

1 **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING**
2 **NORTHWEST REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

3 May 30, 2007 Meeting Minutes
4
5

6 The meeting of the Board of Commissioners was held at the F-GI Workforce Investment Board site.
7

8 Commissioners: See attached.
9

10 Quorum was present to conduct business.
11

12 **Welcome, introductions, opening remarks**

13 Chair R. Larose welcomed everyone at 7:02 p.m. followed by roll call.
14

15 **Opportunity for Public Comment**

16 No comments were received.
17

18 **Public Hearing: Amendment and Re-adoption of the Northwest Regional Plan**
19

20 R. Larose introduced J. Tuck, Chair of the Regional Plan Review Committee. J. Tuck reviewed the role
21 of the regional plan committee. In accordance with Vermont law, tonight's public hearing is the final
22 public hearing prior to NRPC amending and re-adopting the regional plan. Each speaker will be allowed
23 5 minutes to speak.
24

25 *B. Kade motions to overrule the chair so that there is not a specific time limit placed on public comment.*

26 *B. Kittell seconded. Discussion.*
27

28 A brief discussion ensued regarding whether the public should be given a time limit given the
29 significance of the vote.
30

31 *Vote: Motion failed.*
32

33 G. Brunswick provided an overview of the regional planning process.
34

35 Marie Frey commented on the unique character of places with prime agricultural soils including: the need
36 to preserve such places, production of locally grown foods, and the loss of tourism to the economy.

37 *Letter from Richard Hudak and Marie Frey, Hudak Farm, regarding Agricultural Land Preservation was*
38 *previously submitted to Board of Commissioners, and is included as part of the public hearing record.*
39

40 Sue Prent read from a letter submitted to the Board of Commissioners which opposed the proposal for the
41 following reasons: loss of prime ag soils, need for affordable housing vs. need for retail, and lack of
42 creative conservation planning which emphasizes redevelopment of existing structures around traditional
43 centers.

44 *Letter from Sue Prent, Northwest Citizens for Responsible Growth was previously submitted to Board of*
45 *Commissioners and is included as part of the public hearing record.*
46

47 Betty Finn commented on the previous attempt at bringing a large scale retailer to the exit 20 area, the
48 impacts from the loss of a farm economy to the county and state, and the loss of identity of the
49 community should "big box" development occur.
50

1 Marie Lamoge commented on the health impacts of residents living near a large scale retailer due to
2 pollution from increased automobile and truck traffic as well as environmental impacts due to stormwater
3 runoff.
4

5 Tom Bushey commented on the size of the proposed growth center and its relationship to sprawl, the
6 impacts on the St. Albans Bay watershed, the economy, traffic, and conflicts with the Regional Plan
7 citing sections on the growth center (p. 323), water quality goals (p.329), and the land use chapter. Also,
8 it does not follow the Governor's Forward Plan.

9 *Letter from Tom Bushey was previously submitted to Board of Commissioners and is included as part of*
10 *the public hearing record.*
11

12 Jim Hubbard commented that Swanton is at a point where there is a need to protect its heritage and bring
13 other revenues into the community. The planning commission has recognized that Swanton is turning into
14 a bedroom community. A moratorium on all subdivisions for one year went into effect last night.
15 Farming in the area is not safe anymore due to traffic.
16

17 Tim Clippinger commented that the proposed amendments are the result of responsible planning as
18 opposed to developer driven planning. There is consideration of pervious pavements in parking lots,
19 access management, pedestrian access and speed limits.
20

21 Katy Lavoie commented that the proposed amendments are exactly what the legislature and governor had
22 in mind when they supported the growth center bill. Mixed growth delivers a multitude of services which
23 is what Swanton is proposing.
24

25 Pamala Smith commented on the importance of maintaining villages centers to strengthen community ties,
26 urged resourcefulness when planning for future development.

27 *Letter from Pamala Smith and Walt Gaskill previously submitted to Board of Commissioners is included*
28 *as part of the public hearing record.*
29

30 Dick Thompson commented about the significant contributions made by the town to ensure Vermont
31 Natural Resources are protected; the decision of the joint legislative body to apply for village center
32 designation of Swanton Village; the amount of prime agricultural soils within the town; and good
33 stewardship.
34

35 John Edwards commented that the Missisquoi River is a jewel to the area and should be used as a
36 stimulus for economic development.
37

38 Sandy Kilburn commented on the need for balance and moderation; balance in keeping growth in the
39 growth center, not in big boxes. She noted that stores in the village are turning into apartments.
40

41 Ron Kilburn spoke of the work the planning commission has put in over the years in dealing with
42 uncontrolled growth, and loss of farmland; their efforts to get a revitalized downtown and a growth
43 center; and the cordiality despite differing points of view.
44

45 Chair J. Tuck closed the Public Hearing at 7:59 p.m.
46

47 **Minutes of the March 2007 Meeting**

48 *R. Roberge motioned to accept the minutes as presented. H. Garrett seconded. Motion carried.*
49
50
51

1 **Committee Reports:**

2 **Executive Committee** – R. Larose reported the committee is looking for a bylaw review committee. Any
3 commissioner interested in serving should contact either Greta or Catherine.

