

**DRAFT MINUTES
TOWN OF SWANTON
REGULAR SELECTBOARD MEETING
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
In-Person & By Zoom
August 19, 2025, 6:00 pm**

Present: Joel Clark-Chair, Steve Bourgeois, Earl Fournier, Nicole Draper, Nick Brosseau-Members, Brian Savage-Town Administrator, Cathy Fournier-Town Clerk, Christina Candels-Assistant Town Administrator, Robert Nielsen, Kyle Grenier, Jennifer Desautels, Roger Dickinson, Robert Nielson, Leon Kempton, Jennifer Yandow, Reg Beliveau Jr, Nicholas Pfeil, Elizabeth Pfeil, David Hubbard, Carol Hubbard, Kevin Dwyer
Zoom: No Attendance

A. Call to Order

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

B. Pledge of Allegiance

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

C. Agenda Review

Mr. Clark reviewed the agenda.

The board agreed to move the Public Hearing for the Bushey Road/Highgate Road study up on the agenda after Law Enforcement.

D. Meeting Topics

1. Minutes

a) Special Selectboard Meeting of August 6, 2025

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the Special Selectboard Meeting Minutes of August 6, 2025, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

2. Public Comments

None

3. Law Enforcement.

a) Swanton Animal Control

The board reviewed the July 2025 report provided by the Animal Control Officer-Jim Benson.

Mr. Savage said they had reached out to Mr. Benson for clarification on the unlicensed dogs in the report for an update. Mr. Benson did not respond prior to the meeting.

Mr. Fournier asked if any of the dogs were taken to the kennel the Town contracts with? Not that they are aware of, usually Mr. Benson notifies the Town Clerk.

4. Public Hearing- Local Concerns on Bushey Road/Highgate Road Intersection

a) Kyle Grenier – Northwest Regional Planning & Bowman Engineering
Jennifer Desautels & Riger Dickinson from Bowman Consulting

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING at 6:03 pm

Mr. Grenier shared he is the Transportation Planner at Northwest Regional Planning (NWRP).

The Agency of Transportation provided NWRP with funding to have an intersection feasibility study done. This was a result of the new State Highway garage and the potential for future development.

The study will look at what happens in the intersection, traffic, geometry. With this information they will provide a report on what changes to the intersection could look like as well as the cost for the planning stages of the intersection.

This object of this hearing from the Selectboard & community members on what they see in the intersection.

Ms. Desautels said they are here to listen to questions and concerns regarding the intersection.

Ms. Desautels shared a graphic survey of the intersection and maps of the intersection as to how it exists today.

Mr. Dickinson shared that Bushey Road intersection is a minor collector to the State highway system. The intersection presently is a “Y” design of Vt Route 207 and Bushey Road a class II town highway. Also in the intersection is a class IV road (farm road) that connects to State Drive. Surrounding lands are primarily agricultural in use.

The change in recent history is the construction of the new State Highway garage, a new access road was constructed for access, known as State Drive. The State also owns land adjacent to this that there are future plans to construct a National Guard facility.

There is commercial business in the area, Gagne’s, Mother Hubbard’s and a Church. This is likely to increase in the area that will increase traffic.

The Bushey Rd/Highgate intersection currently has high volume of traffic seeing over 700 vehicle per hour at peak commuting times. A large amount of this traffic splits to Bushey Rd.

Mr. Dickinson said the Department of Motor Vehicles lists two reported accidents near the intersection in the last 5 years.

The “posted” speed limit is 40 mph.

Mr. Dickinson said they have located the utilities and wetlands in the area.

Mr. Clark shared the concern of the board about the alignment of the road. The Town intends to block off the dirt road access at the intersection. All access and future development should go through State Drive.

Mr. Fournier said there is business and a lot of housing development in the area. This is a connecting route for people from Sheldon & Richford areas. This area will see future development.

Mr. Bourgeois asked for clarification on the 700 vehicles, is that 350 each way? No that is the total in the morning towards exit 20, in the evening it is outbound traffic.

Mr. Brosseau said he lives close to this area and the traffic peaks at 7 am and in the afternoon. As traffic grows will a traffic stop be something they will look at or a traffic light? Possibly a stop, the traffic doesn’t warrant a light.

Community members who spoke are as listed.

- Carol Hubbard-Highgate Rd
More accidents than reported, line of sight is poor, rise in the road, excessive speed, changing the intersection from a “Y” to a “T”.
- Leon Kempton-Highgate Rd
Accidents and why something is being done now since they have been complaining about this for years. This was part of the agreement with the State in building the new facility.
- Kevin Dwyer-Highgate Rd
Speed, lack of law enforcement.
- Melissa Pfeil-Bushey Rd
Excessive Speed, traffic and lack of law enforcement, daycares and children on the road.
- Reg Beliveau Jr.-Bushey Rd
Signal usage at the intersection, passing, excessive speed, lack of police presence
Mr. Beliveau discussed a community risk reduction program he teaches. This would include enforcement, engineering & expense.
- Jennifer Yandow-Bushey Rd
High speeds of vehicles, lack of police presence.
- Nicholas Pfeil-Bushey Rd
Speed, passing vehicles, no police help.

