

Any questions, comments or concerns about the minutes should be addressed to Amy Giroux, Zoning Administrator at (802) 868-3325

MINUTES
SWANTON PLANNING COMMISSION
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
Wednesday, March 16, 2022 @ 7:00 p.m.

Present: Oliver Manning, Andy LaRocque, Ross Lavoie, Heather Buczkowski, Ed Daniel, Members; Amy Giroux, Zoning Administrator; Joseph Cava, Administrative Assistant; Danny Barratt; Judy Paxman; David Winchester; Michelle Nordberg; Priscilla “Cyl” Connelly; Chevon Cooper

*All motions carried unanimously unless stated otherwise.

1. Call to Order – Mr. Daniel called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.
2. Agenda Review
3. Review Minutes of February 16, 2022

Mr. Lavoie made a motion to approve the Draft Minutes of the February 16, 2022 Planning Commission meeting, seconded by Mr. LaRocque. Motion carried.

4. Zoning Administrator’s Report

Ms. Giroux opened with a summary of issuances since January 1, 2022 including 6 building permits, 8 certificates of occupancy, 15 certificates of compliance, and 7 DRB applicants. Ms. Giroux also mentioned that there will be an increase in these numbers moving forward between this spring through the fall (March to November).

5. Nominate Planning Commission Chair & Vice Chair

Mr. Manning nominated Ross Lavoie as Planning Commission Chair.
Mr. LaRocque nominated Ed Daniel as Planning Commission Chair.

Ms. Buczkowski added that in previous boards, every board member has participated as chair to spread their varying levels of professional experience. Mr. Lavoie showed interest in Ms. Buczkowski’s idea and elected to remove himself from the running.

Mr. LaRocque made a motion to appoint Ed Daniel as Planning Commission Chair, seconded by Mr. Lavoie. Motion carried.

Mr. Manning made a motion to appoint Ross Lavoie as Planning Commission Vice Chair, seconded by Mr. LaRocque. Motion carried.

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6. Public Comment

a) Retail Cannabis Vote

Ms. Cooper asked about the process of legalizing cannabis sales in the community and asked how to prevent marijuana paraphernalia from being advertised on the business? Mr. Winchester responded saying that any business that operates in the Town or Village is subject business operation regulations just like any other business.

Mr. Manning added that the Town Selectboard is currently putting together a vote on this topic which will include a public forum to educate people on what this vote means and what to expect. Mr. Lavoie recommended getting in contact Northwest Regional Planning to hash out the verbiage for this type of development.

Mr. Daniel added that if this vote passes, applicants seeking to open and operate a cannabis business in Swanton would have to come before the DRB like any other business application. Ms. Nordberg asked how this could be addressed in the Municipal Plan? Mr. Lavoie answered saying that the State is the overall authority/licensor on this subject.

b) Zoning Violations

Mr. Winchester asked how the Town handles zoning violations? Ms. Giroux responded that each violation is different, but the process first starts with a consideration letter telling the individual that their project or structure addition is out of compliance. After seven days without a response a violation letter is then sent out.

Ms. Paxman asked how to know whether a property or project is an active violation? Ms. Giroux responded that everything is in the zoning file at the Town Hall. Ms. Paxman suggested Ms. Giroux add street locations to her report of permits and violations.

Ms. Paxman asked how zoning violations could be made more readily available to the public? Ms. Giroux responded that she keeps an active record of violations, and these records are available to the public in the zoning file at the Town Hall.

c) General Junk

Mr. Winchester asked how junk on properties in the community are taken care of? Mr. Daniel responded saying that one man's junk is another man's treasure and therefore issues like this cannot be policed.

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A resolution for issues like this has been to erect fences to obscure the general public's view from someone's private property.

Mr. Winchester asked how to deal with junk on rental properties? Ms. Giroux responded that the landlord who owns the property receives the violation letter, and it is up to them to resolve the issue associated with their property. Ms. Nordberg spoke about policing of issues like this and how there is no teeth behind the follow-through.

d) Farm Animals in the Village

Ms. Cooper raised an issue of farm animals being cultivated in the Village. The issue with livestock is the impact to quality of life. Ms. Giroux responded saying that there are no bylaws preventing the cultivation of livestock in Swanton regardless of location. Other towns, according to Mr. Lavoie, have implemented ordinances to address issues like this.

e) Communications

Ms. Cooper was at the meeting to represent SEP and the current survey project that is underway. Ms. Nordberg added that this survey was brought up at the joint board meeting last week to understand where community members like to receive their information from. Ms. Cooper said it was disappointing how little involvement there was in the survey by a community of over 6,500 residents.

7. Municipal Plan Audit

Ms. Brunswick from the Northwest Regional Planning Commission will be back in June 2022. Mr. Daniel recommended that Planning Commission members review the current Municipal Plan and highlight changes they would like to see. These changes could be combined into one Municipal Plan packet for Ms. Brunswick's review in June.

8. Set next Planning Commission meeting date

Wednesday, April 27, 2022 @ 7:00 p.m. This will be a private working meeting.

9. Public Comment (Reprise)

Ms. Paxman made a comment about the Community Visit that was mentioned in the previous Municipal Plan. Ms. Giroux said that this section of the Municipal Plan will be removed during the upcoming draft stages.

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10. Any Other Necessary Business (None)

11. Executive Session

Mr. Lavoie made a motion to enter executive session at 8:18 p.m., seconded by Mr. Manning. Motion carried.

Mr. Lavoie made a motion to exit executive session at 8:37 p.m.. seconded by Mr. Manning. Motion carried.

No motions taken.

12. Adjournment – Mr. Lavoie made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:38 p.m., seconded by Ms. Buczkowski. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph Cava
Administrative Assistant

Ed Daniel

Ross Lavoie

Andy LaRocque

Oliver Manning

Heather Buczkowski