

**MINUTES
TOWN OF SWANTON
SELECTBOARD MEETING
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
In-Person & By Zoom
Tuesday, March 15, 2022 @ 7:00 p.m.**

Present: James Guilmette, Chairman; Mark Rocheleau, Vice-Chairman; Earl Fournier, Nicole Draper, Ed White, Members; Brian Savage, Town Administrator; Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk; Joseph Cava, Administrative Assistant; Roger Lindala, Northwest Access; Neal Speer, Swanton Board of Village Trustees President; Elisabeth Nance, FCIDC; Mathew Sullivan, Swanton Chief of Police; Patrick Parah; Jack Nichol; Allen Letourneau

*All motions carried unanimously unless stated otherwise.

- A. Call to Order – Mr. Guilmette called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
- B. Pledge of Allegiance – Mr. Guilmette led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- C. Agenda Review
- D. Meeting Topics

1. Minutes

- a) March 2, 2022, Special Organizational and Zoom Selectboard Meeting

Mr. White made a motion to approve the Draft Minutes from the March 2, 2022 Special Organizational and Zoom Selectboard Meeting, seconded by Mr. Rocheleau. Motion carried.

2. Public Comments (None)

3. Law Enforcement

- a) Swanton Animal Control Officer Monthly Report

The Swanton Animal Control Officer Monthly Report was briefly reviewed. Mr. Savage commented that it's been a quiet month since the dogs on First Street were taken into safe custody.

- b) Swanton Health Officer Report

The Swanton Health Officer Report was briefly reviewed. Mr. Savage cited technical issues with ZOOM for the Health Officer not being able to join the Selectboard during the last meeting. Mr. White remarked on junk vehicles being removed from the yard of a residence on Country Acres signaling that that area is getting cleaned up.

- c) Swanton Police Department Report

The Swanton Police Department Report was briefly reviewed with Chief Sullivan delivering his remarks of events. There were around 47 incidents that took place during the month of February. The current organizational system is still combining Village incidents with Town incidents so there is no way to discern between the two without manually altering the summary.

Mr. White added that the Swanton Police are doing a great job. He cited the ride along he took with an officer to better understand what is

happening in the force right now. Chief Sullivan thanked Mr. White and said the biggest challenge is the disconnect between public perception and what occurs on a daily basis.

Mr. Guilmette asked about the piles of trash that have been found between Highgate and Swanton. Chief Sullivan responded that Officer Gilbert is investigating the matter and reported that a lot of the trash has been migrating towards Highgate. Until a suspect is caught the best they can do is clean it up and hope the littering offenses cease.

4. Old Town Business

a) RTP Grant Letter of Interest

Mr. Savage said that Swanton did not receive grant funding through ERSA under the Recreation Trails Program (RTP), but a letter of interest has been submitted. An invitation to reapply will be extended around April 15.

b) ARPA Update

Mr. Savage spoke on the latest ARPA update. Mr. Guilmette recommended putting out a public notice to receive public input on how to spend the ARPA funds. Mr. Rocheleau added that it was important as part of this public input to address what the ARPA funds can and can't be used for.

Ms. Draper recommended putting together a survey to start gathering public input before a tentative public meeting in May 2022. Mr. Speer cited SEP's ideas for spending the ARPA funds and combining these ideas with the goals of the Swanton community.

5. New Town Business

a) Audit report for 2019 from A. M. Peisch & Co., LLP

The report is for 2019, because the reports are backed up following the onset of COVID-19. Mr. Guilmette agreed that members of the Selectboard should take the report home to review and digest.

b) Discuss of possible special Town Meeting Vote to allow the retail sale of Cannabis within the Town of Swanton

After contacting the Secretary of the State of Vermont, Mr. Savage concluded that the votes for the Village and Town must be separate. Mr. Savage will be drafting a warning for the Selectboard to sign in anticipation for the upcoming special vote. An Article can then be put forward before the Town of Swanton registered voters. Mr. Speer emphasized that the Village will be doing the same to put forward a revote in the Village because the final results on Town Meeting Day were so close. Mr. Speer said there is an interested party is setting up a cannabis business in Swanton.

Mr. Fournier asked if the market could become oversaturated? Mr. Nichol responded that there is a chance, but the market itself would determine whether or not this type of business could survive just like any other business. Retail will be the last phase of implementation. Mr. Fournier then asked about the market beyond Swanton looking ahead to Franklin County. Mr. Nichol predicts that St. Albans will set up shop fairly quickly, but Swanton is strategically located as one of the first exits off I-89 from Canada and one of the first towns from New York state. Mr. Nichol has data that can be presented to the community to better understand what this vote means.

Mr. Fournier asked about the controversy? Mr. Nichols described that the stigma would exist anywhere, but the pros outweigh the costs. To summarize, the sale of cannabis is the equivalent of prohibition on alcohol in the 1920s. Just from one dispensary, Swanton could generate 2-4% of its overall income which is a huge financial gain for the community. Ms. Nance added that she would be happy to put out a newsletter to educate the public about the issue surrounding cannabis. She also added that there isn't a lot of data available for Vermont on this type of venture, but whether we agree with it or not, cannabis is legal in Vermont and if Swanton doesn't capitalize on this then another community will.

