

**SWANZEY PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
MAY 3, 2007**

[Note: Minutes are not final until reviewed and approved by the Board. Review and approval of minutes generally takes place at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board.]

The May 3, 2007 meeting of the Swanze Planning Board was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Glenn Page. Members present: Glenn Page, June Fuerderer, Scott Self, Charles Beauregard, Sr., Victoria Barlow, Steve Russell (arrived at 8:00 p.m.), Selectmen's Representative Nancy Carlson and alternates David Osgood and Jeanne Thieme. Town Planner Sara Carbonneau was also present. Osgood was seated for Russell until Russell arrived. The agenda for the evening's meeting was read and the following items were addressed:

Discussion/Other Business –

1. Carlisle Wideplank Flooring – Board members reviewed a letter from Attorney Michael Bentley dated May 2, 2007, requesting that Carlisle be permitted to operate a second shift. Bentley noted that Carlisle was granted approval on July 6, 2006 to expand the building and to operate a second shift. Bentley was requesting permission to allow for the operation of two shifts, notwithstanding the fact that the building expansion has not occurred. Motion by Osgood to approve the operation of the second shift, notwithstanding the fact that the building expansion has not occurred. Seconded by Fuerderer. Vote: All in favor.

2. Discussion with Keith Thibault re proposed senior housing development, for informational purposes only. Thibault stated that Southwestern Community Services is in the process of applying for funding for a subsidized senior housing project (age 62 and up). Thibault noted that the competition for this funding is extremely competitive. The basics of the proposal include 19 apartments in one building (either two or three stories high) situated on 3.23 acres near Nick's Restaurant.

Thibault stated that they hope to connect the project to public sewer. He noted that the project will need to provide a community water supply system, as the West Swanze Water Company is unable to provide water without expensive upgrades to the system. Thibault stated

that public transportation is available on a limited basis through Keene's "Friendly Bus" service.

Thibault noted that the property and its potential re-configuration (to include subdivision and boundary line adjustments) leave the area adjacent to Route 10 available for business use. He stated that the 3.23 acre lot will be a rear lot.

Thibault stated that the tentative time frame is as follows: November-December 2007 a decision will be made regarding financing; if financing is approved, SCS hopes to commence construction in the Fall of 2008.

Self asked if the proposal would include carports. Thibault stated that funding for the carports cannot be included in the grant application. However, Thibault stated that additional funds may be available through the CDBG program.

Carlson stated that she would like to see the business land along Route 10 remain available for business use. Carlson also questioned how many Swanzey residents would be served by the project. Thibault stated that the projects cannot be limited to Swanzey residents only.

3. Discussion regarding Swanzey's "rural character." (Definition of rural character as set forth in Swanzey Master Plan attached.)

Page stated that there are many opinions as to what constitutes "rural character," noting the many changes that Swanzey has undergone during the past 200 years. Page stated that the Town currently is more forested than it has been in many years. He also noted that the villages in N. Swanzey and other areas of Town used to have rail and trolley service, recreation centers, retail businesses, etc. and were bustling centers serving the community. Self suggested that residents may consider rural character to be what they experienced/saw at the time of the survey (2001). Board members acknowledged that it is important to provide areas for development (both housing and commercial) while preserving those natural, historical and cultural features of the community.

4. Discussion regarding Swanzey's housing needs. Discuss anticipated needs and likely trends for proposals for new housing construction. Keith Thibault, Susy Thielan and Charles Michal, representatives from the "Heading for Home" coalition, were present.

The Heading for Home coalition consists of businesses and individuals "who believe that there needs to be a concerted effort in addressing affordable workforce housing issues in our region." Michal noted that it was important to preserve and protect what makes the region special, while at the same time providing opportunities for housing across all socio-economic levels. Michal stated that the diversity of the housing market is diminishing. In addition, those who are at the higher end of the socio-economic scale have a higher percentage of the

available housing stock available to them; those at the lower end of the spectrum have extremely limited available housing options.

Barlow asked how the Planning Board can determine if the Town is meeting its current housing needs and how to prepare for projected needs. Thielan stated that the "Heading for Home" coalition, together with Southwest Region Planning Commission, can assist in assembling this information.

Thibault stated that it was his opinion that it is important for the Town to think regionally, to review density requirements, to provide for opportunities for diversity in housing, to encourage home occupations and to invest in high speed Internet. Thibault encouraged the Board to be pro-active, acknowledging that development will take place, and to plan for the future as the community would like to see it.

Board members expressed concern that increasing housing when the Town's industrial and commercial base is not well established could result in a substantial impact to the tax base. Beauregard and other board members stated that the Town should have someone who focus on promoting economic development in Town.

5. Discussion regarding possible scope of proposed zoning amendments and revisions to site plan review regulations and subdivision regulations.

- Floodplain Amendments – State-required minor revisions to zoning ordinance, site plan review regulations and subdivision regulations.
- Minor revisions to subdivision regulations (excluding re-working of the road standards).
- Amendment of subdivision regulations to address road construction standards and length of dead end roads, as requested by the Board of Selectmen. Proposed changes to be prepared by Lee Dunham.
- Conservation Subdivision/Cluster Zoning – A small working group (two Open Space Committee members plus two Conservation Commission members) has initiated research and will propose amendments.
- Other changes to zoning and Planning Board regulations as deemed important by the Board.

Board members acknowledged that the above-described items needed work. Carbonneau asked if a group of Planning Board members would be willing to assist her in developing amendments. It was decided that a separate sub-group would be formed to work on proposed

amendments to regulations. The first meeting of this group was scheduled for Thursday, May 10, 2007 at 3:30 p.m. at Town Hall.

During the evening's discussion, board members identified potential ideas regarding changes to regulations as follows:

- Match zoning with Open Space Plan maps to make sure development is directed to areas with low conservation priority.
- Determine the most appropriate location for new multi-family housing development.
- Reduce the permissible slope of driveways to keep development off hillsides and ridgelines.
- Reconfigure zones to replace strip zoning in business-commercial areas.
- Review setback requirements and determine whether parking areas and other "amenities" should be included within the setback areas.
- Eliminate calculations based on setbacks of adjacent buildings to determine permissible setback for new construction.
- Support housing for the elderly by permitting accessory housing units.
- Encourage home occupations as the new wave of small businesses.
- Explore assessing impact fees for emergency services.

In addition, another working group was established to work on revising the Town's cluster zoning ordinance. Self will be the Planning Board's representative on this group; Victoria Barlow and Deb Crowder will represent the Open Space Committee; the Conservation Commission will name two members.

6. Minutes from April 19, 2007. Motion by Beauregard to approve the minutes from April 19, 2007 as submitted. Seconded by Carlson. Vote: All in favor.

Motion by Beauregard to adjourn. Seconded by Fuerderer. Vote: All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Submitted by,

Sara H. Carbonneau
Town Planner