

CONVENE, COMMUNICATE, INFORM AND ENGAGE  
ALL ARE WELCOME!  
**SWANTON ENHANCEMENT PROJECT (SEP)**

Community Meeting

May 8, 2025

5:30 – 7:00

Holy Trinity Church

**Minutes**

**Present:** Molly Lambert, Hank Lambert, Chris Dodge, Michelle Desautels, Nicholas Brosseau, Marie Speer, Neal Speer, Joel Clark, Nicole Draper, Suzie Kelleher, Kiersten Bourgeois, Crystal Lampman, Monica Green, Christina Candels

**1. Welcome and Review of Agenda**

Molly called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm.

Everyone in attendance introduced themselves and shared what they do in the community.

**2. Review Minutes of March 13, 2025**

**Joel made a motion to approve the minutes from March 13, 2025 as written, seconded by Nicole.**

**Motion carried.**

**3. Finance Update- Joel Clark**

Joel shared a finance update.

**Unrestricted** has a balance of \$11,556.35.

Committed:

\$1,500 - Swan Pond

\$432 - Pool Pass for Swanton Library

**Restricted** has a balance of \$12,632.00.

Committed:

\$3,800 – LVRT Trailhead project

Balance by category:

Bikes/signs: \$88.95

Capacity Building: \$1,477.25

Substance Misuse: \$1,625.61

Beautification: \$4,825.19 (CD for \$16,482.84) (CD for \$10,000.00-from the Taylor Estate)

The Town committed \$1,500.00(Unrestricted) annual appropriation plus a onetime

\$4,000(Beatification) for trees.

Marble Mill: \$815.00

Molly asked if the Village contribution is included? Joel said they have not received anything yet.

Suzie said the Village did commit \$5,000(Beautification)and she submitted receipts to the Village, and they pay the vendors directly.

**Joel made a motion to approve spending \$432 for Swanton Public Library to purchase a pool pass, seconded by Nicole. Motion carried.**

Crystal suggested this be taken out of the Substance Misuse category.

This was discussed at the last meeting.

**4. Business Spotlight – Monica Greene, President and CEO, Vermont Precision Tools**

Molly introduced Monica as the President and CEO of Vermont Precision Tools and shared the history of Vermont Precision Tolls and their deep roots in Swanton. VPT started in 1968 in Swanton and has grown to what it is today. VPT was the US Small Business Administration of the year in 2015. Monica stated then

the reason they were recognized and trusted was because the company focuses on family, quality, and the customer. Maintaining these three values has led to expansion, employment, and growth in the community of Swanton and Kentucky.

Monica the history VPT how they came to be the business they are today. VPT was started by her dad Norman Leduc and his friend Raymond Boutin in 1968 right here in Swanton.

Monica shared they now employ 212 in the Swanton plant, in 107,000 square foot building. They also have a plant in Kentucky that employs 125.

The Swanton plant is Vermont Precision where they sell their product under the brand name Vermont Gage. The Kentucky plant operates under the brand Vermont Tread Gage.

Monica said between these two facilities they are just under 200,000 square feet. In these facilities they make fixed limit gaging and medical bar blanks.

Monica brought examples of both as an example to show and shared what they can be used for in aerospace, computer technology, plastics, and medical uses.

Monica said the business has evolved to revenues of 45 million with small year over year growth.

Monica said they are committed to giving employees a good work/life balance. Kentucky does seem easier to staff, they are currently fully staffed. In Swanton they currently have 10 openings. They face the same issues all employers do finding employees.

Monica shared they are seeing the generational changes with current employees who have been with them since the beginning who are retiring vs new generational employees. Monica said working to understanding and adapting to what millennials and gen z employees work ethics and priorities have been a shift for them. They also now have a continuous improvement program for employees to share ideas. Since the program began, there have been over 3,700 suggestions to improve the company.

Monica shared they try to offer competitive wages but have also added a profit share program for employees, as of today they have given employees 2.3 million dollars since it began.

Monica shared tariffs and legislative changes have been a challenge. They currently are storing product in Canada hoping the tariffs are negotiated.

Chris asked of the current openings, is there certain skill set they are having a hard time finding? Encouraging the education community to work towards?

Monica said STEM, if they have those skills they can teach them the rest. VPT also offers a full apprenticeship program on site. They can teach anyone who wants to learn.

Kiersten asked what percentage of employees at the Swanton location are from Swanton? Monica guessed over 50%.

