

Draft Minutes
TOWN OF SWANTON
SELECTBOARD MEETING
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
In-Person & By Zoom
Tuesday, February 20, 2024 @ 6:00 p.m.

Present: Earl Fournier-Chair, Joel Clark, Nicole Draper, Cody Hemenway-Members, Brian Savage-Town Administrator, Cathy Fournier-Town Clerk, Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant, Kevin Lapan, Damon Broderick, Betsy Fournier, Colonel Jacob Roy, Heather Lavoie, Sophie Vibert
Zoom: Lin, Angela Trahan, Chevon Cooper, slincoln

A. Call to Order

Mr. Fournier called the meeting to order at 5:59 pm.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

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

C. Agenda Review

Mr. Savage requested to remove Animal Control and Liquor Control from the agenda.

Mr. Fournier requested to add conversation on the road conditions where they are building the new State garage. Mr. Fournier was concerned that the State has put 4" stone on the entrance to Sholan Road. Mr. Fournier would like to know what their plan is for the spring and if this is going to be used as a base.

Mr. Clark requested to add under LVRT under Old Town Business, Mr. Clark also suggested moving Col. Roy up on the agenda due to his drive time to attend this meeting.

Ms. Draper requested to add Northwest Regional Planning update under New Town Business.

D. Meeting Topics

1. Minutes

a) Regular Selectboard Meeting of February 6, 2024

Mr. Clark made a motion to approve February 6, 2024, draft minutes as written, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

2. Public Comments

None

3. New Town Business

a) Representative (s) from the State of Vermont Military Department to discuss proposed Military Readiness Center.

Col. Jacob Roy is the facilities management officer for the Vermont Army National Guard. Col. Roy came before the board to discuss proposed plans to build a new a new State of Vermont Military Readiness center located off VT Route 207 adjacent to the new

VTrans building. The Vermont Army National Guard is looking at consolidating 19 readiness centers across the state. This project would consolidate St. Albans & Swanton armories. This year the construction of a new facility in design to begin construction this summer in Lyndonville that will replace facilities in Newport & Lyndon readiness centers.

Swanton readiness center is the next project planned in this consolidation plan.

The Franklin County Regional Readiness Center is planned to potentially be a 39-million-dollar project. The building is estimated to be a 50,000-75,000 sq ft building, with parking for soldiers and equipment. The site they are currently looking at has been negotiated with the landowner and has a purchase and sales contract pending the DRB Board for 40-acre subdivision. Col. Roy did provide a map with location mapped out. The funding has been secured at the state level from the sale of other armories as well as from legislators. They have already started the conversation with congressional delegates to secure additional funding. This project is currently the Adjutant General' number one priority project.

Mr. Fournier spoke of the opportunity for the Town of Swanton. Mr. Fournier spoke of the current limitations for municipal services in the Southern Growth District that this is planned in.

Col. Roy says his staff is currently looking into where the infrastructure is now in St. Albans.

Mr. Clark stated he feels this is a great project for the area/Town. Mr. Fournier stated the Town can assist with bringing in Regional Planning.

Mr. Clark asked for clarification on the discussion with the delegation on design. Col. Roy stated this would be 25% State 75% Federal funding on design and construction. Mr. Clark shared the Towns interest in the current facility if it became available. Col. Roy stated the facilities sold for the most part is sold on the open market, when it becomes available, they can have this discussion, but the timeline is unclear currently. Mr. Fournier asked if the current armory has no contract to go back to the municipality, or value. Col. Roy stated it is not written to go back to the municipality and it's too early to have a fair market value. That will not be available until close to completion of the new facility.

Col. Roy stated he is currently working on the acquisition of the property, because in order to get federal funding for design the State has to be title/deed holder of the property. The design is projected to cost 4-million dollars, 25% will come from the state, therefore they need to ensure ownership first.

The Selectboard unanimously supported the plans.

Mr. Savage asked upon completion how many staff would work there. Col. Roy stated consolidating the two units could provide 6-10 full time staff members. On drill weekends could bring in 200-250 personnel, more depending on recruiting.

