

MINUTES
SWANTON VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SWANTON TOWN SELECTBOARD
JOINT INFORMATIONAL MEETING
& PUBLIC HEARING
In-Person & By Zoom
Swanton Village Municipal Complex
120 First Street, Swanton, VT 05488
Tuesday, February 28, 2023 @ 7:00 p.m.

Present: Bill Sheets, Village Manager; Lynn Paradis, Assistant Village Manager; Dianne Day, Village Clerk; Reg Beliveau, Village Special Projects Manager; Christopher Leach, Trustee Chair; Adam Paxman, Village Trustee Members; Jason Cross, Fire Chief; Matthew Sullivan, Police Chief; James Guilmette, Selectboard Chair; Earl Fournier, Selectboard Vice Chair; Nicole Draper, Steve Bourgeois, Members; Brian Savage, Town Administrator; Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk; Joseph Cava, Administrative Assistant; Macey Lavoie-Dupont; Cody Hemenway; Tim Hemenway; Betsy Cheney; Gene Fournier; Mark Rocheleau; Sandy Skeels Kilburn; Thomas Oliver; Glen Gerwit; Rich Kelley; Alicia Bourdeau; Shawn Cheney; Dan Chevalier lin (ZOOM User); dillondupont (ZOOM User); Nick Brosseau (ZOOM User)

1. Call to Order

Mr. Leach called the Board of Village Trustees Joint Informational Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Guilmette consecutively called the Town Selectboard Joint Informational Meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence – Mr. Leach led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Agenda Review

4. Reading of Town of Swanton’s Annual Warning – Town Administrator Brian Savage

Mr. Savage opened by reading the Town of Swanton Annual Warning as follows:

The legal voters of the Town of Swanton, who are legal voters in Town Meeting, are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Swanton Village Municipal Complex, First and Elm Streets, Swanton on Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at 7:00 a.m. to vote on the articles herein set forth. All articles are to be voted by Australian Ballot system. The polls open at 7:00 a.m. and close at 7:00 p.m.

Article 1: To elect from the legal voters of said Town the following officers:

- Moderator, Town for a 1 year term
- One Town Clerk for a 3 year term
- One Town Treasurer for a 3 year term
- One Selectperson for a 3 year term
- One Selectperson for a 2 year term
- One Lister for a 3 year term
- One Auditor for a 3 year term
- One Trustee of Public Money for a 3 year term
- One Trustee of Public Money for a 1 year unexpired term
- One Library Trustee for a 5 year term
- One Library Trustee for a 4 year unexpired term
- One Cemetery Commissioner for a 5 year term
- One Cemetery Commissioner for a 2 year unexpired term
- Collector of Delinquent Taxes

- Article 2: Shall the Town appropriate \$1,275,656.34 for the operation and maintenance of the Town Highway Department?
- Article 3: Shall the Town appropriate \$278,225.00 for fire protection?
- Article 4: Shall the Town appropriate \$196,784.08 to provide police protection to the residents of the Town of Swanton?
- Article 5: Shall the Town appropriate \$663,450.42 for the Town General expenses?
- Article 6: Shall the Town appropriate \$175,382.39 towards the maintenance & employee benefits of the Swanton Public Library?
- Article 7: Shall the Town appropriate \$67,490.00 towards the operating budget of the Swanton Public Library?
- Article 8: Shall the Town collect its real and personal property taxes to defray the expenses of the Town for the fiscal year commencing January 1, 2023, and annually thereafter, by its actual receipt of payment (postmarks will not be accepted) at the Town Offices by 5 p.m. on October 15th, or if the 15th shall fall on a weekend or holiday, the following business day by 5 p.m., with an eight percent (8%) penalty and one percent (1%) interest per month (or portion thereof) due thereon for the first three months, and one and one half (1.5%) per month (or portion thereof) thereafter, to be charged for late payment of any installment?
- Article 9: Shall the Town appropriate \$199,245.00 to provide rescue services to the residents of the Town of Swanton?
- Article 10: Shall the Town appropriate \$123,247.24 towards the Operating and Maintenance Budget of the Recreation Department?

