

**Thetford Planning Commission
October 4, 2016 – APPROVED Minutes**

Present: Jason Crance, Jamie Thaxton, Liz Ryan Cole, Dean Whitlock (Recording Clerk)

Absent: Kevin O'Hara, Michael Schunk

Guests: Dori Wolfe, Bill Huff, Wayne Parks, Jessica Eaton

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Jason called the meeting to order at 7:22 p.m. Only three members being yet in attendance, there was no quorum, so Jason opened the floor for public comment, to be recorded without discussion or motions.

2. Public Comment:

Dori Wolfe, of Strafford, representing Wolfe Energy LLC, said she had come to follow up on an email she sent on September 21st regarding the status of a community solar project her company is developing in Post Mills. She presented a brief background to the project, which she explained had the approval of the landowner, the neighbors, and the Town Selectboard, and the support of the regional planning commission, Town Energy Committee, and the Town's legislative representatives. The site is "good" as far as environmental considerations go. The proposed community array did not meet certain net metering requirements but is eligible for state approval on other grounds; however, recent rule changes for siting made at the state level require that the Town have a "duly adopted" Town Plan that allows community solar projects in specific parts of the Town, under the Rule 5.100 guidelines, which are supposed to be finalized by year's end. In order to get the project out of limbo, there must be some appropriate language added to the draft Town Plan. She suggested that, if the Planning Commission did not want to specifically list this project, it could include a paragraph stating that community solar projects would be allowed in Category II areas in the Town.

Liz Ryan Cole joined the meeting; there was now a quorum. Liz said she thought the new rules, as described, sounded stupid, and there was a brief discussion of the current status of the guidelines, a paragraph referencing the guidelines that had already been added to the draft Town Plan, and the Planning Commission's intention to amend the Town Plan as soon as possible after the final guidelines were ready. Dean noted that, originally, we had been told they wouldn't be final until next spring. Dori asked that there be a description added now that referenced the broad categories of acceptable sites, including Category II. She noted that Category I, which includes landfills, brownfields, and similar sites, is already well defined at the state level so doesn't need to be specifically included. She also said that the project must come before the Planning Committee and Selectboard before it can be submitted to the state board that would give final approval.

Dori Wolfe left the meeting (7:50).

Jessica Eaton joined the meeting.

4. Selectboard Report

Jessica presented a memorandum from the Selectboard containing comments relevant to Dori Wolfe's request and also to the surrounding issue regarding Act 174 (the new law mandating Rule 5.100 and its guidelines regarding siting of energy production facilities). The gist of the comments is that the Selectboard does not agree that specific individuals or businesses should be named in the Town Plan, and that Act 174 should be referenced in the Energy Chapter of the Town Plan.

3. Review of the minutes for the 9/20 meeting.

The minutes were accepted as amended.

5. Town Plan (8:10)

Update and discussion – focus on Comment Resolution Document.

Jamie projected the Comments Resolution Document onto the white board so all present could follow along. The discussion began at the next comment in sequence (# 127). Many of these comments referred to the proposed Land Use Area changes affecting Post Mills and the area of the Thetford Hill District stretching east on Route 113 from Garey Road to the Exit 14 interchange at I-91. It was noted that all of these comments will be discussed together. There was a brief discussion of the term "Noted". Dean said that, since the document will be made public soon, a clear definition of the term and the process of reviewing and revising should accompany it. The initial review guides each chapter owner, who will rewrite where appropriate and present the draft changes for discussion, editing, and adoption at a regular meeting. There was a brief discussion of whether the Town Plan would be ready to pass along to the Selectboard by the start of 2017. The sense of the meeting was that, given the number and nature of the comments, that would not be possible.

There was also a discussion of the need for a glossary of terms in the Town Plan; for example, to explain "Clustered Housing" as it is used in zoning and subdivisions. There were several comments about how much information should go into the plan. Liz found the appropriate part of the law and said that "assumptions" are supposed to be included. Returning to the comment about Clustered Housing, Dean referred to a category of land use area called "Hamlet," which is appropriate for rural areas where there are relatively closely spaced houses and also for village areas that have lost their Post Office and businesses. The regional planning commission had recommended that some parts of Thetford qualified to be Hamlets. The townspeople, in earlier open houses and meetings had rejected that idea. Jason noted that the Town Plan only allows for the possibility of certain land uses, so that updates to Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations can be considered and enacted or not.

Bill Huff left the meeting (9:07).

Dean noted that there were no comments on Chapter III, Future Economic Development.

There was a long discussion about Policy 1 under Fire and Emergency Services in Chapter IV – Facilities, Services, and Utilities, which would require new homes to provide year-round access for emergency services. It was agreed that this needed to be reconsidered and the nature of the access clarified, particularly for seasonal homes.

6. Other Business (9:28)

Liz and Dean said they would not be able to attend the next meeting, scheduled for October

18. Dean noted that recording the minutes would fall to Jamie Thaxton and reminded him that the draft minutes needed to be circulated within five days after the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 p.m.

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