

STANNARD TOWN PLAN

Adopted

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Planning Commission

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STANNARD TOWN PLAN 2011

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INTRODUCTION

Stannard is a small rural town located in Caledonia County. One third of the town, now owned by the state, is forested having been cut but never cleared. Of the remaining two thirds approximately half was cleared for agricultural use 125 years ago. It is now largely overgrown. The entire town has primarily northwest exposure, and is at high altitude, ranging from 1400 - 2700 feet.

The town of Stannard has undergone numerous changes during its existence but one thing has remained constant. From its time as Goshen Gore Number One to the present day this place has meant a great deal to its inhabitants. In 2010 it is no longer an isolated agricultural hamlet but instead it is largely a bedroom community of 188 permanent residents and a large number of second homes and camps. Agricultural activities are limited to some sugaring, haying and small-scale livestock raising. Logging takes place on small tracts of private land and Christmas tree farming is burgeoning.

Stannard residents make clear their desire to maintain the town as a viable community that retains its peaceful aspect and rural character. They wish to insure that growth does not overwhelm their town's capacity to pay for services. This is especially important as our ability to control tax rates is essential to keeping the remaining large parcels of land that contribute so greatly to Stannard's ambiance together. We were able to gather this sense of the community through a survey conducted by the Stannard Planning Commission in 2004, as well as from comments made to planning commission members and the selectpersons subsequent to the survey.

We recognize that some development is inevitable. We must, therefore, determine how much development our town can absorb before its character is permanently changed. We must also determine what burdens development places upon the existing infrastructure of the town and how to make sure that any additional burdens are borne by those who create them. Finally, this plan examines Stannard today and attempts to suggest what steps must be taken to insure that Stannard is able to maintain its current healthy mix of young and old.

It is a difficult time to preserve the structure and landscape of a small Vermont town. In many quarters growth is still regarded as an unmitigated blessing. What has been taken for granted for generations may not be properly valued before it is lost. We hope that this plan will offer a clear view of how to preserve and enhance what is ours.

PURPOSE/FORMAT

This plan is intended as a means to guide Stannard's near-term growth. It attempts to present a picture of Stannard today and a considered treatment of what steps might be taken to insure that its essential character is preserved in the face of external and internal pressures.

This plan is organized into six sections (including an appendix) and numerous subsections. The first section consists of prefatory material; the appendix contains the results of the town survey and other documents necessary that support our assumptions and conclusions. The intervening chapters treat the history of Stannard and the planning goals and objectives. Maps detailing land use, transportation, and utility facilities are available at the Town offices.

Vermont statutes that enable municipal plans and the local planning process have few requirements. State enabling legislation has traditionally offered municipalities the authority to plan if they want to, although they are not required to do so. A municipal plan "may" be entirely consistent with state planning goals, but it does not have to be so. We have worked to ensure that this plan contains all the elements required by law so it will be legally valid, once adopted by the selectpersons of Stannard.

This plan's validity is extremely important to Stannard. If the plan were found faulty in a court challenge, it could lose its utility in Act 250 and Section 248 proceedings. That is, Stannard could not use its plan as the basis for testimony for or against specific external projects that would have an impact on us. A valid plan is necessary to influence decisions made by the district environmental commission. In addition, if no plan is in force, then the district environmental commission may use the regional plan to decide the fate of the application.

State law also requires a town to have a valid plan if they wish to adopt or amend zoning bylaws.

OVERALL VISION AND PLANNING PROCESS

Stannard's history (see below) while unique in a number of particulars is all too typical of small hill towns. What was once a viable economic and political entity has become a community, merely by force of habit. Now that the majority of residents work outside the town and the schooling of our children is carried out mostly within other communities, Stannard can no longer assume that its existence is in any way natural. The members of the Planning Commission debated at length the "meaning of Stannard" and decided to ask the opinions of our neighbors in town.

The means we chose for this task was a questionnaire that was circulated to all Stannard residents and landowners in early 2004. We have used the results of this survey, as well as those of a similar one conducted in 1990, as a guide in preparing this update.

In summary we found that residents still appreciate Stannard as it is today, a small, quiet, peaceful, rural community. When those we polled were asked to envision their desired future, the Stannard they looked forward to is a town similar to the one that exists today, with minor improvements. In today's world, maintaining one's situation is not a simple matter of leaving well enough alone. It requires thoughtful preparation as we encounter those forces that press our community from all sides.

Many of these pressures are beyond our powers to control. Nothing we plan, for example, will change the dismal economics of small family dairy farms. Others, such as the town tax rate and the diminishing amount of state money available in the land use fund, are large-scale political

questions. To these we can add our voices, hoping to join a coalition that can prevail. Finally we have issues that lie within our control: where and under what conditions buildings may be sited and what means we will adopt to protect our natural resources. It is these questions this plan attempts to address.

We cannot emphasize enough, however, how much powerful external forces affect the land use patterns in Stannard. Currently there are a small number of large, relatively undeveloped land parcels. Most of these parcels are enrolled in the state's land use program. If these parcels were to lose their subsidy, it is likely that the pieces would be developed— profoundly altering the Town's character.

Our objective in preparing this plan is to ensure that Stannard has as much control as its citizens wish to impose order on the town's future development, and most importantly, as much control as possible over the impact of neighboring towns, agencies, and even the State itself.

HISTORY: The Early History of Goshen Gore and Stannard

The Town of Stannard was incorporated in 1867. Prior to that, it was known as Goshen Gore #1. In 1792 when the Addison County town of Goshen was chartered, it was found to lack the requisite acreage for a Town. Consequently, two gores were added to it, one adjoining Walden and another near Plainfield.

