

SWANTON PLANNING COMMISSION
DRAFT MINUTES
Tuesday, September 8, 2026
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT

Present: Ross Lavoie-Chair, Oliver Manning, Desireah Ladieu, Heather Buczkowski -Members
Carolyn Towsley, Zoning Administrator
Absent: Shawn Cheney

1. Call to Order
Mr. Lavoie called the meeting to order at 5:14 pm.
2. Agenda Review
Mr. Lavoie reviewed the agenda, nothing to add.
3. Review / Sign minutes of Aug 4, 2026 & June 9, 2026
Mr. Manning made a motion to approve June 9, 2026, meeting minutes as written, seconded by Ms. Ladieu. Motion carried.
Mr. Manning made a motion to approve Aug 4, 2026, meeting minutes as written, seconded by Ms. Ladieu. Motion carried.
4. Discussion with new Zoning Administrator/ Carolyn Towsley

Mr. Lavoie presented that the board wanted to make some time to chat with the new ZA, update her on what's been going on recently, and offer support where needed before too much time passed.

They also wanted to communicate that if there are areas the board can provide support, etc.

The board had some discussion about bylaw tweaks and edits, but no serious petitions have been brought forward.

There was some discussion about Ag legislative updates that might affect the bylaws, but Ms. Towsley will review and bring to the board anything necessary. It may be good to have the discussion, but ultimately State Statute would overrule a bylaw if there were conflict. The Bylaws have had a recent update so many newer updates related to Accessory On-Farm businesses are reflected in the bylaws. The board is supportive of On-Farm businesses. The only issue they seem to run into are people who claim they are an Ag business without actually coming under the Dept. of Agriculture's RAP definition.

There was discussion about how the appeal process works according to Statute.

Enforcement issues were discussed specifically in regard to issues with development roads. Mr. Manning would like to figure out a way that

private road construction standards can be enforced because it has been a problem with corners being cut in the past. Other enforcement issues have been ongoing however Mr. Lavoie wants to be sure Carolyn is off to a good understanding of our Bylaws and gets comfortable in the office before trying to tackle too many problems. He reiterated that the PC is there to support the ZA if there are issues where there are sticking points, areas that need clarification, etc.

Discussion was had about enforcement tools that are available, enforcement issues related to roads and public safety hazards, putting foundations too close to setbacks, people living in homes without CO's but their road construction isn't to standard etc.

Enforcement while also being pro development is important, because encouraging growth while helping the town to grow well is sometimes a double-edged sword for some. Mr. Manning disagreed and feels that if people are going to develop or build something, and they should pull a permit and do it right, he doesn't see a reason. But others could see how cutting corners and avoiding permits can be seen as cost-saving. It will cost them unfortunately in the long run. But they are often happy to just pay a fine or double the fee after its already done sometimes, which isn't right.

The ZA is a full-time position now. There was discussion about ways to make complaints about known zoning issues. Ms. Buczkowski wondered about making complaints anonymous, if that would encourage people to come forward without fear of retribution from their neighbors. Ms. Towsley will look into guidance on this from the ZA Handbook if a name has to be provided, but if anybody does provide their name when issuing a complaint, anything that does come through this office is public record, there are no privacy rules that could apply in that situation. However, even if a complaint was anonymous, Ms. Towsley would investigate it for legitimacy before pursuing any enforcement action on the matter. *(as discussed previously, if the ZA decides not to enforce the matter, anybody has the right to appeal that decision.) Ms. Towsley will work on ways to make Zoning inquires more accessible to people.

Mr. Lavoie presented some ideas to make Zoning more accessible or create some FAQs or fun facts to post on social media or the website. Many people don't understand zoning, and if people understand what they can or can't do. Many people have questions about neighbors or zoning, their ideas to create some visibility so that the public feels comfortable approaching the zoning office with questions and making things within the bylaws more accessible and create a person to support

the community in their projects. Offense sometimes is the best defense. Ideas like zoning related Facebook posts to create some outreach.

Mr. Lavoie asked to keep track of things that, if people are coming in often in a certain part of town for example and are finding a certain type of business or development is being restricted, to let them know because they are pro-business and development so if there are legitimate concerns with a restriction that is hindering desired growth, business or development in a bylaw that the Planning Commission at times may hear and consider a zoning bylaw amendment to allow it. Or even go through the Bylaws to discuss a potential development before going through the DRB process, and they are fully supported. This does not include projects where issues are discovered well in a project where Planning needs to be involved. Mr. Lavoie is hoping that creating a process where Staff review is involved prior to a project will avoid surprises down the road, or a situation where there are more questions than answers when the developer gets to the DRB.

5. Next Planning Commission Meeting date October 13, 2026, 5 PM
Mr. Manning will not be able to attend but nobody else should have a conflict.
6. Public Comment None
7. Any Other Necessary Business

Ms. Buczkowski wanted to mention she did go to the service for Ed Daniels who was a former Planning Commission member. And wanted to honor his memory and service to the community.

8. Adjournment
Mr. Manning made a motion to adjourn at 6:09 pm, seconded by Ms. Buczkowski. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by
Carolyn Towsley- Zoning Administrator