

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

**MINUTES
TOWN OF SWANTON
SWANTON PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
*Wednesday, November 16, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.***

Present: Ed Daniel, Chair; Ross Lavoie, Vice Chair; Andy LaRocque, Oliver Manning, Heather Buczkowski, Members; Amy Giroux, Zoning Administrator; Joseph Cava, Administrative Assistant; Corey Parent, Forty-Four Seven Strategies, LLC; Nicole Draper; Betsy Fournier, Chevon Cooper

*All motions carried unanimously unless specified otherwise.

1. Call to Order – Mr. Daniel called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. Agenda Review
3. Review of minutes of November 9, 2022

Mr. LaRocque made a motion to approve the draft minutes from the 11/9/22 Planning Commission meeting, seconded by Ms. Buczkowski. Motion carried.

4. Community Visioning Meeting – Recreation & Senior Housing

Mr. Parent opened by discussing the municipal plan and explaining its importance to the future of Swanton. It can be a valuable source for securing state and federal grant dollars. Continuing, Mr. Parent discussed the change in demographics between Swanton and Franklin County explaining that the population is increasing, and housing availability is decreasing. Mr. LaRocque asked for clarification on the discrepancy in housing? Mr. Parent explained that in addition to single-family residences, some families have a second seasonal property which contributes to housing discrepancies.

Mr. Parent then transitioned to speaking about recreation opportunities in Swanton. Ms. Fournier stresses that recreation isn't confined to organized sports, but valuable natural areas like the Missiquoi Valley Wildlife Refuge which promotes healthy active lifestyles. In addition to natural areas, Ms. Draper stressed the importance of community assets like the public library which hosts a variety of fitness classes and organized community groups. In addition to the recreational opportunities, Ms. Draper highlighted the importance of inclusion and stewardship that these opportunities provide.

The next point Mr. Parent led into is the type of recreational assets that Swantonians take advantage of. Ms. Draper highlighted the underutilization of resources like Marble Mill Park. Mr. Lavoie asked if it would help to have a storage shed on site to utilize recreation supplies? The short answer is yes, but Ms. Giroux reminded the room that this area is an

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active flood zone, which would prevent any physical construction or development on this site. Ms. Draper transitioned to talking about other recreation programs that targets the youth to forge key partnerships with the grade school system.

Mr. Parent asked about community assets that the Town of Swanton is lacking? Ms. Draper said that the proposed community center would help to fill the gap. Ms. Fournier added that the growth of recreational opportunities has encouraged the taxpayers to support future development and growth in regard to recreation. Ms. Draper continued by saying that a community center is vital to expand summer programs that need an indoor space in the case of inclement weather. Mr. Lavoie added that this would be a valuable asset, comparing it to other community centers like Collins Perley in St. Albans which support activities for all ages.

Ms. Fournier stressed the importance of communities supporting one another. The examples are the recently constructed community pool in St. Albans and the arena in Highgate. Mr. Manning mentioned that leaning on one another's community assets isn't a negative, but a positive. If there weren't diverse community offerings that hometowns would be saddled with the debt of creating these facilities without any means of paying for them. Mr. Parent specified that part of the survey is gathering input on what community members would like to see in a community center.

Mr. Parent asked how recreational opportunities could be approved within the community? Ms. Draper said part of the challenge is wayfinding. There are minimal indicators for public parks like Marble Mill. Ms. Draper also expressed the disconnect on know what is located within the community like the limestone company behind the recreational fields. Ms. Fournier added the lasting friendships and connections that are formed through recreational opportunities and how this impacts the future of recreation. Mr. Lavoie highlighted the discipline that is formed through participating in community recreation activities and how this impacts the local job market.

Transitioning, Mr. Parent shifted the conversation to the topic of senior housing. Senior housing is defined as housing suitable for the needs of aging population. Ms. Giroux expressed the lack of housing opportunities for the aging population and was disheartened to admit that this is driving away those that we born, grew up, and raised their families within this community. Mr. Parent expressed that senior housing isn't an issue just with Swanton but is a statewide issue. Ms. Draper expressed a need to change the zoning density to allow more unit on a single acre. Ms. Giroux specified that following the municipal plan rewrite, the bylaws will have an extensive review.

Of all the types of senior housing, Mr. Parent asked what we should see as part of future development? This includes assisted living and other forms of housing. Ms. Cooper said all forms are important. Mr. Lavoie added looking through land use regulations that elderly housing is defined but is not listed as a conditional or permitted use. Mr. Parent added that there are density issues with housing units and what improvements would need to be made to the existing infrastructure to support these housing goals. Mr. Parent

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also mentioned the relationship with Northwest Regional Planning to incentivize housing opportunities.

Continuing, Mr. Parent stressed the importance of the comprehensive community survey which is available online and paper copies. This feedback won't just drive the municipal plan for the next eight years between plans, but the trajectory that development will take over the next 20-30 years. Ms. Draper recommended implementing a QR code in the online surveys to reach more groups of people including high school students. Ms. Draper ended the discussion by expressing her thanks to the Planning Commission for all their hard work.

5. Set Next Planning Commission Meeting Date

Wednesday, December 14, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

6. Public Comment

Ms. Cooper reiterated the importance of a community center to advance Swanton's accessibility to community resources. Ms. Buczkowski expressed the importance of needed accessibility to businesses and community assets for those qualifying under ADA and other mobility issues.

7. Any Other Necessary Business

Ms. Giroux notified the PC that she would be on vacation the end of this week through Thanksgiving.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Lavoie made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 p.m., seconded by Mr. LaRocque. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph Cava
Administrative Assistant

Ed Daniel, Chair

Ross Lavoie, Vice Chair

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Andy LaRocque

Oliver Manning

Heather Buczkowski