

**MINUTES
TOWN OF SWANTON
SELECTBOARD MEETING
In-Person & By Zoom
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
*Tuesday, April 18, 2023 @ 6:00 p.m.***

Present: Earl Fournier, Chair; Ed White, Vice Chair; Nicole Draper, Steve Bourgeois, , Cody Hemenway, Members; Brian Savage, Town Administrator; Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk; Joseph Cava, Interim Administrative Assistant; Christina Candels, Administrative Assistant; Betsy Fournier; .Gordon Winters; Kevin Lapan; Jim Hungerford, Hungerford Paving; Joe Montagne, Pike Industries, Inc.; Tim Smith, Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation; Jason Guyette; Jon Nielson; Suzanne Washburn; Mark Rocheleau; Alicia Bourdeau; Nick Michaud; Roger George (ZOOM User); Joel Clark (ZOOM User); Linda Daneau (ZOOM User)

*All motions carried unanimously unless specified otherwise.

- A. Call to Order – Mr. Fournier called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
- B. Pledge of Allegiance – Mr. Fournier led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- C. Agenda Review
- D. Meeting Topics:

- 1. Minutes

- a) April 4, 2023, Regular and Zoom Selectboard Meeting

- Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the Draft Minutes from the 4/4/23 Selectboard meeting, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

- 2. Public Comments - None

- 3. Expenditures

- a) General Orders (3/22/2023 through 4/18/2023)

- Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the General Orders of 3/22/2023 through 4/18/2023 in the amount of \$122,466.04, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

- b) Highway Orders (3/22/2023 through 4/18/2023)

Mr. White made a motion to approve the Highway Orders of 3/22/2023 through 4/18/2023 in the amount of \$42,503.01, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

c) Library Orders (3/22/2023 through 4/18/2023)

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Library Orders of 3/22/2023 through 4/18/2023 in the amount of \$13,775.80, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

d) Payroll Orders (3/22/2023 through 4/18/2023)

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Payroll Orders of 3/22/2023 through 4/18/2023 in the amount of 40,419.38, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

e) ARPA Orders (3/22/2023 through 4/18/2023)

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to approve the ARPA Orders of 3/22/2023 through 4/18/2023 in the amount of 27,000.00, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

f) Library Payroll Orders (3/22/2023 through 4/18/2023)

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to approve the Library Payroll Orders of 3/22/2023 through 4/18/2023 in the amount of 9,095.90, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

4. Highway Department

a) Opening of 2023 Paving Bids

Mr. Fournier welcomed Mr. Lapan to the table to discuss the paving bids. The paving bids included:

Hungerford Paving: \$549,061.61 grand total with costs at \$612.00 per ton.

Frank W. Whitcomb Construction Corporation: \$628,777.26 grand total with costs at \$612.00 per ton.

J. Hutchins, Inc.: \$628,917.15 grand total with costs at \$612.00 per ton.

Pike Industries, Inc.: \$547,268.63 grand total with costs at \$612.00 per ton.

Mr. Rocheleau reminded members of the Selectboard that though Pike Industries comes through with one of the lowest bids, they've been late on paving projects in the past. Mr. Fournier asked Mr. Montagne if they would remain consistent with their proposed price per tonnage of paving?

Mr. Montagne responded yes. Mr. Bourgeois said if paving projects changed, he would like to see the price commitment per road. Mr. Lapan expressed the importance of repaving roads in West Swanton like Homestead Rd. and Campbell Bay Rd. Mr. Hungerford expressed that there us a discrepancy between what the paving is estimated and how much is used during the process between shim and overlay. Mr. Fournier asked how long it would take to complete the proposed paving projects. Mr. Hungerford responded that they could finish paving by June 30, 2023. In response, Mr. Montagne said they have the advantage of equipment and certified employees to handle the load of these paving projects. Mr. Fournier recommended a special Selectboard meeting on April 24, 2023 to make a decision on the bids.

