

**TOWN OF SWANTON**  
**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR SELECTBOARD MEETING**  
**Swanton Town Office Building**  
**1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488**

***Tuesday, March 29, 2016 @ 7:00 p.m.***

*Planning Commission present: Jim Hubbard, Ed Daniel, Andy Larocque, Sara Luneau-Swan.*

*Selectboard present: Joel Clark, Dan Billado, John Lavoie, James Guilmette, and Jeff Raleigh.*

*Development Review Board present: Amy Giroux*

*Village Trustees present: Adam Paxman, Chris Leach, Eugene Labombard*

*Also present: Reginald Beliveau, Village Manager; David Jescavage, Town Administrator; Darlene Marrier, Zoning Administrator; Yaasha Wheeler, Secretary*

*Public present: Ronald Kilburn, Patricia Rainville, John A. Smith, Ricky Doe, Shawn Cheney, Terri O'Shea, Tom Benton (St. Albans Messenger), Hank Lambert.*

**OPENING OF BOARD MEETINGS**

Mr. Hubbard called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the implementation of the Town Plan.

Mr. Clark opened as Chair of the Swanton Selectboard at 7:02 p.m. Mr. Leach, speaking for president, opened the Village Trustees meeting. There was no quorum for the DRB.

Mr. Hubbard led those present in the pledge of allegiance.

Mr. Hubbard explained that the Planning Commission had rewritten the Town Plan, and the biggest component of that revision was the implementation of the plan.

**RENEWABLE ENERGY**

The number one duty of the Planning Commission was to conduct a yearly joint meeting with the Joint Body. He has seen that a lot of people are still excited about the Community Visit but wanted to make sure that they were not "spinning their wheels." He introduced the new Planning Commission, Sarah Luneau-Swan, and amongst all the Planning Commission, they had over 250 years of lifetime in the community. The Planning Commission's main job is to plan and to push forward initiatives. As planners, they would try to help keep the positive momentum going.

*Amend and identify renewable energy and sites.* That is Item #1 that the Planning Commission was working on with Mr. Jescavage, and planned to approve as a Planning Commission, a new renewable energy section in the Town Plan and present it to the JLB for adoption by May or June. A year ago, the Planning Commission applied for a grant to aid in these renewable energy revisions, but that grant was denied, probably because a number of other grants have already been awarded to the Town.

Yesterday, the Vermont senate had passed a bill that all local communities needed to adopt plans regarding renewable energy.

Mr. Clark “wholeheartedly” agreed that renewable energy was the number one issue to address in the town plan. His understanding was that whatever was done with the town had to be coordinated with the Northwest Regional Planning Commission. He asked if the change to the plan would go forward regardless of the bill currently in the legislature; Mr. Hubbard said that the update would go forward. The Planning Commission had researched other community approaches to renewable energy. Mr. Billado said he had been following the big energy projects in the state, and the Public Service Board and Public Service Department were starting to listen. A hundred and eighteen communities had demanded the ability to have a voice in the process. He agreed that this was the right time to “let Montpelier know that this is our town and we want a say in it.”

Patricia Rainville reminded that the dam in Swanton was an important feature. Mr. Beliveau said that the Village was planning a fish ladder. “This is the only river in the State of Vermont that shows natural repopulation of walleye up to 35 percent.” The dam would be a functioning hydro-electricity facility, and there were indications that the fish were already finding a way around it. Mr. Hubbard agreed that this was something important to promote.

Mr. Hubbard said that they were working on quality verbiage that located specific sites in the community for appropriate renewable energy sites. The Planning Commission would amend the bylaws regarding renewable energy over the summer and autumn too.

Mr. Leach said that much of the state’s efforts were driving up the electricity costs for users. He explained how the “external generation points,” subsidized by the government, increased the rate of the other users. He recommended language addressing that projects cannot negatively impact the cost. “Swanton has the least expensive power in the state of Vermont. We didn’t do that by mistake.” He added that existing hydropower was not considered renewable, but if it were, “Swanton would already be over the number.”