Col. Roy stated they would be back to support the landowners for the subdivision.

4. Expenditures

a) General Orders

Mr. Clark made a motion to approve General Orders for 1/1/24 to 2/20/24 in the amount of \$113,308.52, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

b) Highway Orders

Mr. Clark made a motion to approve Highway Orders for 1/1/24 to 2/20/24 in the amount of \$62,027.20, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

c) ARPA Orders

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to approve ARPA Orders for 1/1/24 to 2/20/24 in the amount of \$4,662.28, seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carried.

d) Library Orders

Mr. Clark made a motion to approve Library Orders for 1/1/24 to 2/20/24 in the amount of \$14,077.55, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

e) Highway/General Payroll Orders

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve Highway/General Payroll Orders for 1/1/24 to 2/20/24 in the amount of \$62,754.68, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

f) Library Payroll Orders

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to approve Library Payroll Orders for 1/1/24 to 2/20/24 in the amount of \$17,807.80, seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carried.

5. Highway Department

Mr. Lapan updated the board that the new truck will be completed by 2/26/24. They should see it by July. Mr. Fournier asked which truck they would get rid of (sell). Mr. Lapan said the 2012 International. Even though the Volvo is giving them issues now, the International has cost more money in repairs.

Mr. Lapan would like the ok to purchase a new chainsaw, there current one needs replacing and won't run currently.

Mr. Hemenway made a motion for Kevin Lapan (Highway Forman) to buy a new chainsaw for the Highway Department, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

6. Old Town Business

a) Recreation Commission – discussion of Community/Rec Center

Ms. Betsy Fournier came before the board to discuss updates from Swanton Recreation. Summer programs were released yesterday, and people are signing up and getting great feedback.

Ms. Betsy Fournier updated a maintenance issue from water they had that has been fixed (water in the building). The building doesn't currently have good drainage.

Mr. Clark was at the facility the day they had water in the building and suggested the highway crew to take a look and install "french drains". This had previously been done near Bushey Street. This can be completed inexpensively. Swanton Village is aware of the lack of drainage. The Town road crew recently helped fix a broken pipe on the playground also.

Ms. Betsy Fournier would like to see some kind of plan for the ARPA funds allocated for the Swanton Rec Department. Mr. Savage updated how the ARPA funds will be taken care of this coming year. This will be discussed with a resolution after town meeting. Mr. Clark reiterated the Town Report shows where the ARPA monies have been earmarked to.

Ms. Betsy Fournier inquired about a previous conversation about a lease for the Village owned property Swanton Recreation currently uses. Mr. Savage stated the Village has committed that when they are ready to build a new facility, they will enter into a 99-year lease. Ms. Betsy Fournier asked if this should be done now. Mr. Clark stated this will be in the best interest of the town now because it is used for recreation. The reason it is in the Village name is because when that property was available the “Village” can take on property without voter approval. Mr. Fournier agreed with investments in drainage or future things, it makes sense to request a lease now. Mr. Savage will reach out to the Village Manager.

Ms. Betsy Fournier shared that they had sent out the RFP for a grant writer again. This round they received one applicant back from Cambridge. Ms. Draper has also spoken with Northwest Regional Planning, and they do have a REDI Grant for grant writing. Northwest Regional Planning is very receptive to helping with grant writing consulting. Ms. Draper stated this is an additional source to assist. Mr. Fournier asked how long the process will take with Northwest Regional Planning. They can find out.

Ms. Betsy Fournier stated they would like to have a public meeting/forum for residents to understand what the plans are and that they haven’t stopped working on the project. The recreation commission just understands this is not the right time to ask for more. The commission knows the community needs this. This will allow the community to share positive/negative with the proposed project.