4 **Finance/Operations** – D. Peirce reported that the budget report was included in the board packet. The
5 Commission is still solvent. The next meeting is June 11th to discuss the FY08 budget.

6 **Personnel** – L. Scangas reported that staff reviews will be held during June, and should be completed by
7 the July Board meeting.

8 **Policy/Project Review** – J. Lambert reported that there were two projects being reviewed that were
9 included in the board packet: the Moran development in Fairfax and another in St. Albans Town. Both
10 are in the pre-Act250 hearings phase. The committee made preliminary comments. Item #3 has
11 substantial regional impact in that it is outside of the growth center.

12 **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)** – R. Larose reported that Sheldon, Grand Isle, and
13 Montgomery have new TAC representatives. The following appointments were made to the Lamoille
14 Valley Rail Trail Advisory Council: Bill Rose, NRPC, Dick Thompson, Swanton Town; Cynthia Scott,
15 Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail. A memorandum of understanding has been executed among all the regional
16 planning commissions in the western part of the state agreeing to participate in the Western Corridor
17 Project. The TAC received an update from Gary Champy, Northwest Transit Network for improvement
18 of public services. The next meeting will be held on June 14th.

19 **VT Assoc. of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA)** – B. Kittell reported that they met
20 recently in Montpelier at League of Cities and Towns. The primary topic of discussion was the start of
21 downtown bills and the evolution of regional growth centers. He noted that there are not clear cut rules to
22 every situation.

23 **Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC)** – No report.

24 **Downtown Development Board** – No report. C. Steen noted that Fairfax , North Hero, Alburg,
25 Bakersfield and Swanton were applying for village center designation through the Vermont Downtown
26 Program.

27 **Regional Plan Committee** – Tabled to be addressed under later agenda item.

28 **Office** – S. Coleman reported that he has provided project oversight and staff support for emergency
29 management exercises held in Sheldon, Fairfax and Enosburgh. The Sheldon and Fairfax exercises were
30 designed to test response to a hazmat event. The Enosburgh exercise utilized a computer based
31 simulation model developed by the Dartmouth Institute for Security Technologies, Team LLC and the
32 Local Emergency Planning Committee #4. All exercises were well attended and were considered a
33 success. He is also assisting several towns with the development and adoption of Vermont Rapid
34 Response Plans and emergency operations plans.

35
36 G. Brunswick reported on a series of workshops that were being held including new board member
37 training, water quality and site planning. Also, a zoning administrator round table will be held to discuss
38 water/waste water rules. She also reported that municipal education grants are available to local boards
39 through the Department of Housing and Community Affairs. Up to \$800 per community is available.

40
41 B. Rose reported on the Western Corridor Project which included the area from Bennington County to
42 Franklin County with focus on US7 and the railroad. The project involves all regional planning
43 commissions in the western part of the state. The US 7 Corridor study resulted from the outgrowth of
44 some of the Wal Mart discussions. Agency of Transportation is taking a comprehensive view of the
45 Route 7/Exit 20 area to better manage how improvements will be constructed. A draft will be released
46 soon and the first public hearing will be held within the next few weeks. Solid Waste Implementation
47 plans were completed and submitted to the state for review. Work will begin on updates to regional
48 transportation plan.

1 **Regional Plan Update**

2
3 G. Brunswick stated a 60% vote of appointed Commissioners is needed for adoption.

4
5 Joyce Tuck reported that public hearings on the proposed amendments to the regional plan were held on
6 April 2, May 2, and earlier tonight. She provided an overview of the regional plan committee process.

7
8 *Joyce Tuck motioned to approve the plan. N. Speer seconded. Discussion followed.*

9
10 Barry Kade noted that he is really concerned about the loss of prime agricultural soils. Prime agricultural
11 soils are a very important consideration for growth.

12
13 Chris Leach stated that the Swanton growth center was thought out in a very efficient manner and that
14 utilizing Exit 20 and the related infrastructure is the best way to manage and sustain growth.

15
16 Patrick Howrigan stated he has reservations because of the prime agricultural soils issue, and that there is
17 a sacrifice here to protect prime agricultural soils in the rest of the county.

18
19 Marilyn Savoy stated that regional planning was established to plan for growth. The concept of growth
20 centers is that it forces communities to look at cumulative impacts.

21
22 Nancy Hunt stated that there has been a lot of planning put into the proposed Swanton growth center and
23 that she supports the proposed growth center in part because of the years of planning experience by the
24 Swanton Planning Commission.

25
26 Colleen Steen stated that development and growth will continue to happen and that the job of the
27 commissioners is to guide the growth. She is concerned about the prime agricultural soils, but
28 commissioners have to look at the bigger picture

29
30 Andrea Baderstadt state that all of us are concerned about economic development and other issues that
31 have been raised. Swanton has put a lot of work into planning for this. If we are going to support
32 planning, we have to support communities who have invested the time.

