

Thetford Planning Commission

Public Comments, Future of Thetford Rural Residential District

February 7, 2012

NAME	Comment	Response
Beth Young	What are the limits on development today in RR and villages?	2 acres, ¼ acre with allowance for density
Li Shen	Considering large tracts of undeveloped habitat. 34% of black throated blue warblers breed in VT. Require 500 acres of contiguous forest. 2 acre lots would not preserve this resource. Parcelization is major threat to northern forest habitat. Has to be mechanism to protect w/o infringing on land owner. Option: Hartford 1 st parcel, one size, next parcel must be bigger. Anti-fragmentation measures. We have some responsibility, like it or not. Hughes tract ~ 260 acres, bisected by two roads. Roads introduce predators.	
Dana Grossman	Also avoid long driveways, access roads. Really cuts up big tracts of land. Where she grew up, was rural, farming, is no longer. A cluster in the midst of a large tract, changes entire tract, not just where structures are.	
Beth Young	Was surprised that 2 acres is the minimum. Maine, has 5-10 acres as minimum, not uncommon. There is precedent for multiple size minimums.	Kevin O'Hara: no one right answer; unintended consequences with larger tracts.
Dana Grossman	Would rather see 2 acres along built up roads rather than 10 acres breaking up a larger tract.	
Sandra Miller	Road frontage requirements – to cut out spaghetti lots. What are the requirements now? What is the effect now?	
Sally Duston	Is the terrain taken into consideration in the minimum? More a factor in RR than in villages.	Kevin O'Hara: zoning did not address restrictions on steep slopes. Driveway requirements will resolve, in a way.
Paul Rump	Not as much a factor in Sawnee Bean. Built on impossible slope, blasted hill. Apparently no restrictions on modification of landscape. Some have no cost restriction, others, restricted by cost. Originally, English got flat land, Catholics, others, got the hills. Are there natural limits on growth? Affordability is a barrier. Economics will limit growth. Is there an actual projection of what is possible? Project what is possible and likely, then, could deduce what we could do?	Liora Alschuler: can also look at recent past, although projections subject to events. Dean Whitlock: Two Rivers regional plan?
Li Shen	Different levels of buyers. Difficult to project numbers of those with few economic restrictions. Build-out analysis.	
Li Shen	Habitat evaluations have been done for Thetford and neighboring towns. Are ratings on capability to support habitat. Conservation overlays – could be supported today by available data.	

Paul Rump	Combine build-out with conservation plan, on a regional basis. Could have regional plan for development. Establish treaty with natural world.	
Dan Grossman	Possible to deal with economics, affordability in a Town Plan? Affordability hard to control. Dartmouth can't achieve. Wonder if possible for Thetford. What is possible, where have capacity to do massive damage, building in middle of 500 acre hilltop, can deal with that, not allow 1 mile road into 500 acres. In cities, notice green space (from space). Planning preserved Boston Common, Central Park. Areas kept intact are essential – in cities would be unlivable. Here, major part of why people live here. Incursions last for hundreds of years. Ten houses could destroy habitat for a huge amount of the town. Town Plan can prevent outsized impact of 1, 2 houses.	
Beth Young	Start from green spaces?	
Dana Grossman	Got appreciation for allowing hunting on land.	
Connie Snyder	Could become unlivable, amazing how development feeds on itself. Can happen very rapidly.	
Paul Rump	Happens by increments. Farms closing, enormous tracts of land now open to will of owners. Finance grandchildren's education, whole area would be developed. Potential for development is enormous. Development pressure will continue. Population happens.	
Susan Rump	30 years ago, one car every half day. Development can be measured by traffic as much as buildings.	
Paul Rump	God bless property owners who maintain the rural landscape, they are under pressure. How to work with the development dynamic with landowners?	Kevin O'Hara: Town Plans are imperfect.
Sally S	Hypothetical question: if buyer wanted to set up large scale, commercial, organic farm? Important to keep currently farmed land in farming.	Kevin O'Hara: would start with Act 250, local regs; would be possible; new zoning took small steps to address.
Paul Rump	Are great sites for organic farms, much that is forest used to be farmed.	
Beth Young	Is farming a rural use, or commercial use?	
Susan Rump	Used to be that everyone raised crops, animals, even if not commercial. May all need to do that. Need to preserve agricultural character.	Kevin O'Hara: 1 district or more?
Dan Grossman	Clearly different uses, whole town is "rural". RR isn't just residential. Can be residential and other grades of rural. Can do anything outside the villages. Not many restrictions today, except Act 250. Whole town isn't "rural residential"; also rural habitat, also just plain rural. Are residential and non-residential areas outside villages.	
Li Shen	Are more residential areas, for example, Gove Hill, could be a different zone with smaller zone, to encourage in-filling, instead of 2 acres everywhere outside villages. Are hamlets outside designated villages.	