5. Executive Session

a) Representatives of Swanton Chamber of Commerce, Inc. – Real Estate

Ms. Draper made a motion to enter executive session at 6:40 p.m., seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

Ms. Draper made a motion to exit executive session at 7:13 p.m., seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

No motions taken.

6. Law Enforcement

a) Swanton Animal Control Officer Monthly Report

Members of the Town Selectboard briefly reviewed the Animal Control Officer's monthly report. The report outlined a lost Shihtzu, which passed away, and a few dogs at large. The issues regarding the dogs at large have since been resolved. Mr. Hemenway said he would cover in Mr. Benson's absence.

7. Old Town Business

a) LVRT Update

Mr. Clark updated the Selectboard on their meeting with VHB. Mr. Clark said that VHB will be working on the site plan, and could have it completed as early as May 2023. This categorical exclusions like federal and environmental review. At this time, Mr. Clark has no concerns moving forward with VHB. As a firm, VHB has extended experience with projects on the LVRT.

b) Recreation/Community Center Discussion

Mr. E. Fournier recapped the previous meeting where the Selectboard discussed feasibility studies to support this project. Mr. Savage and Mr. Bourgeois had virtual meetings with True Teams and Mr. Ballard from Ballard & King Associates concerning the direction that the Town would like to head in. After this evening's meeting, Mr. Ballard will be submitting a cost proposal to validate a feasibility study. Mr. Rocheleau asked about the need for a feasibility study? Mr. Fournier stated that a feasibility study can help to persuade the Swanton taxpayers to support a bond vote to fund the project.

Mr. Guyette expressed concern with a feasibility study delaying the process, which could ultimately lead to a loss of ARPA funds which are time sensitive. Mr. Fournier asked what will happen if the project is delayed or a bond voted down? Ms. Fournier expressed that they would need to revisit the drawing board. Mr. Bourgeois said that this information is important to evaluate the shortfall that will be covered by the taxpayers. Continuing, Mr. Bourgeois stated that the information needs to be accurate as Swanton will be liable for the shortfall and terms of the bond.

Mr. Guyette asked why it would take up to four years to generate a feasibility study to address the shortfall? Mr. E. Fournier said that the feasibility study could help to secure the bond. Mr. Savage added that the ability to pay back on the bond is based entirely on the community's grand list values. Ms. Fournier asked if it would be possible to keep Swanton Recreation to be copied on all future communications concerning the feasibility study. She stated that Mr. Hemenway is present at the Recreation meetings as representative for the Recreation Commission on the Selectboard, but highlighted the importance of transparency with the remainder of the Selectboard.

Mr. White on a final note made it clear that a feasibility study is essential to support the bond. Mr. Guyette added that the work that is done today will be beneficial for future generations. Mr. Fournier echoed this saying he would rather see it done right than have a hurried process that is not implemented properly. Mr. Hemenway expressed that community immersion means more than a feasibility study ever could. Mr. Clark stated that he would be happy to look at drafted proposals before submitted.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to move forward with seeking proposals for a time sensitive feasibility study to support the community center initiative in accordance with federal, state, and local laws, seconded by Mr. White. Mr. Fournier, Mr. Bourgeois, and Mr. White voted aye. Mr. Hemenway voted nay, and Ms. Draper abstained. Motion carried.

8. New Town Business

a) Mr. Tim Smith – Franklin County Industrial Development Cooperation

Mr. Smith mentioned the process of acquiring land to construct a welcome center on the southbound portion of Interstate 89 between Swanton and Canada. Mr. Fournier asked how this will impact traffic on Vermont Route 78? Mr. Smith said that projections show that traffic will be rerouted away from the Champlain, NY and Derby, VT crossings through Highgate into Swanton. Mr. Smith specified that Route 78 is not a priority at this time.

Mr. Smith also mentioned that feasibility studies are underway for the relocation of Franklin County Field Days as they work towards finding a new location. The five area high schools and tech centers in Franklin County are being educated on career opportunities to de-stigmatize the perception that college is the only option after high school. This includes Vermont Precision Tools, Swann Valley cheese plant, and Green Mountain Knitters.

