

Draft Minutes
TOWN OF SWANTON
SELECTBOARD MEETING
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
In-Person & By Zoom
Tuesday, January 2, 2024 @ 6:00 p.m.

Present: Earl Fournier-Chair, Steve Bourgeois, Nicole Draper, Cody Hemenway-Members, Brian Savage-Town Administrator, Cathy Fournier-Town Clerk, Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant, Betty Cheney, Chevon Cooper, Bill Sheets, Nick Brosseau, Chief Brenda Gagne, Megan Santillo, Joel Clark, Daniel Chevalier, Adam Paxman, Jim Pratt, Abigail Gaudette, Chief Matthew Sullivan, Shawn Cheney
Zoom: Linda, Kyle, Citizen

A. Call to Order

Mr. Fournier called the meeting to order at 5:57 pm.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Fournier led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Agenda Review

Mr. Fournier reviewed the agenda.

Mr. Savage stated Chief Brenda Gagne of the Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi is present to meet the Board.

Also noted that the Highway & Town, Swanton Recreation Budget are not ready they will be tabled and schedule a special meeting for them.

Mr. Fournier thanked Chief Gagne for coming to meet the board and stated the board looks forward to working together in the future.

Chief Gagne stated she's been in the community her whole life and spent the last 30+ years doing circle of courage in Swanton. Chief Gagne looks forward to working/collaborating with the Town in the future as well. Ms. Draper thanked Chief Gagne for all she does for the community.

D. Meeting Topics

1. Appointment to fill Selectboard vacancy until March 5, 2024

Mr. Savage stated they have received four letters of interest & resumes for the open position: Nick Brosseau, Joel Clark, Chevon Cooper & Allen Letourneau (Not in attendance).

Mr. Fournier gave them each an opportunity to introduce themselves and brief history of themselves. Mr. Fournier also asked if all interviewed intended to run in March Town Meeting to finish the open term? Mr. Clark & Ms. Cooper stated yes, Mr. Brosseau stated he was waiting to see how the appointment turns out.

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to enter executive session at 6:08 pm, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

Ms. Draper made a motion to exit the executive session at 6:16 pm, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to appoint Mr. Joel Clark to fill the open selectboard position effective immediately, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

Ms. Cathy Fournier gave Mr. Joel Clark the oath of office.

2. Minutes

a) Regular Selectboard Meeting of December 19, 2023

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to approve December 19, 2023, draft minutes as written, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

2. Public Comments

None

4. Law Enforcement

a) Swanton Police Chief Report

Chief Sullivan came before the board to discuss December 2022 & 2023 report. In December 2022 Swanton Village Police responded to 87 incidents in the Town. The top 10 incident types in December were 22 traffic stops, 16 property/home watch, 8 directed patrol, 6 citizen assists, 6 crash, 6 property damage, 6 agencies assist, 3 suspicious person/circumstance, 3 alarm, 2 controlled substance & 2 noise disturbance.

Of the 22 traffic stops incidents they resulted in 2 tickets, 16 warnings, 1 arrest, 2 arrest charges of 2 individuals.

In total Swanton Village Police in 2022 in the Town responded to 920 incidents, this is an increase of 27% from 2021.

Of those 920 incidents 200 were traffic stops resulting in 72 tickets, 173 warnings, 11 civil tickets, 18 arrests. In 2022 there were 75 arrest charges of 43 individuals.

In comparison Vermont State Police responded to 517 incidents 141 were traffic stops (47 on I-89) resulting in 35 tickets, 114 warnings. In 2022 VSP issued 31 arrest charges of 23 individuals. 12 of those arrests were related to traffic enforcement.

