

**Thetford Planning Commission**  
**January 3, 2017 – APPROVED Minutes**

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

Absent: Jamie Thaxton, Liz Ryan Cole

Guests: None

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Kevin called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m.
2. Public Comment: None
3. Review of the minutes for the 12/06/16 meeting  
The minutes were accepted as amended
4. Selectboard Report - None

5. Town Plan

a. Follow up regarding assignments – Dean reported that he had heard back from Pete Fellows of the regional planning commission about the Fluvial Erosion Hazard Area maps. Pete said that the FEH maps had been replaced by River Corridor maps, which were the same thing but with a different name. The map data is available (he provided a link to view them from a state-wide viewpoint: [http://floodready.vermont.gov/assessment/vt\\_floodready\\_atlas](http://floodready.vermont.gov/assessment/vt_floodready_atlas)). He said the hazard areas would fit on the water features map. Viewing the maps online and comparing them to the water features map in the Town Plan showed that the changes were not significant enough from the water corridors already shown to warrant adding the extra layer of detail.

b. Update and discussion – focus on Comment Resolution Document.

The discussion resumed at comment #155, regarding goal # 3 in the Flora & Fauna section of the Natural Resources Chapter, which would “Ensure that animals and plants are able to disperse freely and over long distances between forested blocks.” The comment objected to the word “ensure” as being too difficult to achieve. There was a brief discussion of whether and how to reword the goal so as to retain the spirit without placing too onerous a burden on landowners. Jason proposed using the word “Promote” as in “Promote the ability of animals to disperse freely...” He moved that the new language using “Promote” be adopted. Dean seconded. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Comment #156 voiced concern over the statement “should adopt bylaws”. A brief discussion noted that the legal meaning of “should” in the Town Plan was suggestive, not prescriptive (“should” does not equal “must”), a point that was discussed at the hearing, in succeeding meetings and by the Selectboard. The current text was left as is.

Comment #159 was emailed by Li Shen. It provided language to amend the description of Vernal Pools in the narrative. Kevin noted that Jamie had already rewritten this section but

should be asked to review Li Shen's email and provide a second rewrite if he felt it was necessary. Jason said he would notify Jamie.

Comment #161 and #162 (first comments during the second session of the warned hearing) regarded Policies 2 (about moving or abandoning roads that flood regularly) and 7 (about reducing impervious land cover) in the Flood Resiliency chapter. It was noted that both policies were qualified ("...where practical and financially feasible" and "Use all reasonable efforts..."), giving the Selectboard and landowners sufficient leeway for finding practical solutions.

Comment #163 concerned flood hazard area maps, raising the question, what happens to a 100-year-flood zone if no flood occurs within 100 years? Can the maps be changed? Jason said the answer was yes, but there are state and federal agencies (and insurance company associations) that track these things and have procedures for deciding when the maps should be updated. The maps are still the best guideline available for determine flood hazard zones. There was no specific change to make to the Town Plan.

Comment #164 concerned the impacts on adjoining landowners of passive solar installations. A statement in the narrative section of the Energy Chapter states, "Thetford can encourage use of solar in this fashion by drafting language for the Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations that require the appropriate placement of buildings, landscaping, and energy-saving building design that goes above the State Energy Code minimums." The commenter was concerned that setting requirements of this sort would interfere with the building and landscaping plans of adjacent landowners. Michael said that these issues were always a two-way street that required give-and-take between adjoining landowners. Jason suggested that the language be altered to replace "require" with "encourage". After further discussion, Dean moved that "encourage" be replaced with "promote" and "require" be replaced with "encourage". Jason seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Comment #165 concerned the first page and a half of the Energy Chapter. The commenter said he thought it was inaccurate. After rereading the text, the commissioners agreed that some paragraphs needed citations to back up their statements or they should be removed or rewritten. After further discussion, Jason moved to delete the third and fourth paragraphs. Dean seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The other paragraphs were left as is.

Comment #166 has two parts. In the first part, the commenter said that recommendation #8 in the Energy Chapter, which suggests that the Town should review and adopt zoning regulations that support development of mixed use growth centers providing services to residents, conflicts with other growth provisions written into other chapters in the draft Town Plan. There was a lengthy discussion of his concerns, which included that commercial development was limited to just the Community Business district of East Thetford, and that the proposed addition of a Neighborhood Residential type of area in Post Mills would further restrict business development there. Kevin noted that almost all business types, particularly the service types of businesses referred to in the recommendation, are either permitted or conditional use in all of the village districts so there is no conflict. Dean said that the recommendation could lead to re-examining the use tables in the Zoning Bylaw. The recommendation was left as is.

The second part of #166 was a comment about another potential conflict, where a statement in the Natural Resources chapter refers readers to recommendations regarding wood-smoke pollution in the Energy Chapter. The source of the conflict was not apparent.

Comment #167 was a request to add wind power to the list of locally managed and renewable energy sources at the introductory narrative of the Energy Chapter. Jason moved to add wind power to the list. Michael seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Other Business (8:59)

Dean noted that Kevin Geiger of TRORC had sent an email on January 3 announcing a seminar on Large Forest Blocks, to be held in Bradford on January 10 at 6 p.m. Kevin forwarded the email to the Planning listserv.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

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