Because of the Gores' remoteness from the Town of Goshen they apparently were never directly governed by it. In 1797 the General Assembly of the State was petitioned by the proprietors of Goshen Gore #1 to enact a land tax there and in 1805 another tax (4 cents per acre) to make repairs on roads and bridges in Goshen Gore #1. This was enacted under the authority of Caledonia County. This pattern of governance by, variously and simultaneously, the General Assembly, the County, the Gore's own Justices of the Peace (County officers), and by State appointed commissions composed of 2 Gore residents and one officer of a neighboring town, continued until the incorporation of Stannard

Settlement of Goshen Gore #1 began in 1802 with the families of Elihu Sabin and Warren Smith. In 1803 the Gore was surveyed and laid out into lots of approximately 106 acres each. By 1810 the population was 82, composed of settlers from southern New England and immigrants from Scotland. By 1814 there were enough people in Goshen Gore #1 to threaten to take control of the Addison County town and move its center to Caledonia. As a result, the General Assembly granted the Town of Goshen a part of the neighboring but defunct Town of Philadelphia, providing enough acreage for it to legally incorporate without its gores, although Goshen retained nominal control over them until 1854.

Goshen Gore # 1 functioned and developed itself for 7 decades without a fixed form of governance. By 1840 its population was 143 persons. They owned amongst them 27 horses, 180 cattle, 429 sheep, 100 swine and grew wheat, barley, oats, potatoes and hay, as well as producing almost 8000 pounds of maple sugar. By 1853 the population was 183.

By 1841 certain residents of the Gore requesting incorporation as a Town petitioned a bill to the General Assembly. Other residents of the Gore remonstrated against incorporation and the bill was rejected. In the words of one resident named Joseph Clark, quoted in Hemenway's Gazetteer, "the people for the most part are not dissatisfied with their present situation, being exempt from the demands of the tax gatherer and the expenses incident to an organized town". Since Goshen Gore had roads, bridges, schools, and property taxes, like any town, it is not clear how it avoided the incident expenses, other than those of maintaining a Town Hall and paying a Town Clerk. Joseph Clark was actually a Justice of the Peace and the state appointed tax gatherer for Goshen Gore through much of the 1840's and 1850's. Thus his advocacy of Gore status may have been an attempt to protect his position from the elective politics of Town Meeting. In 1854 the General Assembly severed all connection between Goshen Gore and the Town of Goshen. Initially this bill attempted to attach Goshen Gore #1 to the Town of Walden, but in its final form it was merely set adrift. In 1855 the Legislature had to appoint road commissioners for the Gore. In 1858 some residents of the eastern side of the mountain attempted to secede from Goshen Gore and join their lots to Danville, a town to which they were geographically related. A bill was introduced into the General Assembly but was defeated due to a lack of support from Danville.

Finally in 1867 the General Assembly acted to change the name of Goshen Gore to the Town of Stannard and allow the election of Town Officers. This followed the passage of a number of Acts between 1855 and 1864 that reduced any advantages that residents might find in remaining unorganized, including an 1862 bill making Gore residents liable for Militia duty. The name of Stannard is that of a distinguished Civil War General from Vermont, General George Jerrison Stannard. There is no record that he ever visited the town that bears his name.

1) The Town's Namesake, General George Jerrison Stannard

At the start of the Civil War Stannard was the commander of the 4th Vermont Militia Regiment at St. Albans. He was the first Vermonter to officially volunteer for service with the Union forces. The next five years brought distinguished service, a measure of lasting fame, and great personal sacrifice.

General Stannard's fame came at Gettysburg with his decision to have the Vermont regiments under his command carry out a flanking movement that turned the Confederate Pickett's charge into a retreat and rout. This action is widely considered the pivotal action in the pivotal battle of the War. A statue of General Stannard is found on Cemetery Ridge in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and another stands in Lakeview Cemetery in Burlington, Vermont.

General Stannard was captured and paroled early in the War at Harper's Ferry, shot in the leg at Gettysburg, again in the leg at the Battle of Cold Harbor in 1864, and had his right arm shattered and amputated at the Battle of Fort Harrison, Virginia later that same year.

Following the War, George Stannard was appointed Commissioner of Customs for Vermont, where he served for a few years. He then became the Doorkeeper of the U.S. House of Representatives and served until his death on June 1, 1886.

Stannard flourished in the second half of the 19th century and by 1880 had 252 persons, a Town Hall, 2 schools, 2 churches and numerous farms and sawmills. The Stannard Church, built in 1886, is a nationally recognized historic site. Population declined after that time reaching a low of 88 persons in 1970.

During the early and mid 1970's Stannard, like many small towns in Vermont, experienced an influx of young people of childbearing age from outside of the state. Stannard's population began to grow again. Between 1970 and 1980 the population grew by 61%, a result of both relocations and new births. The zeitgeist of the time was "back to the land", and the folks who adhered to this philosophy were known as homesteaders. Many of the new residents had similar progressive political and cultural values. They also shared a desire to be active in the community. During the 1970s and 80s most Town officer positions were held by newcomers to the Town. It was during this time that the Town confronted many of the education and property tax issues that later became important statewide issues. It was also a time of great community spirit. Organizations in Town bought and renovated the Stannard church, arranged for the donation of a large, centrally located tract of land, and organized numerous civil and social events.

Currently the town has a population of approximately 188 souls. The Town has retained its rural, residential and agricultural character, and has extensive timberland as well. It is known for its high levels of participation in local government and the vigor of its numerous voluntary town organizations.