Rick Doe commented on the language proposed for the plan: “I like it, but is it going to be too late?” The Swanton Wind Project was moving forward. He noted that there was a suit against companies that sold their “renewable energy” out of state, exempting them from being called renewable energy. Mr. Billado added that his understanding was that the bill called for energy produced in Vermont to stay in Vermont. Green Mountain Power and other power companies are already saying that the grids are full; there is no room for extra power.

Mr. Clark explained that Vermont Law School students did a study that showed that none of the credits of these large renewable energy projects went to Vermonters. He suggested putting in a sentence or two in all the major portions of the town plan, and reminded that solar siting was also important. Mr. Hubbard agreed that the Planning Commission would discuss appropriate solar siting.

## **CONDUCT A STUDY OF FIRST STREET CORRIDOR**

The Planning Commission would meet at the park and walk First Street to the interstate and discuss the districts along it and any need for modification of districts. He did not feel that the truck traffic would go away, so he felt it was important to develop First Street with that in mind. There were some historic buildings along that corridor to consider as well.

He mentioned sidewalks and lights that would increase safety between MVU and downtown. He also suggested different ideas of redeveloping the park.

Mr. Jescavage said that there would be a presentation at the Swanton Municipal Complex on April 6, 2016, at 6 p.m. regarding the feasibility study for sidewalks along First Street and South River Street. Mr. Clark added that a task force that began after the Community Visit looked specifically at parking and traffic, especially around the park area. Mr. Hubbard asked that the committees forwarded minutes to the Planning Commission to help keep the planners informed.

Shawn Cheney agreed that traffic was an issue and that the truck traffic was not going to be diverted. He suggested converting rather than diverting, to make the downtown safe and usable. He noticed that the current sidewalks were definitely inadequate, and needed more connectivity to the Rail Trail and the industrial park.

Mr. Beliveau said that it was important to coordinate efforts better with the Planning Commission, since there were a number of efforts in the town and village in progress.

Mr. Clark suggested that the Planning Commission attend a different board's meeting every month to stay abreast of the ideas and changes. Mr. Daniel said that some towns hire a "town planner" to coordinate these efforts. "A lot of stuff waits because we're all volunteers and we don't have time to do it."

### **ESTABLISH VILLAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Mr. Hubbard noted that Swanton did not have an established historic district, so the Planning Commission would be working on designating it. He suggested ideas for refurbishing old buildings and making them usable, expanding parking, increasing quality housing, and other enhancements to the Village. "We think it has a tremendous amount of potential down there... These sites in our historic district, if we don't develop them right, they go away forever."

Mr. Clark asked if anyone had seen the memo from Greta Brunswick, senior planner at Northwest Regional Planning, dated today. The letter said that the Brownfields program had offered to fund to help revitalize a number of prime areas in the Swanton Village area, encouraging private investment, providing developers with useful information and tools that would facilitate redevelopment of catalyst high-priority sites, and more. Mr. Clark felt that the town should definitely take up the offer.

Mr. Hubbard noted that a number of obstacles were arriving in the Southern Growth District, so he felt it was important to consider growth in the Village center.

### **IDENTIFY SITES FOR FUTURE PUBLIC FACILITIES**

Mr. Hubbard said that the town was mostly agricultural, but the Village was important to develop. He suggested uses for various community facilities, and asked the Selectboard to consider retaining the land currently for sale.

Mr. Billado said he did not disagree, but added that the sale of the land was part of paying for the new garage. "If we don't sell that property within the next 11 years, the taxpayers have to come up with another \$200,000 when they've already paid \$600,000." Mr. Hubbard said that was part of "pros and cons." Mr. Shawn Cheney said that he did not feel that anyone would buy the property for \$200,000. Mr. Billado said that the Selectboard compared the property to another property to generate the asking price. Mr. Hubbard felt that developing the property could benefit the community greatly and bring value to Swanton.

Mr. Daniel suggested looking at buying property near municipal facilities. "There is only so much land out there." Mr. Shawn Cheney said some land adjoining the school was available.