Following the reading of the warning and articles, Mr. Fournier came up to the podium to congratulate Mr. Guilmette on his years of service to the Town of Swanton and presented an award to him. Following this recognition, Mr. Guilmette came to the podium to discuss the 2022 highlights in Swanton by expressing his gratitude to all the members of the community that make Swanton a better place to live and work. Another highlight was the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed with the FCIDC for economic development services. A contract has also been signed with Ecopixel of Essex Junction, VT to develop a new joint website between the Village and the Town.

Other notable highlights include the adoption of an ATV ordinance within portions of the Town. Emergency culvert repairs were also a characteristic of 2022. The Town was awarded \$1,249,211.88 in ARPA funds and will be distributed to various ventures in the community including Swanton Recreation, highway/road projects, and the joint website venture. Future developments include the establishment of a community center.

2023 Candidates for Office

- Town Moderator (Vote for no more than 1, 1 Year Term)
Brian K. Savage
- Town Clerk (Vote for no more than 1, 3 Year Term)
Cathy L. Fournier
- Town Treasurer (Vote for no more than 1, 3 Year Term)
Cathy L. Fournier
- Selectperson (Vote for no more than 1, 3 Year Term)
Steven Bourgeois
Jennifer Yandow

- Selectperson (Vote for no more than 1, 2 Year Term)
Nicholas Brosseau
Cody Hemenway
- Lister (Vote for no more than 1, 3 Year Term)
Amy Giroux
- Auditor (Vote for no more than 1, 3 Year Term)
Amy Giroux
- Trustee of Public Money (Vote for no more than 1, 3 Year Term)
Cody Hemenway
- Trustee of Public Money (Vote for no more than 1, 1 Year Unexpired)
-
- Library Trustee (Vote for no more than 1, 5 Year Term)
Sarah Garvey
- Library Trustee (Vote for no more than 1, 4 Year Unexpired Term)
Bianca Braman
- Cemetery Commissioner (Vote for no more than 1, 5 Year Term)
-
- Cemetery Commissioner (Vote for no more than 1, 3 Year Unexpired)
John Kaczowski
Macey Lavoie-Dupont
- Collector of Delinquent Taxes (Vote for no more than 1, 1 Year Term)
Betty L. Cheney

5. Reading of Village of Swanton’s Annual Warning – Trustee Chair Christopher Leach

Mr. Leach opened by introducing members of the Board of Village Trustees and other Village staff. Following the introduction, Mr. Leach read the Village of Swanton Annual Warning as follows:

The legal voters of the Village of Swanton are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Swanton Village Complex, 120 First Street, Swanton, Vermont on Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at 7:00 a.m. to vote on the articles set forth. All articles are to be voted by Australian Ballot. The polls open at 7:00 a.m. and close at 7:00 p.m.

Article 1: To elect from the legal voters of said Village the following officers:
President for a 1 year term
Trustee for a 3 year term
Clerk for a 1 year term
Collector of Delinquent Taxes for a 1 year term

Article 2: Shall the voters of the Village of Swanton appropriate \$138,985 for the operation and maintenance of the General Fund for 2023?

Article 3: Shall the voters of the Village of Swanton appropriate \$575,035 for the operation and maintenance of the Highway Department for 2023?

Article 4: Shall the voters of the Village of Swanton appropriate \$87,861 for the operation and maintenance of the Fire Department for 2023?

Article 5: Shall the voters of the Village of Swanton appropriate \$852,990 for the operation and maintenance of the Police Department for 2023?

Article 6: Shall the voters of the Village Swanton authorize the Board of Trustees to place surplus funds in the Police Department anticipated to be \$61,200 into a capital fund for future purchases?

Article 7: Shall the voters of the Village of Swanton Shall the voters of the Village Swanton authorize the Board of Trustees to place surplus funds in the General Department anticipated to be \$11,900 into a capital fund for future Municipal Complex and Park upgrades?

Article 8: Shall the voters of the Village Swanton authorize the Board of Trustees to place surplus funds in the Fire Department anticipated to be \$10,250 into a capital fund for future purchases?