PLANNING OBJECTIVES: OVERALL GOALS (24 V.S.A. Section 4302 (b))

- 1) To make the planning process a continuous and coordinated effort to develop policies and the framework to implement the policies such that it can be used to guide, unambiguously, the decisions of municipal, regional and state agencies.
- 2) To encourage citizen participation at all levels of the planning process, and to assure that decisions shall be made at the most local level possible.
- 3) To consider the use of resources and the consequences of growth and development for Stannard and the adjoining region.
- 4) To encourage our Town officials to meet with officials of other towns to plan creatively to develop and implement plans.

PLANNING OBJECTIVES: SPECIFIC GOALS (24 V.S.A. Section 4302 (c))

- 1) To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern.

In their responses to the Planning Commission's questionnaire, Stannard residents and landowners expressed an overwhelming preference for current land use patterns. To honor their wishes the town must develop ways to preserve the remaining large tracts of land. This will permit their continued use for agricultural pursuits and allow all to enjoy the aesthetic

benefits. We assume that ownership of these important land parcels will change over time. It is important, therefore to create ways to allow current and future owners to preserve the Stannard environment without suffering economic hardship. Among many possible strategies are the use of zoning, conservation easements, and collaboration with existing land trusts, as well as support for the preservation of the State's Current Use program. Current zoning does make provisions for large tracts of land. From time to time when large tracts of land have come up for sale, ad hoc groups of residents have formed to address the preservation issue. Recently, beginning in 2008 and ending during the summer of 2010 a group of Stannard town officials and residents worked with one of the large landowners in Town, Harold Nunn, and the Vermont Land Trust to preserve and conserve a farm property so that it could stay in agricultural use and be protected from development. This action fulfilled a number of the goals of the 2005 plan. Two of the goals continue to be valid in the current economic climate.

Recommendation: Continue to use zoning, conservation easements, and collaboration with existing land trusts and support for the preservation of the State's Current Use program to preserve large tracts of land.

Recommendation: When large parcels come up for sale, continue to use the committee structure to study ways to preserve open land and address the development implications of sale of the parcel.

- 2) To provide a strong economy that maintains high environmental standards.

Stannard is too small to directly affect the economic life of its residents. The problem of scale is reinforced by a lack of major paved roads and other infrastructure components. The types of economic activity that are most likely to be successful in Stannard without hurting the environment or the town's traditional way of life, are forestry and agriculture. Small-scale businesses that rely on new communication technologies have existed in town and may well increase in the future along with other home based businesses. The town should do what it can to encourage this kind of low impact economic development.

Recommendation: Facilitate the development of high speed broadband access, a necessary tool for many low impact, home-based businesses.

- 3) To broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities in order to foster the full realization of the abilities of all Stannard residents.

- a) Preschool childcare

For many years preschool childcare was provided by relatives and a few baby sitters. During the late 1970s and 80s, Stannard parents helped to operate Caspian Area Childcare Center in Greensboro Bend. Stannard's childcare needs are currently far below its needs in previous decades. The Greensboro Early Learning Center is now Four Seasons Child Care. It offers childcare and preschool programs that satisfy most of the needs of Stannard's families. A need for additional childcare resources was not noted in any of the responses to the 2004 planning survey.

b) Elementary and Secondary Education

Currently Stannard has 36 school-aged children. Ninety-eight percent of the population attend an educational institution, two percent are home-schooled.

Stannard is a partner in an elementary school union with Greensboro. The decision was made in 1988 to form a union after a great deal of research and debate. The Union gave the town a strong voice in the creation of a sound educational environment for our younger students. Lakeview Union School is operated by a board composed of 6 members elected by the town of Greensboro and 2 members elected by the town of Stannard. This was roughly proportional to the towns' population. Expenses for operating the school are paid proportionally by each town according to how many students from each town are enrolled, computed on a daily basis. Stannard's student enrollment currently accounts for 28% of the population of Lakeview Union elementary. Stannard's proportion of the school population is growing at a time when overall enrollment is falling. The result is that Stannard's per-student cost has risen, and is likely to continue to rise for the foreseeable future. Under the current formula for computing education taxes this increase will likely be reflected in an increased school tax rate.

Seventh through twelfth grade students' families have the ability to choose whatever state approved public or private school they like, with tuition up to a state ceiling paid for by the town. This privilege, which stems from the fact that the town does not belong to any high school union, enables students to seek out a school that offers courses that can help them achieve their goals.

Stannard elects a 3-person Stannard School Board (SSB). Since the town does not operate its own schools, the board's role is limited to setting the budget to be raised for Lakeview assessments and tuition payments to secondary schools. The SSB contracts for transportation services to bus students to Lakeview. Stannard also buses students from Lakeview to Craftsbury Academy and Hazen Union, schools that most of the town's middle and high school students attend. This usually involves transferring at Lakeview to another bus (to Hazen) or mini bus (to Craftsbury). These arrangements ensure that all students have public transportation. Students attending schools farther away must secure their own transportation. The Town does not reimburse them for these transportation arrangements.

Ensuring that the bus system is safe and timely in all weather conditions is a very demanding responsibility. A dedicated school director keeps a short wave radio in her house so she can be in contact between 5 and 6 AM with the bus driver, Stannard's road foreman, the school superintendent, and the bus company dispatcher in Hardwick. It is sometimes necessary in extreme weather conditions for the road foreman to plow, sand and salt the road immediately in front of the bus in order for the bus to safely make its route. Since Hazen and Craftsbury are operated by independent boards, school closings are not consistent and may be site-specific to local weather and road conditions. The bus route begins about 6:30 AM when the first student is picked up. School hours are

7:45 AM to 2:45 PM with accommodations for the bus connections. The Stannard bus route ends about 4:10 PM when the last student is dropped off.

