TOWN OF SWANZEY

620 OLD HOMESTEAD HIGHWAY
P.O. BOX 10009
SWANZEY, NH 03446-0009
TOWN HALL (603) 352-7411 FAX (603) 352-6250
WWW.SWANZEYNH.GOV

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC)
Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2025
Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey, NH

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

CALL TO ORDER:
The regular meeting of the Swanzey Economic Development Advisory Committee was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chair Cathy Bergstrom.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:
Chair Cathy Bergstrom, JR Coughlin, Angelo Skip DiBernardo, Greg Johnson, Gus Lerandeau and Selectman Sylvester Karasinski were present.

ABSENT:
Mike Gomarlo and Hannah Maynard were absent.

MINUTES:
The Minutes of the EDAC meeting of December 9, 2024 were approved by consensus.

NEW BUSINESS:
Small Business Advocacy. Chair Bergstrom shared that she's reached out to small business owners and learned that the application process for opening or moving a small business in Town can be unnecessarily burdensome to the applicant. The committee discussed the resources available (some listed on the Town website which are outside of Swanzey) and documentation (challenging to navigate). Bergstrom suggested that EDAC work with the Town (Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Planning Office) to help the Town be more small-business friendly. Motion by Lerandeau, seconded by DeBernardo to submit a letter of recommendation to the

BOS proposing a small business advocacy initiative by EDAC, BOS, and Planning Board representatives. Motion carried unanimously.

Proposed Warrant Articles. Chair Bergstrom reviewed the proposed warrant articles (finalized warrant articles to be voted on in Town on March 11). There was discussion of the proposed change to wetlands setback, specifically to increase it to 75'. Some members noted having gotten feedback that this would cause an undue burden to property owners. Motion by Lerandeau, seconded by Coughlin to submit a letter from EDAC to the BOS and Planning Board stating EDAC is not in favor of the proposed warrant article as written. Motion carried unanimously.

Article 3 relates to a proposal for altering the zoning designation to Residence District for some parcels with frontage on Base Hill Road. The lots in question are currently in Commercial/ Industrial District or the Business District. This is referred to as Spot Zoning, and is controversial and sometimes illegal. There are several articles online about this. Here is one ... Spot Zoning Article This proposal will be covered by a public hearing at a Planning Board meeting.

TIF District. Chair reviewed parameters of the proposed TIF District and shared the map. The committee discussed the proposal; many comments were favorable to the proposal.

OLD BUSINESS:

Made In Monadnock. The clip featuring MoldPro is now available for viewing on the Town website. MoldPro

OTHER BUSINESS:

Town Planner Update. Chair reviewed some of the initiatives from the Planning Office including an application for a coffee shop with a drive-thru in the Business District at the corner of Rte 12 and Marcy Hill Road; grants awarded to Swanzey for work on the Rails to Trails program to finance resurfacing of an area of the Cheshire Rail Trail and a MAST grant which will finance installation of road crossing signals on Ashuelot Rail Trail along Matthews Road.

NEXT MEETING:

February 10, 2025

ADJOURNMENT:

Adjournment occurred by consensus at 5:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Bergstrom, Chair

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January 14, 2025

Board of Selectmen
Town of Swanzey, NH

Re: Proposed Wetlands Setback

To the Swanzey Selectboard:

On behalf of the Swanzey Economic Development Advisory Committee, I am writing to request the Swanzey Selectboard and Planning Board consider review and possible rejection of the proposed wetlands setback as submitted.

Under NH Wetlands Law, RSA 482-A, there are no setbacks. Many municipalities have more stringent standards and include wetlands buffers and setbacks. Several specific resource types in New Hampshire have buffers (added levels of protection) and, under RSA 485-A, there are setbacks when installing new septic systems.

Many wetlands resources at the State level are available to property owners, including:

Wetlands Permitting: Avoidance, Minimization and Mitigation and Best Practices Manual

Information available to property owners includes a definition of wetlands. "Wetlands may appear dry at the surface for much of the year, and for that reason an untrained observer may conclude, erroneously, they are not wetlands. Wetlands are identified by the presence of wetlands plants, soil types, and subsurface water levels."

Throughout New Hampshire, municipality wetlands buffers vary from 25 to 100 feet. A concern for EDAC is the expansion of the definition of wetlands. The proposed setback modifications, while honorably intending to preserve and protect wetlands in Swanzey, seem overly burdensome to property owners. Our recommendation is to reconsider the parameters of the proposal, balancing the preservation of wetlands with the ability of property owners to use and enjoy their land.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Respectfully,

Catherine Bergstrom, Chair
Swanzey EDAC

Copy: EDAC
Planning Board
Town Planner

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January 28, 2025

Board of Selectmen
Town of Swanzey, NH

Re: Proposal for Small Business Advocacy

To the Swanzey Selectboard:

On behalf of the Swanzey Economic Development Advisory Committee, I am writing to request the Swanzey Selectboard and Planning Board consider partnering with EDAC to assist us in becoming an advocate for small businesses in Swanzey.

In speaking with some small business owners in Town, we discovered that the online permit application process can be unclear and difficult to navigate. Not knowing what to expect (i.e. protocol of a public hearing) can be intimidating.

A search on the Town website for an explanation and/or documentation revealed little to no clarity. The search capacity is somewhat lacking.

This was discussed at our January meeting, and resulted in a unanimous vote to recommend EDAC work with the BOS and Planning Board, and any other appropriate Town representatives, to develop a resource and/or improve existing resources.

Our recommendation—EDAC take on the role of advocate for small business owners seeking to open/expand business in Swanzey. This may include creation of an online outline of the application procedure, required downloadable documentation, and identification of all fees. Appropriate contact information would also be included.

It is our intention that this be a first step in creating a town-wide culture of being small-business friendly and working to remove unnecessary obstacles by being transparent about the requirements of doing business in Swanzey.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Respectfully,

Catherine Bergstrom, Chair
Swanzey EDAC

Copy: EDAC
Planning Board
Town Planner