Speed is a concern everywhere. Mr. Savage will add speed discussion to the September 16, 2025, Selectboard Meeting agenda.

The intentions for the intersection are to increase safety at the intersection of the two roads. The Selectboard agrees slowing people down/excessive speed is a priority as well.

Mr. Dickinson said they will take this public input. Once they have done the study they will come back and there will be another public meeting with alternative plans to take input.

Mr. Fournier thanked Ms. Desautels for notifying the community members.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING at 6:39 pm

5. Expenditures

a) General Orders

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the General Orders for 7/16/25 to 8/19/25 in the amount of \$309,668.90, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

b) Highway Orders

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the Highway Orders for 7/16/25 to 8/19/25 in the amount of \$99,634.74, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

c) Library Orders

Mr. Brosseau made a motion to approve the Library Orders for 7/16/25 to 8/19/25 in the amount of \$6,612.63, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

d) Highway & General Payroll Orders

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the Highway & General Payroll for 7/16/25 to 8/19/25 in the amount of \$46,087.71, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

e) Library Payroll Orders

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Library Payroll Orders for 7/16/25 to 8/19/25 in the amount of \$ 10,942.34, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

f) Special Orders

Mr. Brosseau made a motion to approve the Special Orders for 7/16/25 to 8/19/25 in the amount of \$8,555.08, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

6. Highway Department

a) Monthly Report on Highway Department Matters

Mr. Clark shared the Highway Department has been working on roadside mowing, tree removal, road preparation for paving, vehicle maintenance and assisting with a water connection for the LVRT.

Paving is expected to begin soon.

Swanton Hill Rd, all the work is completed except the paving. The paving bids are due Friday 8/22. Mr. Clark said they budgeted 209k, currently it is totaling 160k. They are still waiting for an engineering bill. The Town Highway crew labor hours are not included.

Brooklyn St, Mr. Clark suggested holding off on this until next year and concentration on tree removal.

Line stripping is planned for early September. The State who pays for Maquam Shore Rd has already had them stripped, even though Mr. Clark did request they wait until after the paving is completed.

Tree removal is a priority.

No update on the Barry Rd culvert design.

The new pickup has been ordered by Barrette Ford.

b) Request for guardrails on South River Street

Mr. Clark said they have heard from a resident of the dangers of the corner near their property requesting guardrails. Mr. Lapan did put up markers in the interim.

The estimate from Lafayette Highways Specialties is \$5,425 if anchors are needed. There is an additional cost for traffic control if the Town does not provide this.

Mr. Clark said the Swanton Hill project is funded out of the Road Improvement line on the budget, that is the budget line Mr. Clark suggests paying for this from.

Mr. Fournier said this will be a huge plus if the bridge closure happens in the future.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to authorize up to \$5,500.00 to install guardrails and for Mr. Savage to sign the contract, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

The highway department will provide traffic control.

c) Decker Trail culvert

Mr. Clark said Decker Rd. used to be a road connecting Route 207 and Route 7 prior to the interstate. In 1992 it was turned into a trail, that is used by a few landowners.

This trail has a 24" culvert that is rotted.

VELCO who is installing the power poles has put a large amount of stone and wood over the culvert to make passable.

Mr. Clark said when they are done the board should decide if they are going to fix the culvert.

VELCO is who is requesting this be replaced.

7. Old Town Business

a) Update on land swap

Mr. Savage has received an email from the para legal from the Town attorney and she stated they have not heard from Mr. Rowell about a partial mortgage discharge. The Town attorney does know if they are awaiting a partial mortgage discharge from Yankee Farm Credit it can be difficult. Mr. Savage said as far as he understood all of the attorneys were speaking to each other about this, it seemed to be a communication breakdown somewhere. This has been going on for a year and a half.

Mr. Savage will call Mr. Rowell so things can proceed.

Mr. Bourgeois said they can take time but not this long, if this continues to drag on, he'd support calling it off. This has dragged on and incurred additional legal fees.

b) Update on Old Town Garage site on Fourth Street

Mr. Clark said the draft report has been sent to the State for review. If the State agrees to the plan 2/3's 18" down of the property needs to have the soil removed and taken to the landfill. Other area stated in the report needs to be tested. Mr. Clark said he has asked ATLAS to give them a work plan for this to give to the State.

Mr. Fournier clarified the amount. That is not going to be a cheap endeavor.

Mr. Clark said one option is to pave the lot they will not need to do as much vs hauling it to the landfill in Coventry. It will be cheaper to pave the whole lot and put courts.

There is a portion that would not need the removal.

Depending on what they want to do for recreation, that will determine what they need done.

Mr. Savage said the report is 382 pages, but he will send the maps and an overview for them to have a visual.

Mr. Fournier said the recreation commission should be involved in the planning.

Mr. Clark said once the State approves the report they can develop a plan.

8. New Town Business

a) Set 2025 Tax Rate

Ms. Fournier shared her prepared 2025 tax rate.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to approve the 2025 tax rate of 2.0292 -Residential and 2.3241-Non-Residential rate, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

		2025 TAX RATE		RATE	
		Residential	Non-residential		
	General	0.2254	0.2254	0.0146	Increase
	HW	0.3359	0.3359	0.0293	decrease
	sub total before Ed rate	0.5613	0.5613	0.0147	decrease
	ED RATE-Residential	1.4679		0.0483	decrease
	ED RATE-Non-residential		1.7628	0.0016	increase
	2024 TAX RATE	2.0292	2.3241		
APPROVAL					
2025	Residential Rate	2.0292	Residential ED	3.18%	decrease
			Non-residential ED	0.09%	increase
2025	Non-Residential Rate	2.3241			
			Residential Overall	3.01%	decrease
			Non Residential Overall	0.56%	increase

The decrease in the residential education rate is as listed. The grand list adjusted for the loss of \$1,000,000.00 to the grand list from GMP reappraisal. Even with this loss the total grand list did increase.

The residential decrease was due to the State buying down the tax rate.

The board worked hard to keep taxes from increasing and this shows.

9. Community and Economic Development

a) Update on Swanton Promotion

Mr. Fournier said they have a meeting Wednesday 8-20-25 with Ecopixel to finalize the website update.

Mr. Fournier said he said Hudak's does not have an issue with them putting a Welcome to Swanton sign on their property.

Mr. Brosseau suggested reaching out to Tractor Supply if they would allow one to be put on their property. The sign should be on the other side of the road for cars heading into Swanton Northbound.

Mr. Clark suggested asking the State where they enter State Drive.

10. Any Other Necessary Business

a) Discussion of agenda for Regular Selectboard Meeting of September 2, 2025, Meeting

Mr. Clark said they have discussed having an update of the General, Highway and Recreation budgets and having them to review prior to the meeting.

Mr. Clark asked the board members if they were ready to discuss Maple Grove at the next meeting? Mr. Clark said they do not want to have a repeat of the last meeting that turned into a public hearing. The road takeover policy states the conversation is with the Road Owner or the HOA. Is the board ready to make a decision?

Mr. Fournier said there is no benefit to holding off. It does appear they were led on that the Town would take it over. The engineer states it was built to standards even though the core samples say no.

Mr. Clark said he worked in engineering in his career and if board members have questions about the report, he is happy to discuss the report. Mr. Bourgeois would like to discuss it with Mr. Clark.

Mr. Brosseau asked if they should hold a Public Hearing? No. Mr. Bourgeois said they develop policies to follow.

11. Correspondence

Mr. Clark said in following up to the meeting regarding Maple Grove, the board members received email correspondence from a resident.

Mr. Clark asked the board members thoughts. Last year the board agreed to conditions, as part of that Mr. Lapan and Mr. Clark went to a meeting at Maple Grove and it was not beneficial to have a dialogue. Mr. Clark asked Mr. Lapan if he was out of line and agreed he was not.

Mr. Clark asked the board if they wanted him to step down as chair or respond to the email?

The board agreed that Mr. Savage as Town Administrator included in the email would acknowledge receipt and thank them for their letter.

As far as conduct for the meeting the board operates under Roberts Rule of Order.

Mr. Fournier passed out another correspondence dated 8-18-25 from Fieldstone Land Consultants of Milford NH sent to Bud Hemond shared with Mr. Fournier.

Mr. Clark said the letter looks to have the same verbiage as the last report from them.

Mr. Fournier said the word appears is gone, it states the road meets or exceeds A76 standards. This is not the engineer Mr. Clark met with at the site.

Mr. Brosseau said he attended the Recreation Commission meeting yesterday and they stated the tractor was paid off 8-15-25.

12. Public Comment (Reprise)

None

13. Upcoming Events

- a) Thursday – August 28, 2025 – DRB Meeting – Town Offices – 6:00 pm
- b) Friday – August 29, 2025 – Town Offices CLOSED for Cleaning
- c) Monday – Sept. 1, 2025 – Labor Day Holiday – Town Offices and Ops CLOSED
- d) Tuesday – Sept. 2, 2025 – Regular Selectboard Meeting – Town Offices – 6:00 pm
- e) Tuesday – Sept. 9, 2025 – Planning Commission Meeting – Town Offices – 5:00 pm

14. Adjourn

**Ms. Draper made a motion to adjourn at 7:34 pm, seconded by Mr. Brosseau.
Motion carried.**

Respectfully Submitted by
Christina Candels-Assistant Town Administrator