

**MINUTES
SPECIAL JOINT BOARD MEETING
SWANTON VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SWANTON TOWN SELECTBOARD
SWANTON PLANNING COMMISSION
SWANTON DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD
In-Person and by Zoom
Swanton Village Municipal Complex
120 First Street, Swanton, VT 05488
Thursday, March 10, 2022 @ 7:00 p.m.**

Present: Neal Speer, Board of Village Trustees President; Adam Paxman, Eugene LaBombard, Christopher Leach, Village Trustee Members; James Guilmette, Selectboard Chairman; Mark Rocheleau, Selectboard Vice-Chairman; Earl Fournier, Nicole Draper, Ed White, Selectboard Members; Brian Savage, Town Administrator; Amy Giroux, Zoning Administrator; Joseph Cava, Administrative Assistant; Andrew LaRocque, Oliver Manning, Ross Lavoie, Ed Daniel, Planning Commission Members; Spencer LaBarge, DRB Chairman; Reg Beliveau, Harold Garrett, Jim Pratt, Jennifer Yandow, DRB Members; Dick Thompson; Allen Letourneau; Michelle Nordberg; 802-582-2681

*All motions carried unanimously unless noted otherwise.

A. Call to Order

Mr. Speer called the Board of Village Trustees Joint Meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Mr. Guilmette consecutively called the Selectboard Joint Meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

B. Pledge of Allegiance – Mr. Speer led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Agenda Review

a) Swanton Village Board of Trustees Update

Mr. Speer opened by thanking the voter turnout at Town Meeting Day, thanking the community for their ongoing support.

Mr. Speer then turned the discussion over to Mr. Beliveau and Mr. Savage to discuss potential uses for the ARPA funds. Mr. Beliveau cited needed improvements/upgrades to the Village Municipal Complex. Mr. Savage added that it would be wise not to spend any of the funds until after March 31, 2022. Mr. Fournier expressed support for an outline to understand spending opportunities and how the ARPA funds could be properly allocated and distributed. Mr. Beliveau added that work on the bridge in the Village will take place tentatively in August 2022.

Mr. Speer spoke about retail cannabis being voted down on the Village ballot during Town Meeting Day. Mr. Speer recommended adding it to the Town's ballot during the revote of the school budget which was also voted down. There are interested parties in setting up shop in the community and he expressed educating the community on what retail cannabis could mean. Mr. Rocheleau said this would be good clarification, since the Town's ballot was already warned before an Article for retail cannabis could be added to the Town's ballot.

Mr. Paxman mentioned the relicensing of Swanton Hydro and asked Mr. Beliveau to elaborate on what this means for Swanton. Mr. Beliveau spoke about the revenue generated from water flowing over the bag and how energy production efforts could be increased by switching from incremental to continuous flow over the bag. In previous low water years, the bubble dam has lost about 8-10% of its

energy production capacity which hurts local business owners who depend on the hydro power.

To increase production to a continuous flow would require review from the State Historic Preservation Office to identify any archeological/indigenous sites of importance sites along the river downstream that may be impacted by increased energy production. Mr. Beliveau added that it is important for Swanton to utilize existing renewable energy sources because it prevents projects like the wind towers that were proposed for St. Albans hill. This project were severely opposed by the Swanton community and led to the formation of Swanton's Energy Commission.

In addition to the Swanton Hydro dam in Highgate, Mr. Paxman mentioned the lower Swanton dam in the Village and its importance to the community. In 2015, Agency Representatives from the State of Vermont came to discuss the removal of the lower Swanton dam. Swanton Representatives expressed that there is no intention to remove this dam because it holds back the layers of silt that discourages Walleye spawning. Mr. Paxman reiterated the importance of the dam to the community and if the dam were removed it would destroy essential wetland ecosystems upstream that were created by the dam's construction.