- b) Swanton Town Health Officer Report
Mr. Savage stated there was one anonymous complaint of Swanton Village Complex.
- 5. Highway Department
 - a) 2024 Highway Department Budget
Tabled until special meeting.
- 6. Old Town Business
 - a) Swanton Public Library Budget
Ms. Gaudette came before the board to present the 2024 Library Budget request. Mr. Fournier stated there is still work to be done with the library accountant. Mr. Clark asked for clarification of the library being on fiscal year not calendar year as the town is, this is what needs to be clarified with the accountant to get the library on the same calendar as the Town. Ms. Gaudette answered what expenses the library has in January – February to get them thru to Town Meeting. Mr. Bourgeois stated part of the conversation has been how much it costs the Town in total to have the library operational. The Town is spending approximately \$285,000 a year to operate. This includes the operation, staff salaries & benefits and building maintenance. There is still no clarification as to how much carry over they will have from 2023.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the request for \$70,900.00, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

Mr. Fournier stated they have come back to the board for a salary increase of 6% down from original ask of 14% increase. Mr. Fournier stated other Town employees received 3.7% increase.

Ms. Gaudette stated library employees currently make lower than average salary to other libraries in Franklin County.

Mr. Bourgeois thanked Ms. Gaudette for explaining why they want to give these increases but that tax payers are in the same boat and you cannot buy your way out of this, many tax payers are not getting 6% raise this year. Mr. Bourgeois would like to see library employees receive the Town employees received.

Ms. Draper stated this was discussed with previous Selectboard to increase these employees' wages over time.

Mr. Hemenway stated he agreed with Mr. Bourgeois but that it's a good investment into the employees.

Mr. Clark asked how much of a carry over the library budget will have? Ms. Cathy Fournier stated the library was given their last payment in December of \$16,456 this operates them until Town Meeting. Mr. Clark stated this carry over operational costs will cover the increase they are requesting. This rolls over should decrease the operational ask going forward.

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the request salary budget of \$154,416 for 2024, seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carried. Mr. Bourgeois voted nay.

b) Swanton Rec. Commission Budget
Tabled until special meeting.

c) Zoning By-Law Revision Grant update

Mr. Savage informed the board that the Town of Swanton was not approved for this \$20,000 grant to pay for Zoning By-Law revision. This revision has already begun. The board had previously made a motion to use ARPA funds in anticipation of receiving this grant. Mr. Fournier would like to see this added to the General Fund Budget and keep the ARPA funds unallocated for now. There is still work to be done at the library that the ARPA funds can be used for.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to add \$20,000 appropriation to the 2024 General Fund Budget, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

7. New Town Business

a) Town General Fund Budget
Tabled until special meeting.

Ms. Draper made a motion to have a Special Budget meeting Thursday January 11, 2024 @ 6pm, seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carried.

b) Swanton Fire Department Budget

Fire Chief Dan Chevalier & Mr. Bill Sheets came before the board to present 2024 Fire Department Budget request.

The Board, Chief Chevalier & Mr. Sheets reviewed the budget request. The request for 2024 is \$296,216 a 6.46% increase.

Chief Chevalier discussed 2023 data of calls Swanton Fire responded to. In total they responded to 264 incidents in 2023 down from 279 in 2022.

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to approve the request for 2024 Fire Budget not to exceed \$296,216, seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carried.

c) Swanton Police Department Budget

Chief Sullivan & Mr. Sheets came before the board to present 2024 Police Budget. 2024 budget request is \$475,057 up from \$196,784 in 2023.

Mr. Sheets stated the largest cost drivers in the increase are dispatch fee of \$65,000 previously was VSP for free. Other increases are two new additional employees one full time police officer and one full-time administrative assistant. The Town contract is also going from 56 hours a week to 70(4pm-2am). Other increases are Veterans (retirement) increase in cost, shift differential and on call pay. Village Police have also received salary increases to be comparable with neighboring police department salaries. This proposed budget request represents 1/3 of Swanton Village Police budget.

Ms. Draper asked why there is a substantial increase in Conventions, Meetings & Trainings? Chief Sullivan stated this is training expenses. The previous budgeted

amounts one week of training out of state uses the whole budget. This will allow more officers the opportunity for training.

Mr. Clark asked if there are any unexpected large increases for 2025? Not included proposed building? Mr. Sheets stated there is no other unknowns that he knows of. Adding the two employees will have them fully staffed. The increases in health insurance are out of anyone's control also.