Stannard endured extraordinarily high school tax rates during the decade preceding the Brigham decision and the enactment of Act 60 and 68. The old state formula penalized the town for its high proportion of school aged children and its small tax base. With the enactment of Act 60 and 68, with its focus on the per pupil cost of education, the town enjoyed a respite from this heavy burden. Town voters used this period of lower school tax rates to address some long deferred town business including a major bridge project and the renovation of the Town Hall.

Now the town is about to experience another round of high school taxes due, ironically, to the decreasing school population in Stannard and its partner in the Lakeview Union School District, Greensboro. The fixed cost of running an elementary school is going towards educating a markedly smaller number of students. Additionally, Stannard's proportion of the student body, on which pro-rated costs are assessed, has risen over the past few years. The result is a substantial increase in the amount needed to educate a single student. The school tax rate, by state law, is based on this figure and Stannard's position as a statistical anomaly now may lead the town into another period of exorbitant school taxes.

With the passage of Act 140 in 2010 the state has introduced the possibility that small schools like Lakeview may be pushed to close and new centralized schools be established to replace them. This could adversely affect the sense of community created by a locally run school without the assurance of a reduced tax burden.

c) Adult education

Stannard profits from vocational and other adult educational programs that assist adults to fulfill their occupational goals and hone their parenting skills. Town officers benefit from forums to strengthen their skills. Nearby Lyndon State College and Vermont Community College offer ample opportunities for residents to further their education.

Recommendation: Continue to track demographic trends, with an eye to how they affect tax rates.

Recommendation: Encourage the use of the renovated Town Hall for educational activities and vocational and personal development programs.

- 4) To provide for safe, convenient, economic and energy efficient transportation systems that respect the integrity of the natural environment.

The transportation system of Stannard consists of 18 miles of unpaved roads. Due to light traffic there is little advantage to be gained by paving these roads. The meager traffic flow also enables the roads to double as bicycle paths. The lack of population centers in Stannard and the surrounding communities makes a comprehensive public transportation system impractical. At one time, during the 19th and well into the 20th century, the railroad provided

the major link between Stannard and the rest of the world. A station was located nearby in Greensboro Bend. Because of demographic and economic factors common to most small communities in Vermont, the railroads faded from the scene. To some extent, commercial bus lines picked up some of the passenger business of the railroads. Recently, even this mode of mass transportation has exited the picture. Currently, only RCT, on a very limited, social service basis, offers any sort of bus transportation in the area. The only transportation system that the town operates is a school bus route. (See section 3 for a discussion of this operation.) Automobiles are the only mechanized mode of transportation consistently available to Stannard residents. The 2004 survey indicates that every residence has more than 2 cars associated with it. Because of the importance of cars, the condition of the road system is very important. Respondents to the survey indicated that the condition of the roads was the most important public issue in the Town.

The Selectboard maintains a long-range road maintenance plan. Currently the Town maintains fourteen miles of roads. The Town owns a grader, backhoe, and a heavy truck, all in good condition. The machinery is housed in a Town-owned garage. The roads are currently in very good repair. Many of the bridges in town are in disrepair. The Town does not have the funds to fix them on its own. Like most Towns, it relies on a financial sharing program with the State of Vermont to repair bridges. The Town selectpersons should develop a long-range priority plan for upgrading the bridges. Furthermore, given the Town residents' desire to see the Town remain much the way it has been, ways should be explored to design the bridges to fit in with the rural and natural character of the surrounding area.

Respondents to the Town Planning Survey indicated a strong desire to see greater use of dust-suppression techniques.

Recommendation: Develop a long-range bridge replacement program.

- 5) To identify, protect and preserve important natural and historic features of the Stannard landscape, including buildings.

- a) Natural

Natural areas provide habitat for wildlife and contribute to the sense of rural quiet that questionnaire respondents repeatedly mentioned as being an essential and desirable characteristic of town life. The two largest natural areas we have identified are the forested land on Stannard Mountain and the area around Flagg Pond.

The largest part of the forested area on Stannard Mountain is the Steam Mill Brook Wildlife Management Area, owned and overseen by the State of Vermont, Department of Fish and Wildlife. We expect that this area will continue to be managed for the benefit of wildlife and the environment. We suggest that the town monitor State policy toward this land and oppose any changes that would adversely affect its current status.

Flagg Pond and much of the land surrounding it is in Wheelock and is therefore not within our area of direct control. Despite our lack of jurisdiction this body of water is of great importance to the town of Stannard as a scenic and recreational resource. It is the only easily accessible large body of water adjacent to town. With Wheelock Mountain rising from its further shore, it is one of the most remarkable scenic vistas in town. The effect is heightened because none of the buildings on the pond are currently visible from the road. During the winter Stannard residents skate and ski on the pond. In summer, the pond affords the possibility of canoeing and fishing.

We recommend that the town do what it can to establish policies that discourage development in sensitive areas around the pond. We also recommend that the Town monitor any Wheelock policies that may harm the area around Flagg Pond. If necessary the Town should be prepared to intervene in regulatory hearings.

We believe the town should explore ways to secure the most comprehensive land use maps possible. Our current maps are adequate, but could be much improved. The maps should detail all of the town's physical and man-made resources and soil types.

b) Historic/Cultural

The town's facilities include Stannard Town Hall, a late 19th Century schoolhouse, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, that remained in use until the 1960's. It is now owned by the town and houses the clerk's office. Stannard Church, located across the road, is a National Register Landmark that was endangered due to dwindling congregation and neglect until it was acquired and restored by the Stannard Historical Society. The Stannard Historical Society has a small, but dwindling endowment to support ongoing maintenance of the church. The two acre Orcutt Park, owned by the town, is a center for organized recreation. In 1991 the town built a garage on the Brook Road to house town road equipment.

