

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, April 19, 2023 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, Interim Administrative Assistant; Christina Candels, Administrative Assistant; Corey Parent, Forty-Four Seven Strategies, LLC; William Hancy

*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 March 29, 2023

Ms. Buczkowski made a motion to approve the draft minutes from the 3/29/23 Planning Commission meeting, seconded by Mr. Manning. Motion carried.

4. Municipal Plan Review

Mr. Parent spoke on his conversation with Chief Crawford of the Abenaki tribe about rewriting portions of the Municipal Plan. Chief Crawford was very receptive to these changes recommending changes that don't gentrify members of the Abenaki tribe. Mr. Parent also recommended removing the Forward section of the plan citing that it is redundant and outdated. Ms. Giroux asked if Chief Crawford understood that these sections on history are meant to be brief and concise. Mr. Parent responded yes saying that the edits so far brings greater racial sensitivity to the Municipal Plan.

Mr. Parent said he still needed to gather additional data on the demographics and population data. In the interim, Mr. Parent has been updating the policy goals outlined in subsequent meetings. Though these policy goals are generic to suite all types of development, some are catered to promote development in the Southern Growth district. Other revisions include updating maps to match the updated data.

Mr. Lavoie expressed a need to update the bylaws so they're more users friendly. Mr. Lavoie specified examples like Highgate whose zoning map is aligned well with the individual zoning districts. Mr. Parent requested that Ms. Giroux send updated agricultural and wetlands maps. Mr. Parent also recommended eliminating repetitive language concerning housing. We know the market is high and things are unaffordable,

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but repeating this throughout the section on housing is too much. Housing needs to be a combination of existing housing stock with proposed housing development and rental housing.

Other edits included updating the conditions of recreational assets including property, equipment, and future development. Beyond the Municipal Plan rewrites, Ms. Giroux highlighted the discrepancies mentioned by Mr. Hancy between the bylaws and conditional use approval projects. Ms. Buczkowski mentioned the positive attributes in the community. Mr. Parent summarized by saying that he'll speak with Chief Crawford to solidify their edits while gathering the remaining data to update the figures.

5. Set Next Planning Commission Meeting Date

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

6. Public Comment

Mr. Hancy came forward to speak about a property abutting his with concern about the proposed construction of duplexes. This issue stems beyond this one isolated project speaking in regard to the existing bylaws and proposed projects. The example of the duplexes in the R1/Agricultural Residential District is an incompatible use with the existing bylaws. Mr. Hancy asked how the Planning Commission can prevent additional conditional uses like duplexes that are inconsistent with the existing uses of a district from occurring. Mr. Parent clarified that a Town can't regulate agriculture in the State of Vermont which is why agriculture isn't explicitly listed as a use in other zoning districts.

Mr. Daniel said that after the Municipal Plan rewrite, the Planning Commission will be working on a bylaw rewrite. Mr. Lavoie explained that the reason many of these projects are classified as conditional uses versus permitted uses is to give interested parties and abutting property owner the opportunity to speak on a project. Continuing, Mr. Lavoie added that 40% of Swanton is in land trust which hinders development regardless of the zoning district. Mr. Parent added that the Vermont legislature is making changes to encourage development in northwestern Vermont. Mr. Hancy said these conditional uses are reshaping the character of existing neighborhoods which is upsetting to neighbors that have lived here their whole lives.

7. Any Other Necessary Business – None

8. Adjournment

Mr. Lavoie made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 p.m., seconded by Mr. LaRocque. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Joseph Cava
Administrative Assistant

Ed Daniel, Chair

Ross Lavoie, Vice Chair

Andy LaRocque

Oliver Manning

Heather Buczkowski