Dana Grossman	Encourage development where there is already development, rather than breaking into new areas. Makes whole town grey instead of black-and-white, green & grey. Along Gove Hill road, wouldn't really change the character. Putting a new road into an undeveloped area, new house in middle of 100-200 acre parcel changes things dramatically for that whole area. 1-2 more parcels along Gove Hill Rd would not change character.	
Connie Snyder	Rural vs residential: related to size of holding. Large tracts vs many little tracts. Like Land Trust, encourage little lots on edge, we should honor property rights of those who have kept land undeveloped, should encourage development that doesn't disturb. Build on roads, leave large tracts undisturbed. Encourage clusters, get open land.	
Beth Young	Topography, frontage requirements, get in the way. Need flexibility.	Kevin O'Hara: unintended consequences
Dan Grossman	Effect of lot sizing? Price according to minimum size; 10 acres may not promote protection, just more 10 acre lots, instead of 2 acre lots.	
Paul Rump	Thetford may become alternative to Hanover, Norwich, Lyme where expensive development no more room; already happening on Sawnee Bean. Market going to drive it.	
Li Shen	Lyme: large minimum lot size in conservation areas? Felt to be unfair to landowners.	
Sandra Miller	Hanover had 10-acre zoning in forestry area; only seasonal housing allowed, kept population down. Worked, since 1960. Didn't want to bus kids those distances.	
Connie Snyder	What does that do for a community? (Seasonal homes.) Creates bedroom community. Summer people also treasure and conserve land.	
Paul Rump	Rusticators.	
Li Shen	Many out of town owners.	Liora Alschuler: may be large homes as well as "seasonal" homes
Dana Grossman	Out of season, area feels dead (e.g., Squam Lake)	
Charlie Shepard	Heard that 4 of 5 houses sold to someone from outside VT/NH (not as primary residence).	
Charlie Shepard	What are the laws on wind farms and cell towers?	Kevin O'Hara: regulations dictate what must be done, to a point. Have Telecom reg. Solar collectors addressed in zoning, have energy section in Plan. Energy Cmtee will propose language.
Connie Snyder	Dynamic equilibrium: East Thetford activity, could be encouraged. Hold onto the things that make it a pleasure. Encourage economic activity, with respect for each other and the environment – non-exclusive. With limits, has to be balance. Free enterprise with controls.	

Susan Rump	Would freedom to put up wind tower, start saw mill, on rural land.	
Dana Grossman	don't restrict, keep balance	
Paul Rump	Villages – should have services, banks, groceries, gas, charging stations, hubs for rural areas. Use Thet Ctr as municipal focus, Post Mills waiting to be revitalized. Sr housing, decent police station. No. Thetford probably not going to come back unless hook up with Lyme or Railroad or River. Those villages.. Thetford Hill will remain a museum. Keep rural development from going malignant, sh have some organization, keep people informed about changes, would be do-able.	
Sally Duston	Any regulations to control blasting of hillside? To prevent major alteration of the terrain?	Kevin O'Hara: licensing, not controlled by Town; no steepness restriction in zoning today. Can get unintended consequences.
Li Shen	Blasting could provide site near road.	
Susan Rump	Protect environment without abridging property rights. Nervous about eminent domain seizures. Hope we can regulate that.	
Connie Snyder	Commends you all for the work the Planning Commission does, trying hard to do a good job.	