Stannard acquired the 14.77 acre parcel across from the town hall which wraps around Orcutt Park and includes the land on which the church sits with funding from private donations and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, in a collaboration between the Stannard Historical Society and the town's planning commission. This significant parcel, owned by the town, is protected from development by a conservation easement held by the Vermont Land Trust. The town has developed a plan for a walking trail around the property that features the brook views to Mt. Mansfield, and the nine spot vista, the only place in town from which nine buildings can be seen simultaneously.

In the late 1980's the town began the process of restoring the town hall. Work included restoration of the doorway and large schoolhouse windows, refurbishing the outhouses, and sill work. The project included plans for long deferred maintenance of the building's exterior, restoration of the interior to its original schoolroom appearance, accommodations for accessibility by people with disabilities, and expansion of the building on the footprint of the attached woodshed to accommodate a larger town office with more vault space. Architectural drawings with elevations were created.

In 1999's Town Plan the restoration and renovation of the Town Hall was identified as Stannard's single most important need. Shortly thereafter a building committee was formed to plan and undertake the Town Hall's resurrection. Grants were obtained and a bond issue was passed by the Town voters. With this funding the \$250,000 renovation was undertaken and in 2002 the newly renovated Town Hall was dedicated.

The beautifully restored and accessible town hall is now used as a place for community civic and cultural events. It also serves as a supporting facility for events at Stannard Church, which has no electricity or plumbing. Stannard's cultural life includes annual events such as musical performances, exhibitions, educational programs, festivals, and holiday gatherings by community members for music, storytelling, recreation, and song. Per the 2005 Town Plan, the town has successfully advertised the availability of the Town Hall for cultural, educational, and recreation-al uses.

The 2005 Town Plan identified Flagg Pond as being important to the town for aesthetic reasons and as a valuable biological and botanical resource, even though it lay outside of the town's jurisdiction. The Town Plan recommended monitoring the area. The Nature Conservancy and other groups, including residents of Stannard, have worked diligently to preserve the area surrounding the pond, protecting it from development.

During 2010, the Nature Conservancy purchased a substantial portion of Flagg Pond along with a large area of cedar marsh on the pond's eastern shore. The Vermont Land Trust purchased easements on land above and around the Nature Conservancy property. This goes a long way to relieving concerns about the future of this important resource.

Recommendation: Secure the funds to underwrite more comprehensive land use maps and keep the property maps updated.

Recommendation: Monitor activity and legislation pertaining to Steam Mill Brook Wildlife Management Area.

Recommendation: We believe that the Town should define and catalog scenic resources of importance to residents. Examples already suggested include: the tree lined roadways, such as at Winchester/Nunn, Knudsen, and scenic vistas such as those on the Flagg Pond road. The town's scenic resources are worthy of further study. In the course of such a study it may be advisable to recommend that the town designate certain areas as being of particular value to the town.

Recommendation: Explore funding sources for the ongoing maintenance of the church.

Recommendation: A study should be undertaken to identify sensitive areas in town. These may include smaller natural areas that provide shelter to rare or endangered

species of animals or plants. If any such areas are identified, appropriate steps such as conservation easements, etc., should be taken to protect them .

6) To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife and land resources

Stannard's environment is, if not pristine, at least not beyond repair. We have no industries polluting our air, water, or soil. Among the main threats are the fouling of the Town's environment by the improper disposal of household sewage and motor oil, the careless use of pesticides, and other agricultural chemicals and the illegal dumping of all manner of trash.

Clear streams, rivers, and ponds are not only important to the human residents of Stannard, they are also important to the many species of birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and mammals that inhabit the Town. Befouling the waters would ultimately decimate the diversity of animal life in Stannard.

The major bodies of water in Stannard are Stannard Pond, Stannard Brook and its tributaries, Steam Mill Brook, and Flagg Brook. At present the town's streams and ponds run clear. It is not to be expected, however, that the town can afford to depend on luck for the protection of these vital resources. The natural areas of trees, shrubs, and other plants that grow on and are adjacent to the banks of Stannard's bodies of water help to stabilize the banks, keep the waters shaded and cool, slow runoff going towards the water from upslope land, and help keep sediment and nutrients out of the water. It is important that these buffers be maintained.

Stannard is rich in those types of soil that cannot pass a percolation test. In addition much of Stannard's land is swampy, seasonally or all year round.

As it is now written, Stannard's zoning relies on lot size to moderate potential damage to the water supply and satisfactory compliance with Section 5.4 of the zoning regulations. This section was included when the zoning bylaws were amended in 1994. It was a response to water protection inadequacies that were noted in the 1993 Town Plan. It calls for the issuance of a sewage disposal permit anytime there is a "new use or change of use" of a building. The bylaw requires that sewage disposal systems be designed to satisfy the standards set forth by the "Vermont Health Regulations, Chapter 5, Subchapter 10" or "The Environmental Protection Rules". The bylaw also permits innovative designs, but only on a case by case basis.

State regulations limit subdivision of land that does not pass the percolation test but do not apply for every division of property.

Recommendation: Monitor status of water quality.

Recommendation: Protect buffer areas around the rivers, streams, and ponds.

- 7). To encourage the efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy resources.

Stannard's energy needs are all residential-based. There are no commercial, service, or manufacturing enterprises that have special energy needs. The town is dependent on outside sources for electricity, gas and oil. Many households burn wood, a potential renewable resource, that is widely harvested, but rarely replanted.