Mr. Hubbard suggested building up instead of out as well, to accommodate the need for recreation programs, senior citizen areas, school facilities, and more.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Mr. Hubbard said that an economic development position was important. Hank Lambert with the Swanton Enhancement Project said that the Community Visit stressed the need for a point person to coordinate the numerous efforts to enhance Swanton through networking, pursuing grants, and other efforts. He said that the committee was pursuing a grant to financially support a position, and he would ask the Selectboard to help fund half

of the position. The current positions were too busy to do the project “piece-meal.” Ms. Terri O’Shea said that volunteer work is great, but it is not sustainable long-term.

Mr. Clark said that they did not want to “double-tap” the Village taxpayers, and they wanted to have the position’s salary come out of the General Fund, so that everyone would pay equally. He wanted to be sure that the Town and Village cooperated appropriately. Mrs. Luneau-Swan agreed that educating the taxpayers on the balance between Village and Town is important. Mr. Billado said that the only way this would work is to implement the position into the General Fund. The boards agreed that the Town and Village worked well together.

Mr. Daniel mentioned the pros and cons of merging the Village and Town. Mr. Leach responded that the Village runs businesses because everyone agreed to live together and share the facilities equally (sewer, water, and electric), and those services do not match well with the town, whose job is to keep records. “We work well together. To me, we are together already. We have different needs, and we help each other... I think we’re already merged.” Mr. Kilburn said that he felt discussion of merger would be a distraction, since the business at hand was economic development.

Mr. Hubbard stated, “If we build it, they will come.” Mr. Doe illustrated how Montgomery’s merger affected the town. Mr. Clark said that there were too much momentum with the Community Visit and felt that the merger discussion would be a distraction that no one wanted to deal with.

Mrs. Luneau-Swan asked if there was a way to coordinate amongst the committees and boards: “Is there a central place where the minutes are located?” Mr. Lambert said that the USDA had approved them for a small grant to pay a graduate student, Brian Story. Mr. Story was developing a communication plan, for internal communication and for communication to the public. Mr. Paxman felt that this joint meeting should be done every six months. He read an e-mail he received last year after the car show, highly applauding the show for its organization and Swanton for its warmth and appeal. Mr. Shawn Cheney said that getting the “doers” together with the “talkers,” people would not be willing to spend money in the downtown. He recommended getting people together who are willing to spend the money. Mr. Daniel said that the business owners especially needed to take an active role in the town’s welfare.

Mr. Daniel made a motion, seconded by Mr. Larocque, to adjourn at 8:29 p.m. Motion carried.

The Selectboard and Village Trustees discussed the façade of Dollar General, and Mr. Clark suggested sending a letter from both the Selectboard and Village Trustees requesting a nicer façade. Mr. Labombard said he had not known it was a Dollar General when he saw the warning, and he could not go to every meeting to know what was going on. Mr. Clark said that Dollar General talked to the Village prior to the site plan review, and the DRB learned from that situation. With the information and public input it had, the DRB made a decision. Mr. Jeff Raleigh was in favor of getting the four-month grad student to enhance the communication system. Mr. Lavoie suggested reaching out to the school to find a young person who could learn more about development: “The problem is, we don’t have enough people who want to be part of our boards.”

Mr. Billado emphasized that the boards listened to the voters. Mr. Hubbard said that the boards worked together and are moving forward with adjusting for the future. Terri (?) thanked the boards for their work.

Mr. Beliveau said that Swanton was doing the right things, and were now just dotting their I’s and crossing their T’s to be sure that, moving forward, they would do the right thing. “If we’re going forward, we’re going to do it right. And working together, we’ll make it happen.”

Mrs. Rainville said she was the volunteer coordinator for the historical museum, and asked if the school system had a requirement for community service. What if part of their

volunteer time would be to serve on the boards as a non-voting member? Mr. Doe said he was very proud of Swanton's cooperation.

Mr. Lavoie made a motion, seconded by Mr. Guilmette, to adjourn at 8:47 p.m. Motion carried.

Received and filed by:

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Cathy Fournier, Swanton Town Clerk

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Date