

SEP Steering Committee Meeting
January 9, 2025
5:30 – 7:00
Holy Trinity Church

MINUTES

Present: Molly Lambert, Hank Lambert, Joel Clark, Crystal Lampman, Jason Barney, Bill Sheets, Brian Savage, Chris Dodge, Linda Wirtz, Sandi Kenyon, Saundra Dubois, Suzie Kelleher, Darcy Benoit, BJ Benoit, Ginette Young, Jill Walsh, Nick Brosseau, Marie Speer, Neal Speer, Shawn Cheney, Abby Gaudette, Christina Candels

1. Welcome and Review of Agenda
Molly started the meeting at 5:30 pm, followed by introductions around the room. Molly shared it has been almost 10 years since the members of Vermont Council on Rural Development came to Swanton and met with 250 members of the Swanton community, which resulted in many of the wonderful projects & committees in Swanton today.
The Swanton Enhancement Project, Arts Council, Beautification, Recreation, Walkability and so many more.
2. Minutes
Suzie made a motion to approve the minutes as written, seconded by Joel. Motion carried. No discussion.
3. Finance Update-Joel Clark
Joel shared the balances as listed:
Unrestricted balance is \$11,867.79 less one check for \$80.
Restricted balance is \$11,164.29.
The CD balance is \$16,482.84 as of 12/15/24.
Joel shared \$3,800 of the restricted balance is allocated for the LVRT trailhead, which is going to go out to bid again soon.
4. Presentation - Jason Barney, President Swanton Historical Society
Linda Wirtz shared information on St. John's Church in Highgate.
Please see attached.
Jay shared a wonderful presentation on the history of Swanton. Questions and answers on the history of Swanton were part of his presentation.
Please see attached slide show.
5. Business Spotlight - Bees on Broadway, Darci Benoit
Molly said they would like to use each meeting to spotlight a local business. This meeting they would like to spotlight Bees on Broadway. Darci opened her store front 4 years ago and gained ground every year. Thank You Darci for your devotion to your beautiful business in the downtown.
Darci said she started her business in her home and is in her second storefront location. In the beginning Darci said she was discouraged to open a business, but her stubbornness pushed her. Darci shared she makes her products in house. When she began her business there was not anyone to help her guide with what was allowed and what was not. Darci said she feels now there are a few of them who can help local businesses in regard to what she did to get through. Darci is also working with Suzie and some others to Promote Swanton. Suzie said this group is working to Promote Swanton, so people know places to eat, play and sleep not to be a pass through but a destination. This group is a blend of Selectboard, Trustee's and other community leaders.

Molly shared this is another example of things coming from this group.

6. Committee Chair and Stakeholder Reports

- MVSD – Chris Dodge
Please see the attached flyer sharing updates from all MVUSD Schools.
- Swanton Arts Council – Abby Gaudette
Abby shared Swanton Arts Council is turning 10 next month. They will have a birthday party on March 16th with details to come soon. They have planned an upcycle art class in partnership with Swanton Public Library and Northwest Solid Waste. They have 2 showings of the Swaney art series planned 3/28 & 3/29 at Swanton Public Library. This year they have received a \$5,000 art grant again and if you're interested in participating, please email the arts council.
- Swanton Public Library – Abby Gaudette
Abby shared Swanton Public Library is working on summer camp prep as well as the upcoming Harry Potter night. The library will be closed on January 13th for a staff training event.
- Recreation Department – No Representative
Abby shared baseball sign ups are open and they are working on summer camp preparations as well. Joel shared the warming hut has been delivered for the skating rink for the community to enjoy.
- Swanton Historical Society – Nick Brosseau
Nick shared Fred Wiseman will be doing monthly presentations at the Historical Society. Hank asked if they were working on fundraising for the newly acquired Roy's insurance building. Nick said Heather Lavoie will be the contact for that.
- Swanton Chamber of Commerce – Nick Brosseau
Nick shared the Chamber is still accepting nominations for Swanton Citizen of the Year until the end of January. The google form is on the Chamber Facebook page. The Chamber building is open Monday – Thursday in the summer months.
- Town of Swanton - Brian Savage
Brian shared since the last SEP meeting Selectboard member Cody Hemenway tendered his resignation and the Selectboard selected Brendan Long to fill his position until Town Meeting Day. Suzie Kelleher is the new Town Health Officer.
At the December 17th Selectboard meeting the Selectboard promoted Christina from Administrative Assistant to Assistant Town Administrator.
Zoning bylaw update and rewrite is almost complete, a public hearing will be coming soon.
The 4th street property needs further testing, which is in the process.
Swanton budgets are in the process of completion.
In October there was a water leak in the Clerk's office, this work has been completed.
Other upcoming projects are the Brooklyn Street storm water project and weatherization project of the Swanton Public Library, Swanton Hill redesign, Barry Road culvert replacement, Welcome to Swanton signs. The new Town dump truck is expected to be delivered soon as well.
- Village of Swanton – Bill Sheets
Bill shared the Village currently has 42 full-time & 8 part-time employees & 24 volunteer firefighters. They currently have one full-time vacancy for a police officer.
Bill shared they have 12 months remaining in a 17-month wastewater update. This year they land applied the wastewater sludge on land owned by the Village. This resulted in \$80,000.
They have installed a new water line for Foundry Street.