## **5. Committee Reports**

- Swanton Village-Suzie Kelleher/Neal Speer  
Suzie shared the Village Electric bond passed 148 to 73. The next steps are underway with Connor Construction. Suzie said they are currently in the process of annexing 124 First St. from the Town to the Village. Suzie invited everyone to a meeting for the wastewater plant to see the construction that has been done.  
The Village has plans for sidewalk repair work that will be done this summer.  
Hometown Hero Banners are in, 75 of them will be up for Memorial Day.  
Neal shared the new street sweeper has been out sweeping the streets, it has been having issues but they have been working on it.  
The water line under the river is complete, and Foundry St. has been paved after the construction was completed.  
Neal shared he has noticed the positive energy in the community and welcomes the change after some tenseness the last year or so.
- Town of Swanton-Joel Clark

Joel applauded Monica to their 212 employees and shared that anything the Town can do to help fill those vacancies to let please let them know. VPT has a big impact on the community. Joel shared the Swanton Planning Commission, finalized the bylaws and sent them to the Selectboard. Part of the update is to make the permitting process easier and allow for more housing to be built. The Selectboard will hold two public hearings and encourage people to come. June 3<sup>rd</sup> & July 1<sup>st</sup> at the Town Office.

Joel said they have two vacancies on the Planning Commission and one opening on the Development Review Board if people are looking to serve their community now is a great time to start.

Joel said the Town opened the four-bid submitted for paving and plan to do almost \$400,000 worth of paving. The State has also announced they were awarded a Class 2 highway grant for almost \$200,000 in additional paving. This will be awarded after the State budget is passed. Also awarded is grant for design for the culvert replacement on Barry Rd.

Kiersten asked if the Planning and DRB positions are appointed? Joel said yes and the ad will be out soon for them. Molly said Planning Commission plans for the future of Swanton 20 years from now.

Molly asked if any of the grants have been affected by the government changes? Roads? Wastewater?

Joel said the paving grants are State money not Federal, they are pending the State budget passing. The LVRT project has Federal funding, and to date there have been no issues.

Suzie said the wastewater project is through the Bond Bank, that project is all set. They do have one grant for the tree removal that was from Federal funds, but the State has received that money and they can proceed. They do have roughly 15 other grants on hold for now.

- Library-Nicole Draper/Crystal Lampman

Nicole shared the library is currently closed for construction. They do have a satellite office set up in the church to serve people.

Nicole and Abby are collaborating to plan programming. Abby has been able to offer day camps during vacation.

Crystal said the library has three weeks of camp scheduled for the summer.

- MVSD - Chris Dodge

Chris shared MVU hosted the first Franklin County apprenticeship fair with 46 vendors for 7<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> graders. The Messenger posted a great article about the event.

Highgate Elementary is wrapping up the year with a new master schedule. They will also be getting a new Principal Justina Jennett will be the new principal and Yashua Pastine the current principal will be going to Swanton Elementary.

Franklin Elementary students are getting ready for their Memorial Day parade.

May is when they begin hiring for next year in the schools.

The New England League of Middle Schools has; an award called the Middle Level Distinguished Student Award and Swanton Elementary has participated in that for many years. Two Swanton Elementary students will be honored; they are nominated by their teachers.

Swanton Elementary is prepping for the Mary S. Babcock building renovation scheduled for this summer and fall.

Marie asked Chris if he was retiring? Chris shared he is going to be the Principal at Eden Elementary School in the fall. This is 10 minutes from his home vs an hour each way.

- Swanton Recreation-Nicole Draper

Nicole shared Swanton Recreation and is very busy with T-Ball, Little League, Track & Field, Softball.

They were able to buy a grant to boost the Track & Field program this year.

They are hosting many youth led programs.

May is youth appreciation month. They have many great programs planned to honor them.

Youth leaders are learning many leadership skills.

They have been working to turn the garage space into a teen center. (Tuesday & Thursday 3-5pm)

Friday they are there for youth led clubs.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Youth Appreciation Gala will be held on May 31st, the youth have been nominated by community stakeholders.

Nicole said the community garden space has been redesigned and will be opening soon.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual CornFest will be held Saturday August 9<sup>th</sup> at Swanton Rec.

Swanton Rec has signed on to be an ambassador for the LVRT.

May 24<sup>th</sup> will be the Town wide community yard sale.

For all the programs and information visit [Swantonvt.myrec.com](http://Swantonvt.myrec.com)

Nicole shared a flyer with information, and a press release to promote the afterschool programs highlighted in the community.

The Abenaki Heritage Festival will be held at the Swanton Rec fields May 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>.

The Memorial Day parade will be Monday May 26<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm.

The Block Party will be held in July.

Nicole, shared as Swant Rec continues to grow they are still in desperate need of space. The Swanton Recreation Commission board of directors has started to collect signatures for them to pass to the Selectboard to show the community supports the plan for a new community center/indoor space.

Monica asked if there is a specific space they are looking for? Nicole said they have preliminary concepts to add to the current location. The current location is roughly 14-acres, some of the space is wetlands.

One design was to build a new facility in the lower parking lot. That conversation stopped a few years ago and the rec commission wants to start that conversation again.

Molly asked what happened to the community center discussion? Nicole said all conversations on a community center were halted and that's why the rec board thinks it is important to gather community support and share with the Selectboard.

Crystal shared how Nicole/Swanton Rec has filled a huge gap in summer childcare needs especially when the Notch left.

