

**MINUTES
TOWN OF SWANTON
SELECTBOARD MEETING
In-Person & By Zoom
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
Thursday, February 16, 2023 @ 7:00 p.m.**

Present: James Guilmette, Chair; Earl Fournier, Vice Chair; Nicole Draper, Ed White, Steve Bourgeois, Members; Brian Savage, Town Administrator; Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk; Amy Giroux, Zoning Administrator; Joseph Cava, Administrative Assistant; Joel Clark; Patrick Parah; Don Collins; Lora McAllister; Jeff King; Cody Hemenway

*All motions carried unanimously unless specified otherwise.

- A. Call to Order – Mr. Guilmette called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.
- B. Pledge of Allegiance – Mr. Guilmette led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- C. Agenda Review
- D. Meeting Topics:

- 1. Minutes

- a) February 7, 2023, Regular and Zoom Selectboard Meeting

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the draft minutes from the 2/7/23 Selectboard meeting, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

- 2. Public Comments

Mr. King came forward to thank the Selectboard for the pay raise, Christmas bonus, and continued support from the Town.

- 3. Law Enforcement

- a) Swanton Animal Control Officer Monthly Report

Members of the Selectboard briefly reviewed the animal control officer's monthly report. Mr. Savage mentioned concerns of a dog barking on First Street.

- 4. Old Town Business

- a) Amend and Correct Minutes from the October 18, 2022 Selectboard Meeting

Mr. Savage mentioned and created a memo outlining information that was missing from the 10/18/22 Selectboard meeting minutes. Mr. Guilmette asked Mr. Cava if he could make the necessary changes? Mr. Cava responded yes.

- b) Update on Swanton Recreation/Community Center

Mr. Clark mentioned an update that should be ready at the end of this week. This includes floor plans and numbers to support the community center project.

- c) Update on Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT)

Mr. Clark mentioned a meeting with Mr. Savage in the future to choose a design firm to get the project going.

d) Amended ATV Ordinance

Mr. Savage stated that the ordinance has been amended and wrote a summary for members of the Selectboard to review.

e) Job Description of Administrative Assistant Position

Mr. Savage took the recommendations of the Selectboard to add a piece about social media in the job description.

Mr. White made a motion to advertise the Administrative Assistant position, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

5. New Town Business

a) Review RFPs for Stormwater Permits

Mr. Savage gave a report on the proposals that have been received on the Bushey Street and Country Club Estates Storm Water Permits. The firms and the amount quoted for the engineer, design, and permit application are as follows:

- Watershed Consulting – Proposal for Bushey Street only received previously \$25,780.00
- Ruggiano Engineering, Inc. – Proposal for Bushey Street - \$9,000.00
- Ruggiano Engineering, Inc. – Proposal for Country Club Estates - \$11,000.00
- Ruggiano estimated the permit application fees to the State of \$3,629.00 and \$7,120.00 respectively.

- Cross Consulting Engineers, Inc. – Proposal for Bushey Street - \$26,400.00
- Cross Consulting Engineers, Inc. – Proposal for Country Club Estates - \$27,300.00
- As with the estimated permit application fees that were quoted by Ruggiano, Cross quoted the same estimates.

A motion was made by Mr. Fournier to award the contracts to Ruggiano Engineering, Inc. and to authorize Mr. Savage to sign the contracts. Mr. White seconded. Motion carried.

b) Review of 2021 Town Audit

Mr. Bourgeois questioned the timing of the entries. Ms. Fournier responded that the entries were made at the time that the information was available. Mr. Bourgeois recommended changing the verbiage to reflect a written deadline of sixty days. Mr. Bourgeois added that bids should go out every three years to ensure the Town's banking principles stay current. Ms. Fournier does evaluate this and clarified that municipal banking is outside normal FDIC guidelines. Mr. Bourgeois followed up about asking about retirement through the Town including its contribution. Ms. Fournier stated that this is projected and accounted for.

c) Use of St. Albans Messenger for Zoning & Planning Legal Notices

Ms. Giroux recommended switching back to the St. Albans Messenger to warn the DRB meetings. This recommendation came from using the

County Currier which warns the meetings a week earlier than the St. Albans Messenger. This has caused issues for getting applicants to the DRB in a timely manner.