We suspect that energy cost and utility availability drive construction patterns and styles. Electric lines running from the pole to new houses are quite expensive to install. In practice, new building construction, therefore, tends to be within the limited length of hookup line provided "free" by electric utilities. In recent years the electric utilities that serve the town have relocated many of their cross-country poles to roadsides so that they can better maintain them. This has translated into a pattern of housing that largely fronts on town roads.

Two electric companies serve the town. Residents in immediate proximity to Greensboro Bend are connected to Hardwick Electric Company lines, while the remainder of the town has power supplied by the Washington Electric Cooperative. Both utilities have demand-side management plans and encourage rate payers to conserve energy. There is no scarcity of electricity, or heating fuels. A few residents have experimented with solar power, but as of yet, there is no widespread use of this form of renewable energy source. Likewise, wind power is not available. However, the 2004 planning survey identified this source of renewable energy as being of interest to a good number of respondents. The topography of the Town may be conducive to the operation of wind generators.

Recommendation: Encourage the replanting of hard wood forests used as sources of fuel for wood burning furnaces.

Recommendation: Monitor the effect of utility resources on the patterns of land development.

Recommendation: Study the feasibility of Stannard as a source of wind for the generation of electricity.

Recommendation: Study all of the effects that wind generation plants would have on Stannard.

Recommendation: Disseminate information to developers and residents about any energy efficiency or conservation programs offered by utilities or government entities such as Efficiency Vermont.

- 1) To maintain and enhance recreational opportunities for Stannard residents and visitors.

In the last 15 years Stannard has acquired Orcutt Park and the Nicely property for public recreation. The two acres of land in the center of Stannard Village known as Orcutt Park and the additional fifteen acres of adjoining land purchased by the town as part of the

Villagescape project, are critical to any efforts by the town to develop a recreation plan. We suggest that the development of Orcutt Park and the Villagescape land be undertaken with concern for appropriate recreational possibilities. Private lands are extensively used for private recreation. These activities include hunting and fishing in season. There are trails for skiing and snow machine travel. In past years, Flagg Pond has been cleared in the winter for skating. Roads are used for jogging and cycling. (It is noted that snow machine and ATV travel is currently prohibited on town roads for safety reasons).

We are concerned about the apparent trend toward posting land for political or other reasons. While we recognize the right of landowners to determine whether they wish their land to be available to others, we hope that landowners will consider making more of their land available for hunting, cross-country skiing and snow machine trails. Of course, people must respect the land and its owners when they use private property.

Recommendation: Encourage landowners to make their land available to others for recreational use

Recommendation: Revive a recreation committee to develop a recreation plan for Orcutt Park.

2) To encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries.

As this plan's history section indicates, agriculture was once the economic backbone of Stannard. In recent times conditions have changed so that dairy farming, the prevalent Vermont model, is no longer sustainable. Currently there are very few farmable properties and only a couple of them are now being farmed.

State law mandates that land be taxed at "fair-market value", the price that a land speculator might pay. The state current-use plan is intended to ameliorate the effects of these high taxes on farm and forest landowners. However, this plan is vulnerable to state budget fluctuations. There are, therefore, substantial pressures that may lead to the breakup of these large land parcels before new models of farming emerge. The cost of holding land dictates that any new model be immediately profitable.

If farming is not the major business of townspeople, why do we consider it important to the town's well being? In our opinion the look and feel of Stannard derives in great measure from the large pieces of land that still exist. Furthermore, if these remaining farms were broken up for building lots, the resulting demand for schools and other services would be far beyond the town's capacity to provide.

We therefore consider it essential to provide whatever encouragement we can for landowners to keep these parcels intact. Some means toward this end might include "current-use" taxation, if state law were amended to permit this, or the creation of a land-trust to purchase and administer development rights. Some farms might merit outright purchase by a land

trust, which might then lease land to working farmers. If these or other similar steps are not taken we can expect to see much of the remaining open land subdivided. Zoning can help to keep the existing large land tracts intact and assure orderly development, but it cannot completely stop pieces from being subdivided.

Other, smaller pieces of land have importance to town agriculture. Parcels of several acres or less have traditionally been used as hay fields by in-town and neighboring farmers. It is unlikely that owners of these small parcels believe that this is the most economical use of the land. Without the availability of these hay fields existing agricultural activities become unsustainable. Once again the answer to this problem may be to find a way to lower the relative tax burden on undeveloped land.

In the past decade Christmas tree farming has become a favored way of combining agriculture with forestry. While this type of farming keeps land intact, it can have an impact on current vistas. Raising such crops as carrots, potatoes and parsnips may prove a viable form of agriculture. While these crops have been grown with some success in nearby towns, this radical change in agricultural practice had not yet been adopted in Stannard when the last plan was written. The plan recommended that the Town encourage organic farming. With the sale of the Nunn/Winchester place there is an expectation (based on conversations with the new owner) that we will soon have a commercial organic vegetable farm in Stannard.

Poorly managed chemical pesticide and/or herbicide can negatively affect the health of nearby residents. Farmers, landowners, residents and road and line-management personnel of the Town and utilities must always practice safe pesticide and herbicide management to avoid harm to their neighbors and to the environment.

Forestry and logging are traditional Stannard activities that remain an economical enterprise. The town should encourage this business to continue in a sound manner.

There are no virgin stands of timber in town. The largest parcel of forested land is the Steam Mill Brook Wildlife Management Area, owned and controlled by the State. The management of this land is under the supervision of State foresters.