Nicole shared every student who attends camp this summer will be able to access free breakfast and lunch.

Molly said they will make it a goal for Swanton Enhancement to spread the information and opportunities everyone is working on.

Kiersten asked, "what is going on with the Armory building"? Nicole said the Armory is still being used and it is not vacant. They are waiting on federal funding to design and build the readiness center that will be located by the new State garage by exit 20. That it will be 5-7 years before the armory becomes available. Nicole does not feel it will meet the needs of the community as it is too far from their current location.

- Swanton Historical Society-Nick Brosseau

Nick shared National Train Day is Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup> at the Depot. They will have a model train set up on display.

Nick shared they will also have picnic tables built by Trail Blazers at MVU with help from Vermont Works for Women. The Selectboard allocated funds to pay for the materials.

Fundraising for the Roy's Insurance building is underway.

- Swanton Arts Council-Marie Speer

Marie shared the arts council had their 10<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration on March 16<sup>th</sup>.

They have been offering many classes: youth watercolor class, clay earring workshop, card making class, candle painting. They will be hosting an art show the Wildlife Refuge beginning May 17<sup>th</sup>- July 18<sup>th</sup>. For more information contact Carol at [artshow@friendsofmissisquoi.org](mailto:artshow@friendsofmissisquoi.org)  
The Arts Council is looking for proposals, they have received a grant for to fund events.  
Molly asked if the Swanton Arts Council is linked to the website? Suzie said yes.  
Kiersten asked if there was a master calendar to link all of these events? Molly share the Wednesday newsletter at the school that could help promote events also. Suzie said that's part of what Promote Swanton is trying to do is link them all together.

- Beautification – Suzi Kelleher

Suzie shared it is Spring planting. They are preparing pots on Saturday. Flowers will be planted May 17<sup>th</sup> at 9 am. They have sent out over 30 donor solicitation letters for donations to residents and businesses. Suzie shared the bulb fundraiser and has raised \$200.

Suzie said the Village did get the grant to cut down the trees and remediate the trees. Heidi will help write the tree planting grant.

Suzie shared she recently heard there was a tree taken down from the park on Tanner Memorial Dr and they have requested Beautification plant something. Suzie said they currently have 23-25 volunteers.

Molly said they started with 7 and grew from there.

- Healthy Communities/Substance Use – Crystal Lampman

Crystal shared they are still working on the parent Screenagers component. Crystal shared from her work perspective that the weather is getting nicer, they are seeing behaviors increase, if you need law enforcement remember if you see something, say something. They are seeing an increase in overdoses locally.

Molly shared they are missing a planter box on the bridge. Molly said they also need a new box builder.

- Community and Economic Development/ Promote Swanton / Chamber

Neal shared the swan pond is going to be expanded. The Chamber has a new president Darcy Benoit and Elaine Nester have taken a joint leadership approach.

Suzzane Washburn is spearheading the swan pond project. TDI has assisted in the demolition.

Suzie shared Promote Swanton will meet and talk about upcoming events and the website Tuesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>.

- Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi

Suzie shared they have lost federal funding for the food pantry. They are in need of food and monetary donations. Last year they did a food drive during the Block Party, they intend to do that this year as well, it is important to support the food shelf. They feed everyone regardless of your background.

Molly asked how that message is being shared with the community?

Suzie said that Chief Gagne is a proud woman and asking for financial help is hard. They are proud people. Suzie feels it is important to share what is needed.

Suzie they are in dire need.

Crystal said they started doing food reclamation during Covid with Hannaford and Costco. They provide food, bread, pastries, things like that.

The bulk of the food they are handing out meat, beans things you can make a meal out of are things they purchase from the Vermont Food Bank. The funding for that came from Federal grants and donations. Losing those dollars hurts. The Abenaki food bank is feeding people from all over the county. They are a no barrier food shelter.

They do have a fridge and freezer space for meat, Covid provided money to purchase them.

They are currently working with the Village for a grant to revamp the building so they have a bigger refrigeration area.

They are open Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9-2.

Molly said every food shelf in the State is going through the same situation.

Feeding America losing funding is going to hurt many food banks.

Monica asked what the dollar amount they are losing? \$50,000-\$100,000?

Suzie said at least \$50,000.

Chris suggested reaching out to the school when they do their food drives, they can be very competitive.

Hank shared this is garden season, Plant and extra row. Suzie will see about adding this to the Beautification committee.

Christina asked if the food pantry can still purchase food cheaper than we can in the grocery store?

Yes. So people know its great to donate food, but money will go farther at the Vermont Food Bank.

The Vermont Food Bank does deliver; the cost is by the pound. Food reclamation is picked up by a volunteer with the truck they own.

## **6. New Business**

### **Meeting Dates:**

2025 Proposed Meeting dates:

September 11 (Annual Meeting) and November 13

## **7. Adjourn**

Molly adjourned the meeting at 7:10 pm.

Minutes drafted by

Christina Candels