

SWANTON PLANNING COMMISSION
One Academy St., P.O. Box 711
Swanton, Vermont 05488-0711
Tel. (802) 868-3325, Fax. (802) 868-4957
Email: swanza@swantonvermont.org

June 30, 2015

PUBLIC MEETING
SWANTON PLANNING COMMISSION

The Swanton Planning Commission held a public meeting at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, June 30, 2015 at the Swanton Town Offices, 1 Academy Street for the following purpose:

To meet with representatives of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission to discuss revisions and updates to the “Swanton Town and Village Municipal Plan” which was previously adopted on August 31, 2010. Discussion will be focused upon the consolidation of existing Chapter 2 - “The Vision” and existing Chapter 4 - “Swanton in the Future”, as well as Chapter 5- “Implementation”. This discussion will include consolidation of the text of each chapter and the goals and policies of each chapter. The subject of “flood resiliency” especially the river corridor, which is involved in several different portions of the plan, will also be considered. The Planning Commission will also continue to review recent findings and recommendations of the Swanton Community Visit and incorporate certain recommendations into the plan. Northwest Regional Planning Commission will also complete an enhanced consultation with the Planning Commission.

Present:

Jim Hubbard
Ed Daniel
Andy Larocque
Taylor Newton, NRPC
Yaasha Wheeler, Secretary
Ron Kilburn, Zoning Administrator
Adam Paxman

Mr. Hubbard opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Mr. Newton recalled that the Planning Commission had wanted to do a corridor plan along First Street. Discussion turned to water systems, and how Swanton, in the absence of a municipal water system, had allowed for private systems in the Southern Growth District. Mr. Paxman stated that an NRPC newsletter had suggested a shared water system for multiple municipalities. Mr. Hubbard felt that systems would arise when businesses arrived. The districts in general looked good.

Mr. Newton had integrated language into the Transportation section from the Swanton Community Task Force on traffic. He noted the addition of information on public health as well, linking to the Community Visit and the Substance Abuse Task Force.

Mr. Larocque noted that “there are no current plans for system expansion” under the water system item, but there were indeed such plans. Mr. Paxman informed Mr. Newton of a new 16-inch water transmission line from the reservoir to the Village. The Planning Commission discussed the reservoir. Mr. Paxman explained where the line ran and how it could potentially offer water to MVU or the airport in the future. Mr. Newton agreed to add the information on the waterline.

Mr. Newton noted that Swanton would continue to take steps to maintain flood resiliency, and discussed various points of historical and cultural resources. Mr. Larocque said that many artifacts had been discovered in Swanton; what happened to those? Mr. Kilburn explained the upcoming events about the artifacts, involving both UVM and the University of Maine. Replicas would be displayed at the events. Mr. Larocque felt that that sort of thing was very unique to Swanton. Mr. Hubbard suggested expanding the Chamber of Commerce in the future, to display such exhibits and to include public restrooms. Mr. Kilburn remarked that exhibits were very expensive, and added that gathering public interest in such things is difficult. Mr. Larocque added that the Tabor Road Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge was drawing more crowds recently.

Under the Energy section, Mr. Newton said that he had mentioned Swanton’s low energy costs and briefly touched on Swanton’s renewable energy goals.

Under the Housing section, Mr. Newton had included language about Swanton’s efforts to maintain state standards for various types of housing.

Under Economic Development, Mr. Newton mentioned the task force created around the topic, and mentioned the potential position of a Community and Economic Development Coordinator and his/her role in the future.

Mr. Kilburn asked about wind development, and Mr. Newton noted that the implementation chart included a plan to “attempt to identify renewable energy sites.” Mr. Kilburn predicted controversy over Swanton’s potential renewable energy sites. Mr. Newton said that nothing had yet been applied for. Mr. Hubbard agreed that this topic was one of the first things that should be discussed in the fall after the town plan update. Mr.

Newton summed up that the four topics to discuss at that time would be: river corridors, hazard mitigation plan, First Street corridor, and siting of renewable resources. Mr. Daniel speculated that perhaps structures for renewable energy would become as commonplace on the landscape in the future as telephone poles were in the early 1900s. Mr. Hubbard agreed that community involvement should be sought when the discussion was had.

Mr. Newton explained the application process for a renewable energy structure, which allowed a window of opportunity for the Swanton Planning Commission to meet with the applicant, and the Planning Commission would have equal say with other Swanton municipal boards in terms of the public service process. Mr. Hubbard asked if there were opportunities for more information regarding that process, and Mr. Newton offered such information if the Planning Commission requested it in the future.