Following the reading of the warning and articles Mr. Beliveau presented the dedication of the 2022 Village Annual Report to the memory of W. Scott Mueller who tragically passed away in a motorcycle accident in 2022. Mr. Beliveau also briefly discussed the concept of One Swanton.

6. PowerPoint Presentation and Discussion of Town of Swanton’s Proposed 2023 Budget

2023 Budget Requests Summary
(If All Voted Articles Are Approved)

- Total General Budget: \$1,180,051.79
 To Be Raised By Taxes: \$ 985,942.66
- Total Highway Budget: \$1,902,765.42
 To Be Raised By Taxes: \$1,750,605.42
- Library Budget: \$ 213,097.00
 Library Appropriation: \$ 67,490.00
 To Be Raised By Taxes: \$ 242,782.39

2023 General Budget

- If All Articles Approved \$1,180,051.79
- To Be Raised By Taxes \$ 985,942.66
- 2023 Projected Tax Rate \$.1398
- 2023 Tax Rate \$.1267
- 2023 Tax Rate Increase \$.0131

2023 Highway Budget

- If All Articles Approved \$1,902,765.42
- To Be Raised By Taxes \$1,750,605.42
- 2023 Projected Tax Rate \$.3238
- 2023 Tax Rate \$.2707
- 2023 Tax Rate Increase \$.0531

2023 Library Budget

- If Both Articles Are Approved \$ 280,587.00
- To Be Raised By Taxes \$ 242,782.39
- 2023 Projected Tax Rate \$.0349
- 2023 Tax Rate \$.0356
- 2023 Tax Rate Increase \$.0007

2023 Tax Projections
Tax Rate

<u>Tax Fund</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Village</u>
------------------------	--------------------	-----------------------

General	\$0.1398	\$0.1398
Highway	\$0.3238	N/A
Library	\$0.0349	\$0.0349
Total	\$0.4985	\$0.1747

*Please note – tax rate is based on the 2022 Grand List. The 2023 Grand List will not be available until mid summer.

2023 Tax Projections
Estimated Municipal Tax

<u>Assessed Value</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Village</u>
\$150,000.00	\$747.75	\$262.05
\$200,000.00	\$997.00	\$349.40
\$250,000.00	\$1,246.25	\$436.75

7. PowerPoint Presentation and Discussion of Village of Swanton’s Proposed 2023 Budget

Mr. Beliveau presented the following power point presentation: He stated this would be his last one since he retired in December of 2022 but is staying on to help the new Village Manager, William “Bill” Sheets out on some ongoing projects. He said he would like to start with his explanation of “One Swanton.” Mr. Beliveau said Mr. Speer originated that when they held the Community Visit back several years ago and were referring to the Village and Town working together on projects. He said both the Village and the Town are there for the other entity when a situation may arise. He said he doesn’t feel that phrase should be used to push one’s personal agenda. Mr. Beliveau also stated the 2022 Annual Report was dedicated in memory of a Village worker that was killed in a motorcycle accident, W. Scott Mueller. He explained what positions Scott held at the Village. He then showed the Village’s organizational chart that Mr. Sheets created when he started, showing who works in each department. Mr. Sheets said there are three enterprises here and it’s interesting to see who works where. Mr. Beliveau then asked Ms. Paradis to go through the numbers. Ms. Paradis explained the following to everyone:

TAXES 2022 Actual vs. 2023 Proposed

- General Fund 2022 Tax Rate = \$0.0899 vs 2023 Tax Rate = \$0.0843
- Fire Department 2022 Tax Rate = \$0.0505 vs 2023 Tax Rate = \$0.0532
- Police Department 2022 Tax Rate = \$0.4655 vs 2023 Tax Rate = \$0.5168
- Highway Department 2022 Tax Rate = \$0.3427 vs 2023 Tax Rate = \$0.3484
- 2022 Tax Rate = \$0.9486 vs 2023 Tax Rate = \$1.0027 for a change of .0541

Taxes 2022 Actual vs. 2023 Proposed

- 2022 Actual on a \$175,000 House = \$1660.05; \$200,000 House = \$1897.20; \$250,000 House = \$2371.50
- 2023 Proposed on a \$175,000 House = \$1754.72 for an increase of \$94.67; \$200,000 House = \$2005.40 for an increase of \$108.20; and \$250,000 House = \$2506.75 for an increase of \$135.25. This annual increase is for fire, general, police and highway.