Mr. White made a motion to approve warning DRB meetings and all other Town meeting and bylaw warnings in the St. Albans Messenger, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

d) MVU School Budget

Mr. Collins came forward to speak about the challenges of building a budget as a result of a school district merger. Ms. McAllister remarked that the tax rates have gone down. The enrollment is steady compared to other school districts across Vermont which has seen decreases in enrollments. Mr. Fournier asked about equalized factors mentioned in the report? Ms. McAllister said that this is reflected by poverty numbers and the number of families receiving free and reduced lunches. Mr. Collins expressed that the changes have had a major impact. The free/reduced lunches for example have decreased by the number of families submitting the paperwork for this program. The overall budget has risen \$4.2 million for a total proposed budget of \$44,983,567.00. Mr. Fournier asked about the school's capital reserve fund to cover the roof replacement on the high school. Ms. McAllister said the capital reserve fund has been exhausted and the school board is engaged in a six-phase project to replace the circular roofs.

Continuing, Ms. McAllister mentioned increased staff benefit costs across the board in both the public and private sector. Mr. Collins mentioned that the local school districts lost the negotiating tools used to reduce the costs of health insurance to the local school districts. Ms. McAllister said that the cost per each equalized pupil has remained in the lower half compared to other school systems whose costs exceed Missisquoi's by over \$1,000.00 per each equalized pupil. The equalized tax rate is based upon the average home value of \$200,000.00. Ms. McAllister said this needs to be changed given the increased value of homes in a post pandemic atmosphere. This leads to a higher education tax rate.

The takeaway from this is summarized between Franklin, Highgate, and Swanton. Over time, the school board has improved the retention of quality teachers. Mr. Fournier agreed with the increased spending to retain qualified educators. Mr. Bourgeois asked about the relationship between test scores and these increased salaries. Mr. Collins stated that they are related, but there is a discrepancy caused by truancy of the students regularly attending classes. To conclude, Ms. McAllister passed out a summary of the budget for the board's review. Mr. Fournier mentioned the conflict between the school board's and Swanton Town's informational meeting. Mr. Collins stated he would be willing to work with Mr. Fournier to work this problem out. Mr. Collins also stressed the importance of training students to fill roles within the community.

6. Community & Economic Development

Mr. Savage gave a brief update on economic development activities since the beginning of 2023. Mr. Fournier asked about the tour provided by Green Mountain Knitting? Mr. Savage said the tour went well but is suffering the same setbacks as most employment agencies for filling the employment vacancies.

Mr. Bourgeois asked about the Town's commitment to the MVU sidewalk project? Mr. Guilmette said that the project would be put out to bid next year. The Town's commitment is too deep now to put a pause on it.

7. Highway Department

a) Continue Possible New Truck Purchase Discussion

Mr. Guilmette said that three different dealerships were contacted to gather estimates/bids. Most of the dealerships did not respond or delivered estimates exceeding \$170,000.00 for the truck body alone. Mr. Guilmette recommended settling for the bid from Charlebois of \$261,150.00. Funding amounting to \$150,000.00 will be utilized from the truck replacement fund which would be the \$50,000.00 that's in the fund now and 2023 and 2024 money. An additional amount of \$100,000.00 will be used from the ARPA funds and the remaining balance covered by the sale of the 2012 International. Mr. Bourgeois had concerns with depleting the reserves. Mr. Guilmette explained that they could not borrow against the ARPA funds to replenish the reserves but use them as a onetime purchase.

Mr. Fournier said the truck is going to be something that that the Town will always be wrestling with projecting a five-year replacement timeline on highway trucks. Mr. Guilmette recommended putting money towards the highway department for equipment and road improvements. Ms. Draper asked about the five-year timeline, and this being the second truck being purchased within the five-year period. Mr. Guilmette summarized the complications that arose from the previous truck purchase. Mr. Guilmette also mentioned the extended warranty options and the usefulness of these given issues with the previous truck. Mr. White expressed concerns with the warranty given discrepancies between pages of the contract. To conclude, Mr. Guilmette said they would need to explore the options before the board makes a decision.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to purchase the Western Star truck from Charlebois for \$261,150.00 with the understanding that the truck is turn key ready, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

b) Hay Mulcher

Mr. Guilmette said they were able to find a cheaper hay mulcher from Fournier's versus Franklin Rent All.

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve Fournier's bid of \$6,920.00, seconded by Mr. White. Mr. Fournier abstained. Motion carried.

c) Road Paving

Mr. Guilmette gave a summary of road paving projects for next year including Lakewood Dr., Homestead Rd., Reynolds Rd. Campbell's Bay Rd., and Swanton Hill Rd. which comes to total of 4.34 miles worth of paving. Mr. Guilmette proposes to use \$100,000.00 from the ARPA funds to go with the budgeted amount of \$350,000.00.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to put the roads out to bid, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

d) MVU Sidewalk Garage

Mr. Savage gave a brief update saying the driveway entering the Town garage site is too wide by A76 road standards and would need to be reduced to accommodate the ROW curb cut for the sidewalk.

8. Expenditures

a) General Orders (12/21/22 through 12/31/22 & 1/1/2023 through 2/16/2023).

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the General Orders of 1/1/2023 through 2/16/2023, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the General Orders of 12/21/22 through 12/31/22, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

- b) Highway Orders (12/21/22 through 12/31/22 & 1/1/2023 through 2/16/2023)

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Highway Orders of 1/1/2023 through 2/16/2023, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to approve the Highway Orders of 12/21/22 through 12/31/22, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

- c) Library Orders (12/21/22 through 12/31/22 & 1/1/2023 through 2/16/2023)

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Library Orders of 1/1/2023 through 2/16/2023, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

Mr. White made a motion to approve the Library Orders of 12/21/22 through 12/31/22, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

- d) Payroll Orders (12/21/22 through 12/31/22 & 1/1/2023 through 2/16/2023)

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Payroll Orders of 1/1/2023 through 2/16/2023, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to approve the Payroll Orders of 12/21/22 through 12/31/22, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

9. Any Other Necessary Business

Mr. Bourgeois expressed a concern of people going into the old Riv, which is slated for demolition. Ms. Draper said the building would be coming down between March and April 2023 and the activity there is based upon the asbestos abatement needed for the building can be demolished.

10. Correspondence - None

11. Public Comments (Reprise)

Mr. White wanted to thank Mr. Guilmette for his years of service to the Town. Mr. Bourgeois echoed these sentiments and expressed the gap that the community would need to fill. Mr. Fournier cited Mr. Guilmette's dedication to the community and expressed similar thanks.

Mr. Parah expressed concern over the number of voters present last year and expressed dismay if the outcome was the same this year.

12. Upcoming Events

- a) President's Day Holiday – Monday, February 20, 2023 – Town Office & Operations CLOSED
- b) Joint Town/Village Informational Meeting – Tuesday, February 28, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. – Village Municipal Complex, 120 First Street
- c) Town Meeting Day – Polls open Tuesday, March 7, 2023 from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. – Polls located at Village Municipal Complex, 120 First Street

- d) Joint Planning Commission/DRB Meeting – Wednesday, March 8, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. – Town Office Building, 1 Academy Street
- e) Special Selectboard Meeting – Wednesday, March 8, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. – Town Office Building, 1 Academy Street\

Mr. Savage mentioned that the link contained within the Town report is incorrect for the informational meeting. The correct link will be shared on the website.

13. Executive Session (If Needed) – None

- E. Adjournment – Mr. White made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:38 p.m., seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph Cava
Administrative Assistant

Received and filed by:

Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk

Date