Mr. Beliveau brought up the Highgate Airport project to get water access to the airport. Though not located in Swanton, its location in Franklin County has the potential to benefit surrounding communities. Grant funding is currently being secured for the project while engineers draw up plans for it.

The Town and the Village have been talking with St. Albans Town to encourage infrastructure implementation/improvements to bring water and sewer into the Southern Growth District according to Mr. Speer. Mr. Lavoie asked whether this new infrastructure would be tapping into the Town's existing system. Mr. Beliveau answered by mentioning a study that was being completed to get water to the area from the reservoir. He added that this solution would cost around \$7,000,000.00.

Mr. Speer mentioned the excitement of post pandemic projects and how it encourages people moving from more populated areas like Burlington into areas like the Southern Growth District. Mr. Beliveau brought up recent inquiries by SEP and what they can do to be more involved? Mr. Beliveau mentioned the Community Facebook page and how its negativity has driven away perspective people and businesses wanting to move and grow in Swanton. Mr. LaBarge recommended putting a disclaimer on the official Swanton page that the Community Discussion page does not represent the Town/Village governments and what they stand for.

Mary Hartman at MVU and Nicole Draper through Swanton Recreation are working to engage with youth and how they can impact marketing and outreach in Swanton. Mr. Lavoie recommended adding the Tech Center in St. Albans to the mix because this could cast a wider net of interested applicants to work on Swanton's marketing and outreach.

b) Swanton Town Selectboard Update

Mr. Guilmette talked about the Beebe Road culvert replacement coming up tentatively in summer 2022. In addition to the culvert, the Beebe Road also needs to be repaved which will cause disruptions to traffic because of the work being done to the bridge crossing the Missisquoi River around the same time. Mr. Rocheleau brought up the eventual work planned for Route 78 in 2024 which could take up to four years to complete. Mr. Speer added that this area is long overdue for work since the last improvements were the installation of guardrails between the road and the river.

Mr. Rocheleau spoke about the Town taking over the maintenance of the Swanton Public Library which was included as two Articles on the Town's ballot during Town Meeting Day. He also mentioned discussions with the Town's attorney on ways to improve moving forward since the library is such an essential asset to the community.

Mr. Fournier mentioned an upcoming visit on April 8, 2022 from the Secretary of Agriculture for funding opportunities for the community. Mr. Savage mentioned that part of the visit would be taking place in the Swanton Industrial Park. Mr. Savage will also have a meeting with the Selectman from St. Albans Town to discuss business.

Ms. Draper mentioned the upcoming completion of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and what this means for Swanton and its recreational opportunities. In response to this Mr. Fournier mentioned the Fourth Street property and the Brownfield remediation that needs to occur to take care of existing contaminants on the property. While on the subject of Brownfield remediation, Mr. Speer mentioned Phase II work on the Riviere Hotel and asked about coupling it with the Fourth Street property. Mr. Guilmette mentioned that these Brownfield funds are only available to towns for recent acquisitions like the Riviere Hotel, unlike the Fourth Street property which has always been owned by the Town.

Mr. Lavoie spoke about a bill, House 703, which is before the State House of Representatives. The bill would allow for the utilization of blighted areas within communities and spur growth as it relates to housing and economic development. The bill would also establish a revolving loan fund and encourages local technical centers to get involved for trade experience. Additions to the list to incentivize the program include energy alternatives/renewable energy and green building technology.

c) Swanton Planning Commission Update

Mr. Daniel spoke about the Town Plan revisions. He mentioned that Swanton did not receive Municipal Planning grant funds, and this will make the process more difficult. He also mentioned the \$2,000 approved, by the Selectboard but is hesitant to hire a consultant because of fees upwards of \$20,000 for Municipal Plan revisions. Mr. Daniel recommended going through the list of task organizations like the Energy Commission and getting them involved to make changes.