Proposed 2023 Taxes by Department

- \$175,000 House = General \$147.52, Fire \$93.10, Police \$904.40, Highway \$609.70 = \$1754.72
- \$200,000 House = General \$168.60, Fire \$106.40, Police \$1033.60, Highway \$696.80 = \$2005.40
- \$250,000 House – General \$210.75, Fire \$133.00, Police \$1292.00, Highway \$871.00 = \$2506.75

Ms. Paradis then showed what the Village of Swanton electric rates are compared to other utilities in the State of Vermont. Swanton Village has the third lowest rates in the 600 kWh range (\$86.21) and the 1000 kWh range (\$139.11). Ms. Paradis said currently most electric utilities in Vermont are filing for rate increases. She said VPPSA will be reviewing their rates this summer to see if a rate increase is needed.

Mr. Beliveau stated that he is proud to share that Swanton Village Electric is 100% renewable. He said they care about the environment and community is at the heart of Swanton Village. He also said companies like VPT can receive incentives from the State because the electricity is 100% renewable.

Ms. Paradis informed everyone that the Water and Wastewater rates are reviewed annually during the budget building process. She said it has been determined that an adjustment to the water and wastewater rates is not needed at this time.

Water Treatment Plant

Mr. Beliveau stated that this year we continued to focus on the exterior of the plant, clearing scrub and shrub brush from under the powerlines and along the stormwater ditches. Trees will get replaced with newer ones. The low lift station needed some repairs to the walls due to age. Since the upgrade to the plant in 2012, activities have been focused on preventative and modest maintenance repairs and upkeep. Activities have been in the works for a waterline crossing under the Missisquoi River. We'd like to thank the voters for approving the Bond vote in November for \$1.2M. The current waterline crossing which is suspended off the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Bridge will be a redundant line for the time being.

Wastewater Treatment Plant

Mr. Beliveau summarized the report as pretty similar to last years, as we continue to work on our treatment process at the plant to reach the new State phosphorus rules and TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) limits of 0.2mg/L. Nexom Blue Pro Filters were picked as the vendor of choice, so now the work begins on final engineering and funding which may include a future bond and grant opportunities.

Public Works

- ▶ Paving projects for this year included Winters Court and smaller sections of much needed broken pavement.
- ▶ A sidewalk project on Fourth Street repairing broken sections between Liberty Street and the Rail Trail were completed which improved the crossings into the Swanton Central School and the Fourth Street sidewalk system. This section totaled 320ft of new sidewalk. Another 24ft of miscellaneous broken sections of sidewalk were also repaired.
- ▶ New main line valves were installed in order to better isolate waterline breaks, and reduce downtimes caused by the repairs. The old valves are aged and some nonfunctioning making shutdowns for repairs impossible.
- ▶ A bike repair station was installed at Swanton Beach this summer to help with our many bike riders who visit the beautiful shores of Lake Champlain.
- ▶ Other projects included working with the Town's paving project on Wheeler Round where we worked with them on raising the sewer and storm structures prior to paving. Once again, showing collaboration and teamwork are what make this community great.

Electric Department

- ▶ The electric crew continues to keep our system reliable during normal conditions, and during poor weather events. The funding for the AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure) system is still hung up at the State level. The State grant funding will help cover a significant portion of the program for Swanton.
- ▶ Upgrades for the coming year will be reviewing pole replacements and any conductor upsizing that would be necessary for future electrification needs.

- ▶ Once again, we provided Mutual Aid to a neighboring community post windstorm. These crews worked through the Christmas Holiday restoring power to families that were in the dark.