33
34 Neal Spear stated the people of Swanton have been as conscientious as can be and that the proposal
35 reflects smart growth. He has concern for the Hudak Farm, but noted that the issue can be worked out
36 with Swanton Town and Village.

37
38 Harold Garrett spoke of farming, the work of the Swanton planning commission in planning for the
39 growth center, areas that have been set aside as conservation, and how nothing occurs in Swanton without
40 being scrutinized. The town of Swanton is not asking for anymore then what they are responsible for and
41 they can continue to control what is out there.

42
43 Bob Manning stated he has lived on the Bushey Road for 60 years and during that time farmed the
44 Gerbode Park West until it was unsafe due to traffic. The area can not handle the traffic due to the
45 numbers of cars that use that road everyday.

46
47 Bill Kittell stated that global warming will produce more food not milk. The area is a farming community
48 found nowhere else is new England. We should be concerned with the loss of prim agricultural soils,
49 otherwise the plan is a mistake.

50
51 Joyce Tuck stated that this is the only way to control the hodge podge of growth at Exit 20.

1
2 John Lambert stated that growth is coming. We can get ahead of developer controlled growth. When we
3 talk about the loss of agricultural land we also have to talk about farmers having the right to sell land to
4 developers.

5
6 David Peirce stated that the plan is good for Swanton but he cannot support it. He noted that expansion of
7 the water and sewer services, which are currently near capacity, would cause a rate increase to the city
8 residents.

9
10 Barry Kade asked what will prevent individuals or developers from buying up properties around growth
11 centers?

12
13 Ron Kilburn stated the issue was considered during the Swanton’s zoning bylaws revision process. It is a
14 tough question because of the rights of ownership.

15
16 Jim Hubbard stated that everyone in Chittenden County wants a 10 acre lot. Three years from now, when
17 they don’t want to mow the back 5 acres, they will subdivide it then subdivide again. If we don’t plan for
18 this now, then we’ll be coming back to you to come up with another way. We are a bedroom community.
19 The voters vote down our school budget. We need the place to grow.

20
21 *M. Guernsey motioned for a roll call vote to adopt or reject the proposed amendments to the regional*
22 *plan. B. Kade seconded. Discussion.*

23
24 A discussion ensued to clarify that a “yes” vote is in favor of adopting the proposed amendments, and a
25 “no” vote is against adopting the proposed amendments.

26
27 Roll call vote:

- 28
- | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 29 Baker: <i>Absent</i> | 44 Douglas: <i>Absent</i> | 59 Lavalla: <i>Absent</i> |
| 30 Tatro: Yes | 45 Clark: <i>Absent</i> | 60 Tomlinson: <i>Absent</i> |
| 31 Beaderstatdt: Yes | 46 Lucy: <i>Absent</i> | 61 Brouillette: Yes |
| 32 Jesberger: <i>Absent</i> | 47 Baitz: Yes | 62 Howrigan: No |
| 33 Hunt: Yes | 48 Waite: Yes | 63 Guernsey: Yes |
| 34 Mayo: <i>Absent</i> | 49 Demars: Yes | 64 Wright: <i>Absent</i> |
| 35 Charron: Yes | 50 Leslie: Yes | 65 Peirce: No |
| 36 Larose: Yes | 51 Paquette: <i>Absent</i> | 66 Scangas: Yes |
| 37 Roberge: Yes | 52 Trombley: <i>Absent</i> | 67 Middlemiss: Yes |
| 38 Touchette: <i>Absent</i> | 53 Simm: Yes | 68 B. Johnson: <i>Absent</i> |
| 39 Duso: Yes | 54 Tuck: Yes | 69 Garrett: Yes |
| 40 Steen: Yes | 55 Kade: Abstain | 70 Manning: No |
| 41 Devine: Yes | 56 Merrier: <i>Absent</i> | 71 Leach: Yes |
| 42 Kittell: No | 57 P. Johnson: Yes | 72 Spear: Yes |
| 43 Savoy: Yes | 58 Lambert: Yes | |

73
74 *Vote: Motion failed to achieve the 60% required for passage.*

75
76 *M. Guernsey motioned to bring the proposed amendments back to the Regional Plan Committee.*
77 *D. Peirce seconded. Discussion offered. No discussion. Motion carried.*

78
79
80

1 **Nomination of Officers**

2 *R. Roberge motioned to nominate the current slate of officers with the addition of Patrick*
3 *Howrigan as member at-large. C. Leach seconded. Motion carried.*

4

5 *B. Kade nominated B. Kittell for Chair. B. Kittell declined nomination.*

6

7 *H. Garrett motioned to close nominations. L. Scangas seconded. Motion carried.*

8

9 **Other Business**

10 J. Hubbard thanked those who voted in support of the proposal.

11

12 A. Baderstadt thanked members of the communities, the commission, and staff in the opening of
13 the Missisquoi Bay Bridge. D. Leslie supported the commendation.

14

15 **Adjourn**

16 *D. Roberge motioned to adjourn. C. Steen seconded. Motion carried.*

17

18

19 The meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.