and reformatted.

3.3 concerns protection of natural and cultural resources. 3.3 (A), purpose, states that the Town should protect cultural, historical, and archaeological resources. There was a long discussion about how restrictive such language could be. The lack of affordable housing, both homes and rentals, was discussed, and the need to balance such needs and the rights of landowners with the need to protect natural diversity along with cultural, historical, and archaeological resources. Kevin said that one role of the Planning Commission is to allow people to do what they need to do with a minimum of unintended consequences, and to make it clear what is allowed so everyone knows what is possible.

3.3 (B) concerns wetlands again, referring to the wetland standards in the Zoning Bylaw, which specify that a 50-foot-wide vegetated buffer must be left undeveloped around all wetlands. Liz pointed out that this means a total of 100 feet added all around the size of the wetland itself, which can remove a lot of property from a lot. Kevin noted that the intent is to minimize adverse impact without completely eliminating the possibility of building. There was a discussion of ways that developers had worked around such restrictions and how cumulative development can ultimately destroy the quality of a wetland. The language was left as is.

## 7. Other Business (9:25)

1. Energy Generation update – Michael reported that he had attended the Energy Committee meeting to discuss the new requirement to prepare a town map showing the appropriate locations for renewable energy generation. The legislature held a special session to complete the law and set guidelines for towns to follow, and TRORC had prepared a draft section to go into the regional plan. The Energy Committee is not ready to take on the task of creating a draft of the map. Michael said they will need a lot of input from townspeople and other committees but they will get the process started. It's possible that the final language and map will be ready to include as part of the rewrite after the warned hearing. Michael will continue to attend their meetings to monitor progress.

2. Liz reported that she had attended an interesting planning presentation in New Hampshire that explored affordable housing solutions such as tiny houses and shared housing. In light of the number of Millennials still living with parents, these are becoming more and more popular as alternatives to traditional first homes and standard rentals.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

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