Hydro Plant

- ▶ Relicensing is continuing through the different stages. 2022 has proven to be the second highest production year in a ten-year comparison.
- ▶ The hydro team continues to test the efficiency of all the units trying to get the most generation possible.
- ▶ Upgrades to the hydro plant station batteries and battery charger will help keep things charged for starting and stopping the units for years to come.
- ▶ The Annual Plant Maintenance shut down in 2022 revealed no major issues.

Maintenance Department

- ▶ They have continued preventative checks throughout the Village properties this past year resulting in a lower number of unpredictable and unforeseen repairs to all assets. The maintenance staff's dedication to seek out and handle issues before they become costly repairs is of the highest priority.

Accounting, Utility Billing and Customer Service

- ▶ Our office staff continues to serve our customers with great customer service.
- ▶ They have been busy this year maneuvering the various COVID relief programs that assisted customers with their utility and property tax bills.
- ▶ In addition to customer service, our small office also handles utility and property tax billing, payroll, human resources, accounts payable, grant support, budget and financial statement reconciliation for all the Village departments.

Carry over projects into 2023

- Hotel Riviere remediation/demolition
- Vietnam Veteran Memorial Bridge (Depot Street)
- Downtown Enhancement Project
- Missisquoi River water main river crossing
- Highgate water/sewer to the Airport
- Wastewater upgrades
- Public Works/Water
- Village Complex – renovation
- Public Safety Complex

2023 Candidates

- Village President 1-year term - Neal Speer: Thanked everyone for their past support and asked for their continued support.
- Village Clerk 1-year term - Dianne Day: Thanked everyone for their past support and asked for their continued support.
- Village Trustee 3-year term – Adam Paxman: Thanked everyone for their past support and asked for their continued support.
- Collector of Delinquent Taxes 1-year term - Betty Cheney: Thanked everyone for their past support and asked for their continued support.

Mr. Beliveau and Mr. Sheets thanked everyone for their continued support and reminded everyone to come out and vote on Tuesday, March 7th from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Mr. Sheets commended Mr. Beliveau for his time as Village Manager. Ms. Kilburn added that Mr. Beliveau has gone above and beyond during his time of service. Mr. Leach added that the last twelve years with the Board of Village Trustees has been a rewarding experience and Swanton is a great place to live.

8. Public Comment

Mr. Oliver, State Representative, introduced himself and said there hasn't been a whole lot going on at the moment in Montpelier. He said there are some bills he is watching and waiting to see how they will be presented. He said there are some he will not support. Some members of the audience asked him a few questions about current bills.

Mr. Cheney made a statement about how the Village of Swanton will lien a property owner if a tenant leaves an unpaid electric bill. He said no other utility does this and he feels it's an unfair practice. He said as a real estate agent it's difficult to encourage individuals to purchase rental property in the Village's electric territory because of this. He said this has cost him approximately \$8,000.00-\$10,000.00 over the years. Ms. Paradis stated that the Village updated their Charter in 2009 to include putting liens on unpaid electric bills. She said Swanton Village was the 13th municipality to do so and it helps to keep electric rates stable. She said in previous years she would ask the Board to write off approximately \$40,000.00 in unpaid electric bills. She said this was then absorbed by all the rate payers and rate increases were necessary. Ms. Paradis feels this practice is working because in recent years she is only asking to write off approximately \$7,000.00. Mr. Sheets thanked Mr. Cheney for his comment and said he heard what he had to say.

9. Any Other Necessary Business

Mr. Savage said there is a brief item to discuss to amend the January 17, 2023 SLB Meeting minutes.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to amend the 1/17/23 SLB Meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

10. Executive Session (If Necessary) - None

11. Adjournment by both Boards

Mr. Paxman made a motion to adjourn the Board of Village Trustees Joint Informational Meeting at 8:30 p.m., seconded by Mr. Leach. Motion carried.

Ms. Draper made a motion to adjourn the Town Selectboards Joint Informational Meeting at 8:32 p.m., seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph Cava
Administrative Assistant

Dianne Day
Village Clerk

Received and filed by:

Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk

Date