Forestry as a commercial activity suffers from many of the same problems as agriculture. Most logging is done on small parcels of leased land. After land is logged it is more likely to be developed than to be left to go through another growth cycle. The money earned by landowners from stumpage fees is not enough to pay taxes, let alone earn a profit on purchase of land. This situation can only worsen if land use goes by the wayside and taxes continue to rise.

Forestry practices, if not carried out with an eye to minimizing effects on surrounding areas, can take a toll on the roadways and waterways in town. The town is able to, and to some degree does regulate landings and access roads that have a direct effect on the town roadways and waterways. The town can also regulate when logging trucks of a certain weight can use the town roads.

Recommendation: Support state legislation to encourage farming, forestry, and Christmas tree farming.

Recommendation: Assist in any way that the Town can, to help the new owners of the Nunn/Winchester property create a viable organic commercial farm.

Recommendation: Study the most effective ways to minimize the damage logging practices have on the towns roads and waterways.

Recommendation: Encourage the use of organic methods of farming and/or safe use of pesticides and herbicides.

- 3) To encourage safe and sanitary residential housing in Stannard that is sufficiently valued to help defray the public costs of services in Town, without devaluing the importance of traditional rustic hunting camps to the Town's economy and tax base.

At present, the property taxes of few houses in town pay for the cost of the town services they use. This sad fact is exacerbated by the high cost of land in neighboring communities, particularly Walden and Greensboro. Stannard is providing affordable housing for the region.

Currently, it appears that high-end new construction is more likely to occur in Greensboro and Walden. Act 60, and its successor Act 68, lowered and stabilized the town's tax rate for several years. This provided the town the opportunity to make some infrastructure improvements that had been postponed for over a decade. We had some hopes that the lowering of education tax rates might result in the construction of high-end housing in town and the improvement of existing homes. Unfortunately we have not seen a major change in building patterns and, in any event, changes in per capita student costs have become of more concern to the town. We are seeing substantial increases in our tuition costs that will result in the resumption of high school tax rates.

Property tax legislation is a very large factor in how a town develops. The citizens of Stannard realized this and actively supported efforts to make the state's property tax laws more equitable. Their fifteen year long political efforts were instrumental in the creating of Act 60. Two town residents were plaintiffs in the Brigham lawsuit that led to the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the previous education funding mechanisms. We encourage the town to monitor proposed legislation that may affect the town's interests. It is vital that town officers and citizens keep our representatives to the legislature apprised of our concerns and of any potential for harm that may come from unwise revisions to the education funding formula.

A major issue in Stannard continues to be the proliferation of low value housing whether from the conversion of camps to year round residencies or from the continuing placement of used or otherwise substandard mobile homes.

Recommendation: Continue to lobby the State Legislature to implement legislation that leads to stable and equitable property tax rates.

- 4) To plan for, finance, and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.

Stannard has two municipally owned buildings, a garage that houses the Town vehicles and a Town Hall that houses the Town offices as well as Town meetings and other civic gatherings. The Town Hall was thoroughly renovated during 2001 and 2002 and the Town garage, built in 1991, is a relatively new structure. Both buildings are in excellent condition and contribute greatly to the quality of Town life. The 2005 Plan noted that the Town garage needed a bathroom. The bathroom was added to the Town Garage in 2008.

Stannard provides fire protection through contractual arrangements with the Greensboro Fire District. In addition to providing the Town with emergency services, members of the Fire District have worked with the Select Board to develop and implement plans for the installation of dry hydrants. These hydrants provide responders with more predictable access to water and thus contribute to the safety of lives and property. They were constructed shortly after the 2005 Plan was enacted.

Serious criminal activity is addressed by the State Police while traffic patrolling is arranged on an as needed basis by contracting with the Caledonia County Sheriff's Department. Dog complaints and other such disputes are handled by the Town Constables who volunteer their time for the town's benefit.

The Stannard Town Meeting has a history of generosity toward local nonprofit and service organizations. Beneficiaries of the Town's contributions have included The Greensboro Library, Greensboro Recreation, Northeast Kingdom Youth Services, Hardwick Rescue Squad, Fairbanks Museum, Area Agency on Aging, Four Seasons Child Care, and A.W.A.R.E.

Stannard is a producer of solid waste, all of which must find its way out of town for final disposal. For many years disposal has been handled by a number of private carriers who haul to landfills in other towns. This system continues to prevail although steep tipping fees have resulted in a disturbing increase in illegal roadside dumping, primarily on Stannard Mountain. The Town Constables with the strong encouragement of the Selectboard have rigorously pursued outlaw dumpers by carefully examining trash for clues to their identity. Firm action of this kind and quick removal of the trash should help stop this disturbing trend. The general proliferation of litter is also a problem. Much of this can be traced to the door of fast food franchises that have recently come into the area. Although town residents give their time each spring to Green-Up Day activities, the careless disposal of fast food effluvia continues to outpace our efforts to maintain a clean roadside.

Stannard is a member of the Northeast Kingdom Solid Waste Management District. It is important for the town to take an active part in their deliberations so we may preserve our influence. Private haulers who are also required to pick up recyclables provide trash pickup.

Recommendation: Use the Town Hall to expand cultural, social, and arts' events and activities

Recommendation: Participate as active members in the Northeast Kingdom Solid Waste Management District.

Recommendation: Evaluate the need for social or other services for town residents while taking into account the Town's ability to pay for such services.

5) To foster regional cooperation.

Stannard must be very sensitive to the actions, for good or ill, of its larger neighbors. We are dependent, in several significant areas on our neighboring municipalities. These include education, solid waste disposal, and the maintenance of the roads that lead from the State highways to the body of the Town. We rely on other government entities for police and fire services which we simply cannot provide ourselves. Clearly, it is essential for Stannard to continue its long established policy of working with regional and statewide groups to cooperate in areas of mutual concern.

