

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

Present: Steve Bourgeois-Vice Chair, Nicole Draper, Cody Hemenway, Joel Clark, Brian Savage-Town Administrator, Cathy Fournier-Town Clerk, Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant, Kevin Lapan, Chief Mathew Sullivan, David Winchester, Mark Nolan

Zoom: Earl Fournier, Lin, Keith Ellery, Citizen

A. Call to Order

Mr. Bourgeois called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

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

C. Agenda Review

Mr. Savage requested to add under New Town Business two checks received where would the Board like these to be allocated.

D. Meeting Topics

1. Minutes

a) Regular Selectboard Meeting of January 16, 2024

b) Special Selectboard Meeting of January 22, 2024

Mr. Clark made a motion to approve January 16, 2024, Regular Selectboard Meeting and January 22, 2024, Special Selectboard Meeting as written, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

2. Public Comments

4. Law Enforcement

a) Swanton Police Chief Report

Chief Sullivan shared with the board the January 2024 Swanton Village Police report. In January 2024 Swanton Village Police handled to 76 incidents. Of those 76 incidents the breakdown is listed below:

37 Directed Patrol, 6 Property/Home Watch, 6 Cras/Property Damage, 5 Agency Assistance, 4 Welfare/Suicide Check, 3 Traffic Stops, 2 Family Fight/Domestic, 2 Community Outreach, 2 Suspicious Person/Circumstance and 2 Juvenile Problems. Of the 3 traffic stops 0 Tickets were issued, 3 Warnings, 6 Arrest Charges of 4 Individuals.

The weather has been good to safely perform traffic stops also. Chief Sullivan has also continued to work with officers to punch patrol cards to better track incidents in the Town.

Chief Sullivan also shared some new data from Vermont Intelligence Report for crime in the State of Vermont.

In 2023 there were 912 non-fatal overdoses, 218 fatal overdoses. Law enforcement response to non-fatal overdoses was up 35% over 2022. That number is estimated low due to Burlington Police not responding to non-fatal overdoses after August.

Laboratories found that Fentanyl was present in 98% of samples tested in 2023.

Chief Sullivan spoke of the shortage of Drug Recognition Officers in the county also when it comes to charging individuals. Swanton Village does have a part time Drug Recognition Officer. Another important fact was the increase of Xylazine being used and found. This drug is used by veterinarians, and Narcan does not stop the overdoses effects of Xylazine because it's not an opioid. This is not a controlled drug.

The report also stated cyber threats/attacks are on the increase and as we see the unrest going on in other parts of the world, we will see these increase.

The report stated for 2023 there were 424-gun violence incidents, 238 of those were threats, 149 involved gun fire, 37 incidents where firearm was used to wound people, 46 victims, 19 homicides, 27 non-lethal injuries.

The report stated domestic violence as the motive for these firearm events has substantially decreased with drug percentage involvement increasing dramatically, roughly 450%.

Juvenile crime violent crimes were up 150% in 2023, this is violent crimes with juveniles. In 2023 there was 2 lethal firearm incidents with juveniles under 15.

Chief Sullivan shared data from Chittenden County for car thefts, the data did not provide Franklin County data.

Chief Sullivan shared the ongoing concerns with the Canadian Border. Canada has added 13 additional countries to the electronic travel authorization list. This has encouraged easy access from these countries to fly to Canada and access the border. From 2021 to 2022 the rate of Border Patrol contacts has gone up 359%. From 2022 to 2023 the rate has increased 300%. Overall, 2021 to 2023 they have seen a 1,019% (almost 5,000 contact) increase of Border Patrol contacts with people attempting to cross the border in the Swanton sector. Important note of the report was that only 25% of those contacts are family units or juveniles the other 75% are individuals.

Mr. Bourgeois asked of the illegals contacted how many stay in the area? Chief Sullivan did not have the data for this.

Chief Sullivan shared update on a search warrant served in St. Albans in January related to alleged abduction in Swanton. This warrant provides over 50 pieces of evidence.