The bridge repairs were completed ahead of the schedule in 15 days. They have received a \$300,000 grant with a \$75,000 match for traffic/pedestrian safety for Merchants Row. They have purchased the parking lot at 74 Merchants Row. They have received a \$175,000 grant with a 5% match for 2 fast-level electric car charging stations.

Bill shared they have a \$423,000 grant for Church Street redesign, as well as they have applied for a \$650,000 grant to update Canada Street.

The Police Department has been very busy in the community. They are aggressively pushing back on the drugs in Swanton.

Bill shared for Hydro they are still in the process of relicensing with FERC. Swanton Village Electric currently produces 78% of their own power, they are close to being the number one lowest electric rates in Vermont.

Bill shared they posted an RFP for the Hotel Riv property. They received one application. This property is currently working on browns field remediation. Neal shared this is an ongoing process with the State. Suzie said it was bought by the Village as they would have access to the programs to mediate vs a private buyer. Bill shared currently the only party interested is Habitat for Humanity.

- Beautification – Suzie Kelleher & Hank Lambert

Suzie & Hank wanted to thank the many volunteers as well as the Selectboard and Village Trustee's for there continued support.

Suzie shared data from 2024 and plans for 2025. See attached.

Suzie said they are currently working on a Flower Power fundraising event. Links to this can be found on SwantonVt.Gov website.

- Healthy Communities/Substance Use – Crystal Lampman

Crystal shared Franklin County Caring Communities no longer exists but she works for St. Albans Police Department dispatching. Crystal said it is not currently as bad as it was in the summer where you could see active substance use in the parks, library steps and churches step in St. Albans. The work that Caring Communities provided she is still working to continue as a volunteer. Crystal said they still have to the goal to bring “screenagers” film to Swanton to show people the effects screens effect young people. Crystal said youth during Covid forgot how to communicate effectively without screens. Crystal said that is why it's important to support community programs like Swanton Recreation, Swanton Public Library, Crossroads Afterschool program and what they do for the community's youth.

Crystal said Crossroads is actively looking for volunteers.

Abby said the library has a new Teen program on Friday's 3pm-5pm.

- Community and Economic Development- Darci Benoit

Darci & Suzie said the Promote Swanton is in progress with more to come.

7. New/Other Business

Christina shared with everyone anything they would like to see on the website. Please send to her to add to the community calendar. Suzie said as part of Promote Swanton they are redesigning the website to make it easier. Sending them to Christina makes it easier to put all events in one spot. Shawn shared many people do not realize how important the bylaw rewrite is, these changes will be huge for Swanton. These changes come from the Planning Commission, with a lot of scaling back and changes. The Planning Commission has been working on this for over a year now. They will hold a joint meeting Planning Commission, Selectboard & Village Trustee's January 22nd at 5:30 at Swanton Village Complex.

Suzie shared the date for Promote Swanton Downtown Block Party will be 7/25/25 5:30-7:30 pm. Suzie would like SEP to donate the money to pay for the bounce house again this year.

Abby shared the Abenaki building is very busy and open to everyone. They are currently planning a spaghetti supper to raise money for the “Pow-Wow” & Heritage Fest. Suzie said in December they fed 900 people; they are in desperate need of volunteers and goods. Crystal said in

comparison pre-covid they were serving 250 people per month, four years later serving 900 people is a huge increase. The tribal office is open Monday, Wednesday & Friday 9am-2pm.

**Joel made a motion to give \$200 to the Abenaki Food Shelf, seconded by Nick.
Motion carried, no discussion.**

8. Adjourn

Crystal made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 pm, seconded by Sandra. Motion carried.

9. Meeting Dates:

2025 Proposed Meeting dates:
March 13, May 8, September 11 and November 13

Minutes Drafted by
Christina Candels