

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, October 26, 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; Brian Savage, Town Administrator; Chevon Cooper, Northwest Access; David Montagne; Cathy Montagne; Nicholas Brosseau; Ron Kilburn; Sandy Kilburn; Nicholas Brosseau; Karen Drennen; Marie Frey

*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 October 12, 2022

Mr. Lavoie made a motion to approve the draft minutes from the 9/21/22 Planning Commission meeting, seconded by Mr. LaRocque. Motion carried.

4. Community Visioning Meeting – Southern Growth District

Mr. Daniel began with an introduction of the Southern Growth District (SGD) outlining some of the problems with the area like the lack of water or sewer infrastructure. Mr. Daniel expanded by adding key partnerships with municipalities like St. Albans City and St. Albans Town to bring this much needed infrastructure to this district is essential. Mr. Parent continued the discussion by introducing himself and discussing tonight's agenda as preparation for creating a new Municipal Plan. Mr. Parent stressed the importance of this plan being a vision that could help boost development in addition to grant funded opportunities. Continuing, Mr. Parent said this plan isn't a five-year plan, but a 20–30-year plan for visioning the future. Other data of note during the presentation was a discussion of demographic changes including age and housing.

Shifting to the SGD, Mr. Parent brought up a map for the public to understand where this area is and why it is important. Mr. Fournier asked about the difference between areas of potential development and hinderances like land trusts and wetlands? Mr. Parent responded that tonight's discussion was strictly a consensus of discussing what the community would like to see here. Ms. Drennen asked about discussions with St. Albans to bring in water and sewer. Ms. Buczkowski answered that discussions are in progress with the Village to bring water to the Town where the SGD is located. Mr. Brosseau, a neighbor in the SGD, remarked that he wasn't against development, but didn't want it to

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look like another Maple Tree Place in Williston, VT. Mr. Manning asked for clarification on what Mr. Brosseau wanted to see for housing in this area? Mr. Brosseau responded that he would like to see single-family residences to keep it in keeping with the remainder of the district. Mr. Brosseau following up by asking if water was expanded into the district what it would look like for homeowners in the area with private wells. Mr. Lavoie responded that existing residences would keep their autonomy with wells, but as these systems start to fail, it is leveraged to connect with proposed infrastructure.

Ms. Drennen added that she would like to see mixed use to gain income for the community on this area. Ms. Cooper asked how far the existing utilities come towards the district? Mr. Lavoie responded that the utilities end near the area of John's Bridge. Continuing, Mr. Lavoie said his hope would be to slowly expand this district and other large scale community projects with a 1% local options tax. Ms. Frey expressed concerns of a local options tax given the increase of vacant businesses in St. Albans. Mr. Parent responded saying that the local options tax also accounts for online shopping in addition to physical retail locations. Ms. Buczkowski added the importance of business growth and the need for ADA compliant businesses compared to those located on Merchants Row.

Mr. Brosseau expressed concerns over future development and the ability for the existing roads to handle the load. Mr. Lavoie said this is the point for including this in the Municipal Plan to open grant opportunities with VTrans for improving the road. Mr. Fournier expressed his experience as a farmer in regard to the land in the SGD but said this is valuable land for development and whether we like it or not growth will occur. If we tailor, it to Swanton's vision then growth will occur in a controlled manner. Ms. Kilburn agreed with Ms. Frey and Mr. Brosseau about not wanting this area to become another Maple Tree Place. Ms. Drennen said this is the purpose of zoning and planning to protect this area against obscene development and grow in an acceptable fashion.

Ms. Cooper said she would not like to see anymore car dealerships. In response, Mr. Lavoie expressed that any business is an investment, and we can't pick and choose what the reality of any business means for the community. Ms. Cooper followed up by saying she wasn't against business development but wanted to see localized development that fits the area. Ms. Buczkowski asked how neighbors within the SGD felt about smaller development with commercial space on the first floor with residential units above? Mr. Fournier added that St. Albans is a part of this plan to work on joint ventures with abutting land. Mr. Brosseau expressed concern over big box retailers in this district and wants to see greater pedestrian access to the area.

Mr. Daniel expressed the importance of affordable housing opportunities for the young. Rather than leaving the community that raised them, Ms. Buczkowski added that it should be more important to retain our young people rather than them pursuing more affordable housing opportunities elsewhere. Ms. Drennen asked about this idea of convenience for housing in the young, but also for senior citizens. Rolling back to pick and choose, Ms. Cooper expressed the importance of affordable opportunities and asked about the high-rise housing examples that were discussed? Mr. Lavoie responded that any

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development would be conforming with zoning regulations which would cap the building height at 35 feet or three stories. Mr. Parent continued the discussion by asking what the Town needs to do in the next five to eight years to achieve this vision. The consensus is water and sewer infrastructure.

Ms. Drennen would like to see an actual formalized plan in place. Mr. Fournier added that the Town Selectboard is working in partnership with the Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation (FCIDC) to put together a master plan for the area. Mr. Parent asked about tax increases and local option taxes to spur development? Ms. Drennen said there is a disconnect between property tax and other tax incentives that counts against senior citizens. Mr. Savage said some of these issues stems from competitors between industrial enterprises like Tractor's Supply and the State of Vermont. Ms. Frey asked about a scoping study to address what a local options tax would look like for Swanton. Mr. Parent brought up examples of projects in the area that were funded by a local options tax like new St. Albans Town Hall and the St. Albans City Pool. Mr. Parent also discussed Tax Increment Financing (TIF) as another route of financing.

Ms. Drennen brought up the importance of adding a comment section to the online survey as this could be written on the physical paper form, but not online. Mr. Parent said he would talk to Elizabeth Nance about this as FCIDC built the survey. Mr. Brosseau asked about a deadline for the survey? Mr. Parent responded that December 1, 2022 is the contingent timeline for gathering the survey data. In addition, Mr. Parent said there are still glitches to work out with the online survey as it was just launched today. Mr. Savage asked about the community forum in November? Ms. Giroux responded the forum would be on Wednesday, November 16, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. at the Swanton Town Hall to discuss recreation and housing.

5. Set Next Planning Commission Meeting Date

Wednesday, November 9, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 16, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

6. Public Comment - None

7. Any Other Necessary Business - None

8. Adjournment

Mr. Lavoie made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:48 p.m., seconded by Mr. LaRocque. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph Cava
Administrative Assistant

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Ed Daniel, Chair

Ross Lavoie, Vice Chair

Andy LaRocque

Oliver Manning

Heather Buczkowski