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to approve the request for \$475,057.00 from April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

8. Community and Economic Development
None

9. Any Other Necessary Business

- a) Liquor Control Board – 2nd Class License, Tobacco and Tobacco Substitute License Renewal – A & A Brothers, LLC

Ms. Draper made a motion to exit the regular selectboard meeting and enter the Liquor Control Board meeting at 7:37 pm, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

Ms. Cathy Fournier stated A&A Brothers LLC needs to renew their 2nd class liquor license, tobacco license & tobacco substitute licensee. They have had no issues.

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to approve the for A&A Brothers 2nd class liquor license, tobacco license & tobacco substitute license., seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Ms. Draper made a motion to exit Liquor Control Board and enter Regular Selectboard Meeting at 7:38 pm, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

10. Correspondence

Mr. Savage updated the board that Ms. Tanya Dufresne has given her resignation of custodial cleaner. Ms. Dufresne has done this for 11-12 years.

Mr. Savage will send out an email to all Town employees to see if anyone is interested before looking elsewhere.

11. Public Comment (Reprise)

Mr. Cheney asked for an update on the 4th street property project what the plans are? Or should they reconsider selling it or donating it to the school?

Mr. Savage has been working to try and get it added to the brown's fields funding, but it has been deemed ineligible. At this time, they still need to have the soil checked.

Mr. Cheney stated the town lost the sale & tax base by leaving it empty. Many members of the community have put a lot of time into this project of what to do with this lot.

Mr. Clark suggested to add this conversation to the Special Selectboard Budget meeting.

Ms. Draper gave a handout of what Swanton Rec has planned for 2024. Ms. Candels will share this to the website as well.

Mr. Ed White was the Selectboard's police commissioner, his resignation has left this position empty.

Ms. Draper made a motion to appoint Mr. Hemenway to fill this position police commissioner until Town Meeting Day, seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carried.

Mr. Clark asked if there will be opportunity prior to the public hearing to see what will be presented? Mr. Fournier stated Mr. Savage will put together a PowerPoint so the board can review this weekend.

Mr. Fournier stated he wants the discussion to focus on what the Town residents want for coverage not the proposed facility. Mr. Clark said yes but the first thing people are going to ask is "what is it going to cost"?

There is mirrored coverage with a new facility and mirrored cost without. They do have a proposed cost but knowing this will change. This is a village project not a town project. Mr. Fournier stated he thinks people will support a police facility but on a smaller scale, members agreed. If Town residents are comfortable with 70 hours of coverage, then they need to know that, if they want 24/7, they need to know that too.

Ms. Draper stated the incident analysis is an important tool also, Mr. Savage stated that will be part of the PowerPoint. That the Swanton Village Police do have a presence.

Mr. Cheney stated the importance of the Police Chief having the admin support to be able to do his job.

Mr. Clark asked if there is an answer from the attorney that if the Town can enter into a long-term contract for police coverage? Mr. Savage will find out if not talk with another attorney.

Mr. Clark stated the Public Hearing should not be a discussion about adding other towns, at this time that is not up to Swanton Town. Mr. Fournier stated that is one way to make this project affordable, but no towns want to commit.

The Town of Swanton cannot make this decision this is the Swanton Village.

Ms. Cooper stated she had previously asked this to the Village and they stated she was thinking to far into the future.

12. Upcoming Events

- a) Wednesday – January 10, 2024 – Public Hearing on expanded police coverage coverage for the Town – Swanton Central School Cafeteria – 7:00 pm and ZOOM
- b) Wednesday – January 10, 2024 – Planning Commission – 6:30 pm – Town Offices
- c) Thursday – January 11, 2024 – Special Selectboard Budget Meeting- 6:00 pm – Town Office
- d) Monday – January 15, 2024 – Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday – Town Offices & Operations – CLOSED
- e) Tuesday – January 16, 2024 – Regular Selectboard Meeting – 6:00 pm – Town Offices and Zoom
- f) Wednesday – January 24, 2024 – Planning Commission – 6:30 pm – Town Offices
- g) Thursday – January 25, 2024 – DRB – 6:00 pm – Town Offices

13. Executive Session (if needed)

E. Adjournment

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to adjourn at 8:06 pm, seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted by
Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant