



**Minutes for Town of Pawlet Planning Commission
Pawlet Town Office
Pawlet, VT
Monday, March 28, 2016
7:30 p.m.**

Members Attending:

**Wayne Clarke
Gary Baierlein
Paul Elsholz
Mark Frost
Melissa LaCount
Eric Mach**

Members Absent:

Harry Van Meter

Others Attending:

**Lyle Jepson, Rutland Economic Development Corp
John Moore, Pawlet
Lisa Moore, Pawlet
Frank Nelson, West Pawlet**

Eric called the meeting to order at 7:40 pm.

Item 1: Meeting Agenda

Wayne made a motion to approve the meeting agenda; Paul seconded; motion passed.

Item 2: Minutes of February 22, 2016 Meeting

"Organized Camps" should be removed as a conditional use in Agricultural/Rural Residential areas. The definition should be removed as well. The draft said "add" in error. Gary moved to approve minutes with changes: Melissa seconded; motion passed.

Item 3: Presentation from the Rutland Economic Development Corporation (REDC)

Lyle congratulated the Planning Commission on rewriting of the Town Plan. He then outlined some issues that he feels Pawlet needs to address to strengthen its economy.

Highlights of the presentation and the discussion it stimulated are summarized below.

1) We need to make Pawlet attractive to young people. Wayne said that job-seekers should consider quality of life, not just income. Lyle suggested that people in their 30's may be attracted to the area for that reason.

2) A well trained labor force must be available for businesses. While Vermont has a good education system. Employers need drug-free, reliable employees who have good math, communication and problem-solving skills.

3) To encourage the stable growth of small businesses, the Rutland Economic Development Corporation offers a revolving loan fund. This program is intended to fill in the gaps (as opposed to acting as a primary lender). Also, while REDC is not a realtor, it does have a website (<http://www.rutlandeconomy.com/>). People looking to buy or sell commercial real estate may want to take advantage of their listings.

Eric said that he was concerned that Vermont is perceived to be over-regulated and unfriendly to business. Wayne and Gary agreed. Lyle said that branding is important to get rid of this poor image.

4) Agriculture in the state is becoming more diverse. Farmers may want to take advantage of the resources available at the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative to help them address the growing list of issues they face.

Wayne pointed out the decline in dairy operations and the preponderance of land preserved by the Vermont Land Trust. He asked if there was a program to foster cooperation between these two competing entities. Lyle said people like Tara Kelly at the Rutland Area Farm and Food Link (RFFL) or Greg Cox at the Vermont Farmers Food Center (VFFC) may be better positioned to address this question.

5) Pawlet's poor cell phone coverage may hurt the development of local business.

Paul asked if there was a way to market Pawlet's high Internet speeds. Lyle said call centers are in demand; businesses like Fairpoint may be able to take advantage of this asset.

Lyle distributed REDC's legislative summary (of 3-10-16) and a list of additional resources available to Rutland County business and non-profit organizations.

Item 4: Audience Comments

John and Lisa Moore are interested in expanding their day care/preschool but are reluctant to invest due to the wording of town's Bylaws. If they buy a larger building in town but do not reside in it, it is no longer considered a "home occupation." Does their business qualify as a school? A discussion about the fairness and application of conditional uses and permitted uses in the Agricultural/Rural Residential area ensued.

Gary argued that a business is a business. While he supports the expansion of the day care/preschool, such a business increases traffic demanding more of the Town's resources. Other businesses that do not require additional traffic and do not impact the character of the town are unfairly impacted by the current language.

Frank was concerned that if we get rid of "home occupation" as a permitted use and allow small businesses in Agricultural/Rural Residential areas we will open a Pandora's Box of issues. Eric agreed that such a broad approach has caused problems in the past. Wayne said that traffic from large trucks is not conducive to a residential area and that some distinctions are necessary.

New Definitions were proposed to be added to the draft of the Bylaws:

"Day Care--care for the needs of people who cannot be fully independent such as children or elderly people

School--an institution for education."

Paul moved to include these definitions; Mark seconded; motion passed.

Item 5: Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for April 25, 2016. The agenda is: 1) approve agenda 2) approve the minutes 3) guest speaker Ned Swanbert discusses river corridors 4) public comments 5) Zoning Administrator's Report and 6) Unified Bylaws (in particular the feasibility expanding the commercial zone to include a "park and ride.")

Gary moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:17 PM; meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Paul Elsholz