Mr. Daniel read a portion of the language that identified Swanton as “a walkable center,” but pointed out another section that noted the traffic and access management problems, making the roads (Route 78 and Route 7) dangerous to pedestrian and bike traffic. He suggested language that would state Swanton’s desire to improve those conditions. Mr. Kilburn reminded that a Swanton task force was looking at that problem.

Mr. Paxman asked about the dam, and wished to ensure that it was identified as a historical or cultural resource. Mr. Newton remarked that there was no task associated with it. Mr. Hubbard reminded that the dam could be included in the Energy section, because it potentially could be used for energy in the future. Mr. Newton read language from a previous draft that suggested looking at the dam for future economic development.

Mr. Daniel read a section that discussed Swanton’s efforts to retain historic and cultural resources, and felt that might be a good place to mention the dam. Mr. Hubbard summed up that public input had said “Save the dam,” and felt that it should be included in the plan.

Mr. Newton suggested language along these lines: “It is important that the community dedicate itself to continuing to preserve the Lower Swanton Dam and other Native American culture sites.” Mr. Kilburn explained the importance of the dam: the quiet water for paddling, the reservoir for fire fighting, and more.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Newton summarized the information in this section, including a information on NFIP standards, fluvial erosion, buffer zones, and river corridors. There was also information about the Phosphorous TMDL Implementation Plan, Vermont Shoreline Protection, the flood of 2011.

PRIME AGRICULTURAL SOILS AND FARMLANDS

It was noted that some information had been updated from 2009 data to 2014 regarding parcels of land categorized as farms and parcels currently enrolled in the Current Use Appraisal program. Information on earth resources mostly identified several quarries.

WETLANDS

Mr. Paxman asked how wetland would impact their TSA district. Mr. Hubbard pointed out that it was just wetlands, not floodplain, and hoped that the wetlands could somehow be mitigated in the future. Mr. Newton summarized that Class 2 wetlands were regulated by the state, and that any development in the buffer zone or in the wetland itself required the payment of a fee. Class 3 wetlands were under the jurisdiction of the Army Corps of Engineers. Mr. Hubbard felt that wetlands were a large issue in Swanton, noting several key areas of Swanton that involve wetlands. Mr. Daniel recounted how the drainage changed over the years, due to a multitude of culverts installed in the Village, backing up the water and expanding wetland areas. Mr. Hubbard agreed that there was little stormwater drainage in the Village.

Mr. Newton asked if either the town or village had a culvert inventory. The Planning Commission said “no.” Mr. Newton suggested having a subheading talking about stormwater and including a goal in the implementation plan to create a culvert inventory. He added that there was a lot of money that Swanton could access for stormwater and water quality issues, especially because of Swanton’s geography and position on the lake. He also noted that FEMA money was available to update culverts in Swanton under the hazard mitigation plan.

CHAPTER 6 – COMPATIBILITY

Mr. Daniel mentioned “The two towns are also linked by two local roads, Maquam shore an Highgate Roads,” and suggested using their highway names, Route 36 (Maquam Shore Road) and Route 207 (Highgate Road). Mr. Newton said he believed Route 36 was no longer a state route through Swanton, but he would double check that. Mr. Kilburn suggested removing the language, “Highgate serves as a bedroom community to Swanton and St. Albans,” which was language from the old plan. Everyone agreed.

Mr. Newton noted that the chapter noted how Swanton’s local plan and NRPC’s regional plan were largely compatible with each other.

OTHER BUSINESS

The Planning Commission would meet again on July 8th. Mr. Newton would get all edits done by July 9th. He explained the hearing process and how major and minor changes could be made. The JLB could only make a major change after consultation with the Planning Commission. An amendment could always be added afterward, to avoid interrupting the schedule with any major changes. The Planning Commission hearing for the plan would be scheduled for August 12th. Taylor would prepare the warnings for the hearings and send to Miss Wheeler to warn publicly. After the PC hearing, a copy of the plan needed to be submitted to the Selectboard with a report. The Planning Commission thanked Mr. Newton for doing “a remarkable job.”

Mr. Hubbard said he felt that it was time to advertise for the Planning Commission vacancy, and noted the upcoming Zoning Administrator vacancy that would follow the expiration of Mr. Kilburn’s term.

Mr. Hubbard made a motion, seconded by Mr. Larocque, to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes of June 23, 2015. Motion carried.

Mr. Daniel made a motion, seconded by Mr. Larocque, to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Yaasha Wheeler
Planning Commission Secretary

Jim Hubbard

Ed Daniel

Andy Larocque