Mr. Speer asked for clarification on what this grant funding would have done for Swanton? Mr. Lavoie replied to saying that this grant funding would have allowed Northwest Regional Planning to take on the actual rewrite with comments from the Town. Now, the Town will have to handle the rewrite with comments from the Northwest Regional Planning Commission. Mr. Fournier mentioned the Southern Growth District as a vital inclusion on the Town Plan as it relates to water and sewer infrastructure goals. Mr. Lavoie also cited vision uses for the Fourth Street property.

Ms. Yandow asked about the Town's plans for the Southern Growth District? Mr. Lavoie responded that water and sewer infrastructure is the primary goal for the district, but other ideas include big box retail and senior housing citing examples like Maple Tree Place in Williston, VT. Mr. Lavoie said the conception for the Southern Growth District has shifted to a range of mixed-use commercial, retail, and residential opportunities that stems beyond big box stores. Mr. Rocheleau remarked on previous conversations with St. Albans and types of development that could occur in the area by tapping into existing infrastructure.

Part of the goal for improving Swanton's image is giving the official town Facebook page a greater presence above the community discussion group which does not represent Swanton. Ms. Yandow cited people in the community see it for what it is, but people living outside the community do not know any better about

the community. The talk then led into a discussion about marketing and the essential duty of someone in marketing to manage this type of venture.

Ms. Nordberg over ZOOM added that a survey distributed last year called for a more conjoined and centralized easy to find website where people can find everything that they are looking for. She also mentioned the requests for user parameters and how she could help with this.

d) Swanton Development Review Board Update

Mr. LaBarge started by thanking the DRB Board members who were present, and the other boards present in coming together to create a better Swanton. There are a couple of things coming up in overcoming the hurdles that the DRB is hashing out with the Planning Commission. Some of these things include bylaw revisions that would settle more complicated occurrences before the DRB like variances. The DRB will always set the precedence, but it is important to revise and clarify otherwise complicated stumbling blocks to better interpret land use and development regulations.

Mr. Beliveau added that the DRB is a great group of people, and it is important to encourage growth and development without setting unrealistic parameters that hinder development opportunities. Very few times do DRB members disagree on outcomes discussed in executive session, which is very good to look forward too for a united Swanton. Mr. LaBarge did mention that there are times when a final decision is difficult, but he feels that the DRB moves forward in the best way to help property owners and sets the bar for future projects that come before the DRB.

Mr. Daniel piggybacked on Mr. LaBarge's theme around communication and talked about steps that could be taken to communicate better with its citizens and get the word out. Ms. Nordberg added onto Mr. Daniel's comments saying that newspaper communication is the second to last least valued form of communication and by the survey result standards is an outdated practice.

D. Public Comment

a) Maquam Shore Update

Mr. Guilmette updated the boards present letting them know that the Invasive Aquatic Species Grant was not awarded to Swanton. According to Ms. Nance in economic development there are no other existing grants available at this time, and Swanton will need to reapply during the next grant funding cycle. Ms. Draper cited the underutilization of assets like the beach on Maquam Shore Rd. and the impact it could have on the community for recreational opportunities.

b) Other

Mr. LaRocque mentioned the murder in the Village that was stirred up by drug related activity. He asked what has been happening in town in response to drug houses in the community. Mr. Rocheleau mentioned in some cases the Selectboard's hands are tied because there is a difference between public perception and what law enforcement can legally do.

Mr. Letourneau said that there should be greater briefing to address public concerns. Mr. White added that the State Police did release information on the facts of the case which provided a nice summary of the events that took place on First Street. Mr. White also cited the growth of technology and the positivity of the new Chief of Police from his colleagues and community members.

E. Any Other Necessary Business (None)

F. Executive Session (None)

G. Adjournment

Mr. Speer made a motion to adjourn the Board of Village Trustees Joint Meeting at 9:09 p.m., seconded by Mr. LaBombard. Motion carried.

Mr. Rocheleau consecutively made a motion to adjourn the Selectboard Joint Meeting at 9:10 p.m., seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph Cava
Administrative Assistant

Received and filed by:

Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk

Date