Mr. Smith also highlighted the discrepancy between job opportunities and housing. He said that there are good job opportunities in the area, but said that many of these jobs are pushing people so far out to afford to live, that people are ultimately leaving those jobs because it leads to a poor quality of life. Mr. Bourgeois spoke on a story published in the paper that St. Albans is implementing a plan to create 200+ additional housing units to fill this gap.

Mr. Bourgeois mentioned that there are limited growth opportunities for industrial development and asked Mr. Smith if there was a way to mitigate the existing wetlands in the Southern Growth district. Mr. Smith mentioned that this is an opportunity that he would like to explore. Mr. Smith also mentioned lands accumulating to four acres which was sold to Vermont Precision Tools, which could also expand industrial development in Franklin County. Continuing, Mr. Smith mentioned a study that was conducted seven years ago evaluating industrial lands in Chittenden County. The study found that industrial development is now on the doorstep of rural counties like Franklin which still has land available for development.

b) Appointment of Deputy Forest Fire Warden

Mr. Savage said that a motion needed to be made.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to appoint Tim Gerrard as Deputy Forest Fire Warden, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

c) Swanton Public Library Elevator Contract

Mr. Savage highlighted the issues stemming from the float pump in the base of the elevator shaft. Mr. Savage recommended terminating the contract with Otis. Mr. Hemenway asked about the repercussions of terminating the contract. Mr. Savage said let them take us to court.

Mr. Hemenway made a motion for Mr. Savage to terminate the contract with Otis Elevator Company, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

Mr. White made a motion for Mr. Savage to institute a contract with Alpha Elevator VT, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

d) Memorandum of Agreement – Swanton RR Depot Museum

Mr. Bourgeois raised the concern of establishing a reserve fund to handle long-term maintenance needs of buildings like the Swanton RR Depot Museum. Mr. Savage added that the recent bond seminar he attended expressed the need for these capital reserve funds to handle expensive or emergency projects where standard funding is insufficient.

Mr. White motioned to renew the Memorandum of Agreement with the Swanton RR Depot Museum, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

**Recess Regular Meeting and Enter into
Liquor and Tobacco Control Board**

Ms. Draper made a motion to recess the regular meeting and enter into the liquor and tobacco control board at 8:42 p.m., seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

1. Dollar General – Liquor and Tobacco License
2. Hometown Sunoco – Tobacco and Tobacco Substitute Endorsement
3. Mama Bears/Swanton House of Pizza – Liquor License

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the license renewals as applied for Dollar General, Hometown Sunoco, and Mama Bears/Swanton House of Pizza, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

**Adjourn Liquor and Tobacco Control Board
And Re-Enter Regular Meeting**

Ms. Draper made a motion to recess the regular meeting and enter into the liquor and tobacco control board at 8:43 p.m., seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

9. Any Other Necessary Business - None

10. Correspondence - None

11. Public Comments (Reprise)

Mr. George asked for consideration in light of the long meeting time to accept a courtesy email concerning the LVRT to be submitted and reviewed at the Selectboard members' earliest convenience.

12. Upcoming Events

- a) Planning Commission Meeting – Wednesday, April 19, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. – Town Office Building, 1 Academy Street
- b) DRB Meeting – Thursday, April 20, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. – Town Office Building, 1 Academy Street
- c) Regular and Zoom Selectboard Meeting – Tuesday, May 2, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. – Town Office Building, 1 Academy Street

13. Executive Session (Legal, Personnel)

Ms. Draper made a motion to enter executive session at 8:51 p.m., seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

Ms. Draper made a motion to exit executive session at 9:17 p.m., seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to approve a pay increase for Mr. Bockus at a new rate of \$25.00 per hour, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Mr. Hemenway made a motion for Ms. Candels to receive their two week vacation and sick leave benefits, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

E. Adjournment – Mr. White made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m., seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph Cava
Administrative Assistant

Received and filed by:

Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk

Date