

Thetford Planning Commission
May 8, 2018 – DRAFT Notes

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

Absent: None

Guests: Cathee Clement (Selectboard liaison)

(Numbers below refer to agenda items.)

1. Jason called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

2. Public Comment
None.

3. Review of the minutes from the 4/24/18 meeting.
The minutes were accepted as written.

4. Selectboard Report

Cathee said that, at the next Selectboard meeting, they would discuss reducing the size of the Planning Commission to 5 members. Their advertisements had given that date as the deadline for submission of applications. So far, none had arrived. At their last meeting, she had urged the members to reach out one last time to people they knew who might be interested. If none are forthcoming, she expects that they will move to reduce the size of the Planning Commission.

Cathee said she had also asked the Selectboard to reconsider reviewing the next draft of the Town Plan in chunks as each chapter is finished. She said the other members expect that the regional planning commission (TRORC) will request the Planning Commission to reduce the size of each chapter and are hesitant to review text that is likely to be removed. There was a discussion of the Planning Commission's workflow so that Cathee could explain to the Selectboard that the review would be very organized and doable. Jason explained that the first step, already underway, is to insert and edit the changes requested by the Selectboard for the first 5 chapters that they have already reviewed. As that proceeds, the Commission is deleting text from the narrative of each chapter, following the guidelines from Kevin Geiger of TRORC, as described in the minutes of the 4/24 meeting. The Commission will then continue to make changes to the remaining chapters, both by eliminating some of the narrative and by making changes that the character of the changes the Selectboard requested in the first 5 chapters. Jason said he hoped to get through the Selectboard's changes by the first or second meeting in June.

Cathee asked how the Commission's felt about reducing the number of members. After a brief discussion, everyone agreed that if we must, we must. Liz noted that the Development Review Board has 5 members. Since the DRB and Planning Commission used to be a single body, having 5 members in each seems reasonable.

Jamie said that a neighbor had asked him about the status of the project to link Thetford's villages with walking trails. There was a brief discussion but no one knew for sure if the grants

had run out or other projects had become more important. Cathee said she would check with the Selectboard at their next meeting.

Cathee left the meeting.

5. Review and Modify Town Plan Draft

Jason reported that he had received a spreadsheet from the Vermont Department of Taxes that has the residential sales information for 2017. He had forwarded the spreadsheet to the Planning Commission listserv on May 7. He asked Dean if he could use this data to update Figure 4 in the Housing Chapter. Dean said yes.

Liz was quickly brought up to date on the editing process: after discussion each suggested change, Dean was recording them in a master document. There was a brief discussion about trimming the existing narrative. The members confirmed that Chapter 1 had been completed at the previous meeting and began to work on Chapter 2 – Education. Sections of text were identified that could be removed without reducing the support for the Goals, Policies, and Recommendations. Most of the deleted text was historical information that was interesting but not necessary to the goals of the Plan. The data concerning yearly enrollment was summarized. Figure 8 was removed completely. Following the Selectboard’s request to remove any mention of third-party vendors of services, the details about Open Fields School were replaced by a simple statement that there is a small private school on Thetford hill, along with the statement that a small percentage of students are home-schooled.

7. Discuss Elder Housing Committee Goals for Town Plan.

Jason referred the members to an email from Scott Hesser regarding the current status of the senior and affordable housing situation. Briefly, Scott’s email describes why there has been so little progress in locating a suitable site in Thetford for a senior and affordable housing development and how the group intends to proceed, in conjunction with the Twin Pines Affordable Housing Trust. Funds have dried up in the past few years, and the process moving forward seems to be for adjoining towns to collaborate on competing for funding. Thetford still needs to locate a site in town that would be suitable for such a project. The senior and affordable housing is also looking at broadening its scope to include “workforce housing”: that which is affordable to families and individuals with incomes around the local median. This was identified as a need in a recent forum held in Thetford.

6. Review and Discuss Proposed Draft of Community Health Chapter

There was a brief discussion of the purpose in reviewing this proposed chapter. It is considered optional by TRORC and the members agreed that it wouldn’t be appropriate to include it in the current revision of the Thetford Town Plan. Due to the late hour, Jason asked each member to read through the proposed chapter before the next meeting and come up with five comments. These will be collated at the next meeting to pass along to TRORC and the authors of the chapter.

The next meeting will be held on May 22, which is not the usual third Tuesday pattern. The change is temporary. June’s meetings will be back on schedule.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m. Jason apologized for running overtime and promised to do better next time.

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