Mr. Fournier stated by taking a step back and looking for funding is supporting the community also. Ms. Betsy Fournier stated the years they have come and asked for minimal budgets but provide so much shows support. Mr. Fournier asked if they wanted to do this at the informational meeting next week or have their own meeting? Mr. Clark stated they need to keep the upcoming meeting to the March ballot items. Ms. Betsy Fournier encouraged people to read the Town Report and they will have a public meeting in April or May. Ms. Betsy Fournier wanted clarification on whom will be the Selectboard member on the fundraising committee. Mr. Fournier suggested Mr. Bourgeois, who is not in attendance tonight. Ms. Betsy Fournier will reach out to Mr. Bourgeois. The fundraising committee will consist of 3- Community members, 1- Selectboard members, 2-Recreation Members.

b) Update on basement repair of Swanton Public Library Building

Mr. Savage updated that the large items have been moved back into the room occupied by the Historical Society.

Ms. Lavoie updated that the smaller items have been moved back also.

Mr. Savage said that once everything was back in the room, they could measure for runner rugs. The next project for the basement is connecting the drainage system into the storm sewer system. Mr. Savage has met with Dean Scott from the Village and there are a couple options they can do to tie the drainage system & elevator sub pump into the storm water system. The longest run is the storm sewer in the parking lot but would be the least disruptive vs tying into the street. Mr. Savage will meet with Kevin Lapan and Dean and plan. The shortest run is going to require police for traffic control.

Ms. Lavoie asked if the flooring was not put down because of the sub pump? Mr. Savage said no the flooring was not put down because they wanted to ensure the systems work and the basement stays dry. They are confident with the system and other work completed will work, but wait and see what a year brings.

Ms. Lavoie was concerned about antiques sitting on the floor? Mr. Fournier asked if stuff was put on blocks? Ms. Lavoie said they can elevate the cases. Ms. Lavoie is still working on a new location.

c) Discussion of need for building maintenance consultant

Mr. Savage said the board has discussed the need for a maintenance consultant before but needs clarification on what this person would do, oversee the work or do the work, consulting. Mr. Savage asked what the board envisions this position to do?

Mr. Fournier says this has come up multiple times where it would be valuable to have someone who has a understanding of these issues to go with a recommendations. This would allow for specifics. Mr. Fournier does not feel there is anyone on the board knowledgeable / experienced at making these decisions. These are old buildings.

Mr. Clark feels he has 20+ years of facility experience with old/new buildings, you're not going to find one person whom is an expert in all areas. What would be ideal is to have a few reputable people whom you can go to when you have specific problems. If there are a few people with an agreed upon rate you can go to them and get things fixed, do not need to hire a handy man.

With bigger projects go to the specialist, buildings for to engineer or architect, heating go to heating specialist.

Mr. Fournier asked if this is the Selectboard job? Hiring someone they would know whom to go to. Mr. Fournier feels each time they do something it doesn't go the way it should because other issues come up. Hiring a person can help plan for future needs.

Mr. Clark stated the previous Selectboard would come up with a 5-year plan of when projects would be needed. IE roof, trucks.

Mr. Clark said you can hire someone to look at all the buildings and plan for what needs to be completed.

Ms. Lavoie stated she is working on plans for an older building while trying to find a new location for the Historical Society, it could be overwhelming.

Mr. Fournier stated what's important is doing this.

Ms. Cathy Fournier asked to have they not talked about having someone inspect all the buildings and see what is needed? Mr. Savage said yes, the board had requested he asked Kevin Nichols to do this will all town-owned buildings. Mr. Fournier said, "Well we didn't do it." Mr. Savage said the plan is for that to happen once the budgets are passed before you spend money.

Ms. Draper said she feels they can plan things in house, but if delegating to a Town employee how do they keep the consistency between boards? Policy? Operating procedure? Example do they inspect each building? Consistency would help, as they build a capital plan to see how this gets implemented. Ms. Draper is committed to helping. Ms. Draper has made a facility manager job description, to help the buildings stay assets and not become liabilities.

Mr. Clark asked if they are comfortable with Kevin Nichols report for buildings, does not think they need to hire another position, these reports can give a baseline for existing facilities for repair.

Mr. Hemenway asked if they should have one person on the Selectboard to oversee this happen? They can review the reports.