Mr. Clark asked if the system allows a way for officers to clock time on the road, patrolling the Town? Chief Sullivan stated yes, this idea was brought up by Mr. Hemenway previously and he is still working with officers to do this regularly. This is listed as directed patrol on the information Chief Sullivan provides in monthly report. Mr. Clark said this will help him inform people when they ask the area patrolled.

b) Swanton Town Health Officer Report

Mr. Savage stated he did not receive a Health Officer Report for January 2024.

5. Highway Department

a) Sign Certificate of Highway Mileage to State of Vermont, AOT

Mr. Savage reviewed the Certificate the State requires each Town certify the milage. Mr. Savage stated there has been no changes in the roads in 2023.

Ms. Draper made a motion to sign the Certificate of Highway Milage for the State of Vermont, second by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

6. Old Town Business

a) Update on basement sewer issues of Swanton Public Library

Mr. Savage updated the board on the toilet in the basement. Mr. Savage contacted the Village to ensure the line was not blocked. Alliance provided maintenance to the library but they do not service sewer issues. Mr. Savage contacted Drummac and they came and ran a snake and camera and determined the pump was no longer working to pump up to the sewer line. They ordered the pump and has since been fixed. Mr. Savage has not received the bill yet but was quoted \$1,700 for the pump prior to the pump being ordered.

7. New Town Business

a) Discussion of COVID Sick Leave Policy of the Town of Swanton.

This policy was implemented three years ago and has been renewed annually since. The sick leave policy provides 5 additional sick days. There has been some discussion as to weather is should be made permanent. The Town still has employees as frequently as two weeks ago out with COVID.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if this was compensated for by the Federal Government? No.

Ms. Draper said she believes the guidelines around COVID have changed, that if people are not ill, they can return to work pretty quickly. Is this up to date with the guidance?

Mr. Savage stated the 2024 guidance is not out yet.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if we should renew until the new guidance comes out?

Mr. Hemenway stated he has not seen any consistency of guidance with businesses either.

Mr. Clark did not have issue with continuing it with the small number of employees as if one person comes to work with COVID for example the Highway could be out everyone easily. The same for the Town Office.

Mr. Clark made a motion to continue the Covid policy for six months then re-evaluate, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

b) Distribution of St. Albans Micro Transit Study

Mr. Savage shared the Micro Transit Study from St. Albans. Mr. Savage & Bill Sheets have previously been to a meeting at NMC. This is to help the needs of the community for people to be able to get to there appointments. The board members can review this an Mr. Savage can schedule a meeting for another time with Amy Brewer form NMC.

c) Discussion of area preparations for Solar Eclipse on April 8, 2024.

Mr. Savage was involved in a Zoom call today; this was with Swanton Village, St. Albans City & Town in the planning of the Solar Eclipse.

Mr. Savage asked Ms. Draper if the recreation has plans for this? Ms. Draper stated the library is heading up Swanton's Solar Eclipse plans. There will be more details to come. St. Albans Chamber of Commerce will link to there site any plans Swanton wants to advertise.

The local schools are not allowing viewing on the property.

Mr. Clark shared that he heard a great story on VPR about this event, this is expected to bring a lot of traffic to the area. Mr. Savage said they are told of tour buses coming to the area as well.

Mr. Savage will continue to update the board with details as they become available.

d) Concerns of residents of Ceres Circle and Glen Ridge Lane relative to school bus on Highgate Road.

Mr. Savage continued the conversation of these developments having received complaints from them about the speed on Route 207 and that the bus will not pick up children in their developments. Mr. Savage has spoken with the Superintendent of Schools about this and they are in the driver's seat with the bus companies in regards to contracts.

The bus companies have no plans to change current plan because of the time it would take changing the bus routes. Mr. Fournier suggested at a previous meeting that the contact the State of Vermont to inquire about a speed study and lowering the speed limit on Route 207. Mr. Clark mentioned writing a letter to the school. The board does not have authority over this but its important to share the concern. The developments have nice turn arounds that they can make it work. Mr. Savage said they can also request the State to put a school bus stop ahead sign.

Mr. Clark made a motion for Mr. Savage to draft a letter to the school district, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

e) Where to allocate \$7,000 from the State of Vermont AOT for right-of-way from Riverside Cemetery on Route 78.