Stannard's neighbors are Walden, Danville, Greensboro, and Wheelock. With the exception of Greensboro, with whom we share a school and on whom we depend for fire protection, Stannard's low population density and relatively small size creates a minimal impact on these towns. Due to topography, we have virtually no relations with Danville. While we once had very little to do with Wheelock, increased numbers of Stannard residents have come to rely on Wheelock to maintain the portion of Town Hwy. #1, Stannard Mountain Road, that connects Greensboro Bend/Hardwick with Lyndonville and, by means of I91, with the larger world. Stannard shares some roadway jurisdiction with Walden, and Wheelock. Access to some remote corners of their towns is only available through Stannard, and vice versa. Cooperative arrangements have been worked out with Walden such that neither towns' road crew is obliged to plow noncontiguous portions of their highways.

Stannard, Walden, and Hardwick together form one Vermont House district. We are united by having low tax bases, and we are similarly affected by state aid to education formulas. Stannard has been successful in its efforts to stay in this district during the decennial redistricting process.

The area in which Stannard has the most effect on its neighbors is education. Stannard school children attend schools in Hardwick and Greensboro in significant numbers. Of greatest significance is our partnership with Greensboro, the Lakeview Union Elementary School District formed in 1988. We share school operating costs, special education costs, and debt service, figured on an average daily attendance basis. Our Union Assessment reflects the percentage of Stannard students relative to the total number of students. Declining enrollments in this school are of great concern to both towns.

Stannard actively participates in library and recreation programs subsidized by Greensboro. Stannard residents continue to support these programs, by town appropriations and by supplying volunteers to work with the programs.

Land values are higher in Greensboro and Walden. Stannard has become an affordable housing town for the region. The relative impact this has on Stannard's infrastructure is greater than it would be in Greensboro or Walden, towns that have more diversified and more stable tax bases.

Land use and land use policies in Wheelock could have an effect on Stannard. Flagg Pond, a large body of water, is a prominent feature of Stannard's landscape, even though it lies within the borders of the town of Wheelock. Any physical altering of this feature could have an effect on the enjoyment and recreational opportunities of Stannard residents. Likewise, development around the pond could affect the ability of the Town to provide adequate road upkeep. All vehicular access to the Pond is through Stannard. Wheelock does not have a zoning ordinance and we have seen, over the past few years, housing construction creep up the Wheelock side of Stannard Mountain. The buffer provided by the Steam Mill Brook Wildlife Management Area should minimize the effects of this development.

Much of the southern and western slope of Stannard Mountain is also part of Wheelock. Development in that area could alter the landscape and view that Stannard residents currently have. Development in the same area could also necessitate higher road expenses because access to the area from the southwest is on Stannard roads.

Recommendation: Continue to maintain good relations with neighboring towns and organizations.

Recommendation: Keep abreast of land use changes and policies in neighboring towns. Intervene in hearings when these policies may be at odds with the Stannard Town Plan or the wishes of Stannard residents.

- 13) To maintain an ongoing planning process. State law and our own experience require that the town plan be updated every five years. Without a current plan in effect Zoning Bylaws cannot be changed. Furthermore, a regular planning process provides a forum for deliberation on the problems facing Stannard and offers a means of addressing perceived needs for the future.

Recommendation: The planning commission should regularly review and update the town plan. The plan should not be allowed to expire.

Recommendation: The Stannard Planning Commission should remain active. It should produce an annual report for the Town's annual meeting and keep abreast of funding possibilities for identified projects.

- 14) The 2005 Plan suggested that the Town look into creating subdivision regulations to further many of the recommendations made in the Plan. During the following 4 years the Planning

Commission redesigned its zoning regulations. The Zoning regulations were passed in 2009. The Zoning Bylaw includes subdivision regulations.

ZONING ORDINANCE

Stannard's original zoning bylaws were enacted in the 1970's. They were updated in 1992, 1994, 2003, and 2009 when the zoning administrator, Board of Adjustment, Selectmen, and Planning Commission collaborated to recommend revisions to the bylaws in response to actual situations that had been encountered. The proposed changes emphasized the following points that still accord with the findings of this version of the town plan :

1. New construction can result in new demands on town services. If practical, these costs must be borne by those creating the need for new expenditures to the extent permitted by law.
2. The mechanism for carrying out the zoning bylaws should be self-supporting. This goal could be met by revisions to the zoning permit application fees to reflect the amount of the administrator's time required, by instituting a site plan review fee and by the establishment of a variance fee.
3. The zoning ordinances need continual review to ensure that they are effective tools for the benefit of the town. Any ambiguous wording that is discovered needs to be removed and reworked.

APPENDIX

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA: To be updated when 2010 data is published.

Sources, Census and school board records

Town Population:

1890:239
1900:222
1910:206
1920:173
1930:154
1940:140
1950:116
1960:113
1970:88
1980:142
1990:148

2000:188
2010;

Household types, To be updated with 2010 data

Total households =
Married with children =
Married without children =
Single parent families =
Single householder =
Other householder =

School Age Population (School Board data)

1969-70: 32 students or fewer
1979-80: 32
1984-85: 32
1989-90: 56
1990-91: 51
1991-92: 51
1992-93: 50
1993-94: 62
1994-95: 54
1995-96: 66
1996-97: 53
1997-98: 45
1998-99: 25
1999-00: 38
2000-01: 37
2001-02: 45
2002-03: 43
2003-04: 40
2004-05: 41
2005-06: 47
2006-07: 37
2007-08: 38
2008-09: 36

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