Mr. Savage stated that this will all be part of the capital plan the Town needs to have in place within a year and a half to be GASB compliant.

Mr. Fournier asked if Kevin has completed any buildings? No

Ms. Lavoie stated she has seen his reports, and they give immediate needs and long term. Ms. Draper asked if the board should set standards? Mr. Clark asked if he could give the report, he will take the time to make the plan for 10-15 years they can budget for.

d) LVRT Update-Joel Clark

Mr. Clark updated that the State of Vermont did approve the additional funds requested. (\$133,197.00) The town attorney has done the title work for the right-of-way. The final design will be ready by the end of the month. Mr. Clark said he will talk with Kevin Lapan (Highway Forman) to ensure the rest of the trees are down by the end of March. The project is still on track to begin construction late summer. Once the environmental paperwork is done it can go out to bid.

7. New Town Business (Reprise)

a) Discussion of Joint Informational Meeting February 26, 2024

Mr. Savage asked whom do the explaining at the meeting, he is working on the power-point? Mr. Fournier said Mr. Savage should give the presentation and the board will answer questions. Mr. Savage also shared that the Town Report has one page missing and will be available then also. Ms. Candels will post that on the website, social media and available at the town office. Mr. Fournier took a moment to thank everyone who helped put the Town Report together.

b) Northwest Regional Planning Update-Nicole Draper

Ms. Draper took a moment to share an update from attending Northwest Regional Planning meetings. In January they had a great presentation from Vermont Futures. One large take away is the shortage of people to fill jobs. Vermont is lacking about 7,000 people to fill jobs that are vacant. Northwest Regional Planning works with agriculture to expand agriculture for food insecurity and agro tourism. Ms. Draper has spoken with business who are interested in this as well. Ms. Draper also shared that Harold Garrett is on the TAC commission and has a lot of info on this, Ms. Draper suggested they request Mr. Garrett to a meeting to report on the transportation they are working on in the community. (Southern Growth district, VT Route 207)

The second meeting Ms. Draper reported on that she attended was a Franklin/Grand Isle Selectboard covering. This was with Selectboard members people from Vermont Leagues of Cities and Towns and Northwest Regional Planning. They group discussed the challenges scene with infrastructure and the high costs. One conversation she would like to see continue is the local option tax, a lot of communities have found a great benefit in that and helps build infrastructure. Swanton is very thankful to have very dedicated clerks in the community, Thank You.

Mr. Savage updated that he has also requested the State perform a speed study and school bus stop ahead for VT Route 207.

Ms. Draper asked if everyone has seen the Public Notice from the Core of Engineers for the Route 78 project? They are looking for feedback.

8. Community and Economic Development

Ms. Draper shared a pamphlet guide she found in Burlington on how to open a business in their community, it could be very useful for small businesses in Swanton. Even if it was a one-page list for people with information. Mr. Fournier said that would be nice on the website.

9. Any Other Necessary Business

None

10. Correspondance

None

11. Public Comment (Reprise)

None

12. Upcoming Events

- a) Thursday, Feb. 22, 2024 – DRB – 6:00 pm – Town Offices
- b) Monday, Feb. 26, 2024 – Joint Town/Village Informational Meeting
7:00 pm – Swanton Village Municipal Complex
- c) Tuesday, Feb. 27, 2024- MVSD Informational Meeting-7:00 pm MVU Library
- d) Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2024 – Planning Commission – 6:30 pm Town Office
- e) Town Meeting Day, March 5, 2024, Offices Closed – Polls open at Village Complex
7:00 am to 7:00 pm – **PLEASE REMEMBER TO VOTE! Absentee ballots can be requested at the Town Clerks Office.**
- f) Wednesday, March 6, 2024 – Special Organization Selectboard Meeting- Town
Offices – 6:00 pm

13. Executive Session

- a) Real Estate

Mr. Clark made a motion to enter executive session at 7:48 pm, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to exit executive session at 8:20 pm, seconded by Mr. Clark. Motion carried.

No Action Taken

E. Adjournment

Mr. Clark made a motion to adjourn at 8:20 pm, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant