

TOWN OF SWANTON
DRAFT MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Swanton Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488

Wednesday, May 19, 2016 @ 6:00 p.m.

Present: Jim Hubbard, Planning Commission Chair; Ed Daniel & Andy Larocque, Planning Commission members; Darlene Marrier, Zoning Administrator; Yaasha Wheeler, Secretary; Marianna Gamache; Suzanne Washburne; Shawn Cheney.

1. Call to Order

Mr. Hubbard called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m.

2. Agenda Review

No changes were made to the agenda.

3. The Swanton Planning Commission walked along First Street to consider possible changes to the NCL/Neighborhood Commercial Light District and the TSA/Travel Service Area District.

The Planning Commission noted that the truck traffic would remain on First Street because of the interstate and that the neighborhood along First Street was slowly transitioning from residential to commercial. In light of that, it was worth discussing whether the districts should be updated to reflect and facilitate that shift.

Mr. Daniel suggested having signs diverting traffic to the “downtown district” to prevent back-up at the end of First Street. Ms. Washburne asked to know the definition of “historic,” since some of the buildings and areas in the Village were historic, and Mr. Hubbard identified certain areas as historic (the library, the park, the town offices, etc.). He added that Swanton may lose some of the historic sites in order to develop.

Mr. Cheney explained that it was most difficult to sell commercial properties in Swanton because the larger franchises would need to buy several lots, which became expensive, and would also need a sufficient customer base to be attracted to Swanton. That situation favored more “mom & pop” shops. The properties along the “grid” (between Grand Avenue and Canada Street) tended to sell for the lowest amount.

The Planning Commission and attendees discussed the need for more crosswalks and sidewalks, as well as for general renovation of many of the buildings along the street. The Marble Mill properties also needed renovation for commercial use and could eventually attract investors.

Mr. Hubbard said that he had tried on multiple occasions to get the Development Review Board to meet with the Planning Commission to discuss the various needs of Swanton, and of the ways to stimulate commercial developments, but had so far been unable to meet with the DRB. Ms. Washburne suggested that the Economic Development Committee should review the bylaws and help consider the direction of Swanton.

4. Discussion of possible changes viewed on walk.

Mr. Hubbard summarized that there were three main matters to consider:

- 1) The Economic Development Committee should have a copy of the bylaws.
- 2) There was a lot of potential for commercial development along First Street, but there were financial obstacles in the way.
- 3) The Planning Commission hearing on renewable energy amendments, scheduled for June 1st, needed to be cancelled. In light of a new bill (S.230) and some proposed renewable energy language modeled after the language from the town of Bennington, the Planning Commission wished to postpone the hearing and consider additional renewable energy amendments.

5. Review minutes of April 27, 2016

Mr. Daniel made a motion, seconded by Mr. Larocque, to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes of April 27, 2016. Motion carried.

6. Any Other Necessary Business

The Planning Commission set the next regular meeting for June 15, 2016, and was postponing the special renewable energy hearing of June 1, 2016, until a date to be determined.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Daniel made a motion, seconded by Mr. Larocque, to adjourn at 8:41 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Yaasha Wheeler
Planning Commission Secretary

Jim Hubbard

Ed Daniel

Andy Larocque

Ross Lavoie

Sara Luneau-Swan