Mr. Fournier added that it is up for the voters to decide and asked if the Selectboard is willing to take a position on this? Mr. Speer responded that this is why the Village placed it before the voters, and this is why the Village is willing to hold a revote on the matter. Mr. Savage said the Selectboard wouldn't be able to vote on this putting an Article forth tonight, because it would need to be warned 30 days before the vote. Mr. Parah asked about the conflict of cannabis and CBD vs. THC. Mr. Nichol explained that CBD has a lower THC which is the primary psychoactive component of cannabis.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to schedule a Special Selectboard Meeting on March 18, 2022 to approve an Article for Swanton Town voters, seconded by Mr. Rocheleau. Motion carried.

c) Senate bill, S.274

Bill S.274, Mr. Savage explained, was put before the Committee of Jurisdiction by Senator Parent concerning city vs. town property taxes.

6. Community & Economic Development

a) Swanton Enhancement Project (SEP) Meeting of 3/3/2022

Mr. Savage attended the meeting with Mr. Speer, Mr. Beliveau and Ms. Draper to talk about what has been happening in the Town and the Village. Mr. Fournier tied in SEP with the expansion of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail citing what a great opportunity it would be for the community.

b) LVRT Stakeholders virtual meeting of 3/17/2022

Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) will be holding a virtual meeting to discuss the completion of the rail trail with a connector to St. Johnsbury in St. Albans. Mr. Savage will include Ms. Draper as part of the Swanton Recreation Commission on the ZOOM link when one is available.

c) Secretary of Agriculture tour on 4/8/2022

The Secretary of Agriculture will be taking a tour of Swann Valley in Swanton during their visit.

d) MVU Sidewalk

Ms. Nance gave the Selectboard an update of where work is with starting the MVU sidewalk project between the high school and the Village. As spring approaches, Ms. Nance stress that now is the time to put the project out to bid.

7. Highway Department

a) 2022 State Transportation Grants

Mr. Savage recommended getting together with Mr. Guilmette and Mr. Lapan on the Highway Department to discuss getting the grant materials submitted by the application deadline of April 15 for road repaving, construction, and culvert work. Mr. Guilmette stressed the importance of understanding the costs associated with individual highway projects when delegating funds.

b) New Highway Department Truck

Mr. Guilmette expressed the good news that the truck is finally complete and ready for pickup.

8. Expenditures

a) General Orders (2/16/2022 to 3/15/2022)

Mr. Rocheleau made a motion to approve the General Orders from 2/16/2022 to 3/15/2022, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

b) Highway Orders (2/16/2022 to 3/15/2022)

Mr. Fournier asked how fuel costs would impact the bottom line for highway vehicle operation? Mr. Guilmette said that the amount of fuel consumed could be estimated and Ms. Fournier could equate this into the budget.

Mr. Rocheleau made a motion to approve the Highway Orders from 2/16/2022 to 3/15/2022, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

c) Payroll Orders (2/16/2022 to 3/15/2022)

Mr. Rocheleau made a motion to approve the Payroll Orders from 2/16/2022 to 3/15/2022, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

d) Library Orders (2/16/2022 to 3/15/2022)

Mr. Fournier asked if the figures shown in the Selectboard packet were annual expenses? Ms. Fournier responded that the figures shown were quarterly expenses.

Mr. White made a motion to approve the Library Orders from 2/16/2022 to 3/15/2022, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

e) Library Payroll Orders (2/16/2022 to 3/15/2022)

Mr. Rocheleau made a motion to approve the Library Payroll Orders from 2/16/2022 to 3/15/2022, seconded by Mr. Rocheleau. Motion carried.

f) Selectman Payroll Orders (2/16/2022 to 3/15/2022)

Mr. Guilmette made a motion to approve the Selectman Payroll Orders from 2/16/2022 to 3/15/2022, seconded by Mr. Rocheleau. Motion carried.

9. Any Other Necessary Business

a) Recess Selectboard Meeting and convene Liquor Control Board

Mr. White made a motion to recess the Selectboard meeting and convene the Liquor Control Board at 8:10 p.m., seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

1. Liquor License Renewals for 2022

- Dollar General
- Fiddlers On The Green
 - i. First Class Restaurant (Beer & Wine)
 - ii. Third Class Restaurant
 - iii. Outside Consumption Permit
- North Country Bait & Tackle
- Campbell's Bay Inc.

There are no violations for any of these liquor license renewals.

Mr. White made a motion to approve the liquor license renewals for 2022, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

b) Adjourn Liquor Control Board and re-enter Selectboard Meeting

Ms. Draper made a motion to adjourn the Liquor Control Board and re-enter the Selectboard meeting at 8:12 p.m., seconded by Mr. Rocheleau. Motion carried.

10. Correspondence - None

11. Public Comments (Reprise) - None

12. Upcoming Events

- a) Planning Commission Meeting – Wednesday, March 16, 2022 @ 7:00 p.m., Swanton Town Hall, 1 Academy Street
- b) DRB Meeting – Thursday, March 31, 2022 @ 6:00 p.m., Swanton Village Municipal Complex, 120 First Street
- c) Selectboard Regular Meeting – Tuesday, April 5, 2022 @ 7:00 p.m., Swanton Town Hall, 1 Academy Street

13. Executive Session (Personnel, Real Estate)

Mr. White made a motion to enter executive session at 8:13 p.m., seconded by Mr. Rocheleau. Motion carried.

Mr. White made a motion to exit executive session at 8:57 p.m., seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to raise the salary of the Health Officer up to \$350.00 a month plus mileage reimbursement, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

E. Adjournment

Mr. Rocheleau made a motion to adjourn the Selectboard meeting at 8:58 p.m., seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph Cava
Administrative Assistant

Received and filed by:

Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk

Date