Mr. Savage stated this is for the State to work on 78. No graves need to be moved during this work. This is Town owned property. The cemetery commission can use this for work/plans. Mr. Savage stated Mr. Hemenway is on the Cemetery Commission as well. In 2023 the commission spent money fixing the building at Riverside Cemetery, there is other work to do in other cemeteries as well. The cemetery on Church St. needs work in 2024. Mr. Fournier asked if the when the work is completed will the cemetery be returned to current specifications. Mr. Savage said yes it states it will be returned to present state. Mr. Savage will have a meeting with them prior and will discuss. Mr. Fournier just wants to ensure once the work is complete it won't be a cost to the Town or Cemetery Commission.

Mr. Clark made a motion for it to be used for Cemetery Commission needs, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried. Mr. Hemenway abstained.

f) Where to allocate \$1,000 donation from Mylan.

Ms. Cathy Fournier shared they had received a check from Mylan with no request or suggestions what to use it for.

“To the Town of Swanton on behalf of the employees of MTI we are happy to present you with this donation, we thank you for your service to the community”.

Ms. Candels had reached out to them with no response with there intentions of this donation.

Mr. Clark would like to see this earmarked for the Welcome to Swanton signs, Swanton Beautification is also planning to contribute to this project in 2024.

Mr. Clark made a motion to earmark the money towards the repair or replacement of the four “Welcome to Swanton” signs, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

g) Notch donation in 2023 2/7/23

In 2023 the Notch had requested a \$2,000 after-the-fact request donation from the Town for the Notch Day Camp. The money was not sent and the Notch is not returning this year. Ms. Cathy Fournier would like to know what the board would like to do about this earmarked \$2,000.

Mr. Ed White Sr made a motion as follows on 2/7/23:

Mr. White made a motion to approve an allocation of \$2,000.00 from ARPA funds, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to rescind the motion, seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carried.

8. Community and Economic Development

9. Any Other Necessary Business

a) Liquor Control Board – renewal of licenses

Mr. Clark made a motion to exit the Regular Selectboard meeting at 6:54 pm and enter the Liquor Control Board meeting, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

Ms. Cathy Fournier has one renewal request for a 2nd class liquor license and tobacco license from Hog Island Market. they have no violations.

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the request for renewal for Hog Island Market, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

Mr. Clark made a motion to exit Liquor Control Board Hearing and enter back into Regular Selectboard meeting at 6:55 pm, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motions carried.

10. Correspondence

None

11. Public Comment (Reprise)

Mr. Nolan asked for clarification what the driving force for the need to increased need for police coverage in the Town of Swanton? As a tax payer he would like to know where the need is coming, the data to show the increased need?

Mr. Clark said he would be glad to have a conversation with him or Mr. Hemenway whom is the police contact on the Selectboard.

Mr. Nolan spoke highly of the town road conditions, thanked Mr. Lapan.

Mr. Hemenway will call and speak with Mr. Nolan.

Mr. Winchester wanted to have a further discussion on the Swanton Public Library proposal he sent in. Mr. Winchester stated there is state statutes that he has to follow for this work.

Mr. Clark stated there is a difference between a repair and renovation and the work being done is a repair. Mr. Clark appreciated the bids received the board members discussed and a bid awarded. The board appreciated the bids and made a decision. The RFP had the work being requested. The Selectboard has the choice which bid to choose.

Going forward Mr. Clark will commit to having clearer written RFP's.

12. Upcoming Events

- a) Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2024 – Planning Commission – 6:30 pm Town Offices
- b) Monday, Feb. 19, 2024 – Presidents Day Holiday – Offices and Operations
CLOSED
- c) Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2024 – Regular Selectboard Meeting – 6:00 pm Town
Offices and Zoom
- d) Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024 – DRB – 6:00 pm – Town Offices
- e) Monday, Feb. 26, 2024 – Joint Town/Village Informational Meeting
7:00 pm – Swanton Village Municipal Complex
- f) Tuesday, February 27, 2024 – 7pm-Missisquoi Valley School District Informational
Meeting-MVU Library
- g) Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2024 – Planning Commission – 6:30 pm Town Office

E. Adjournment

**Mr. Hemenway made a motion to adjourn at 7:10 pm, seconded by Ms. Draper.
Motion carried.**

Respectfully Submitted by
Christina Candels
Administrative Assistant