

**MINUTES
TOWN OF SWANTON
SELECTBOARD MEETING
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
In-Person & By Zoom
Tuesday,
June 4, 2024 @ 6:00 p.m.**

Present: Joel Clark-Chair, Earl Fournier, Steve Bourgeois, Nicole Draper, Cody Hemenway-Members, Brian Savage-Administrative Assistant, Cathy Fournier-Town Clerk, Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant, Julie Regimbal, Stephanie Gagne, Suzie Kelleher, Chief Matthew Sullivan

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

Ms. Draper requested to add under Old Town Business Recreation Building Project Modification.

Mr. Clark requested to add under Highway Department Line Striping & Maquam Shore property right-of-way concern.

Mr. Savage requested to add under Any Other Necessary Business a letter to Beebe/South River Street residents drafted by Mr. Clark.

Mr. Savage requested to add under Any Other Business New FEMA flood buyout program.

D. Meeting Topics

1. Minutes

a) Regular Selectboard Meeting of May 21, 2024

b) Special Selectboard Meeting of May 24, 2024

Mr. Bourgeois questioned the draft quarterly report from the Swanton Library. Mr. Bourgeois asked if they could provide a final that also included the budget vs actual numbers. Mr. Savage will request this.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to approve May 21, 2024 & May 24, 2024, draft minutes as written, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Mr. Bourgeois abstained from May 21, 2024, as he was absent.

Mr. Hemenway abstained from May 24, 2024, as he was absent.

2. Presentation by Missisquoi Valley School District – Budget revote

Ms. Regimbal & Ms. Gagne presented budget information for the upcoming revote for the MVSD School Budget June 18, 2024. Ms. Regimbal shared they have cut from the budget for the previous vote \$1,034,000. For this third vote they cut an additional \$835,000. The voted amount for the third vote is \$48,909,437. Ms. Regimbal said with this amount they are at an equalized tax rate of \$1.19. Ms. Regimbal said in comparison when they merged, they were at \$1.43. Mr. Bourgeois asked where this compares to last year? Last year was \$1.24. Mr. Fournier asked if this included the CLA? No, it does not. With the CLA in Swanton it would be \$1.51.

Ms. Regimbal said they have cut some savings from hiring a new assistant principal, clerical position in the Central Office/Business, Capital Expenses, Interest Expense, Highgate Roof replacement, MVU Parking Lot, Vacant Teaching Position, Vacant Custodian, MVU Admin Position.

Ms. Regimbal said they will have a meeting on Saturday at 8:30 at Swanton Central School Library. There will also be an informational meeting June 10, 2024, at MVU at 7pm. These meetings will be for people to ask questions before the revote.

Mr. Clark thanked them for coming to share the info and understands how hard this process is. Mr. Clark asked if they had an actual amount of what the increase in taxes will be to the voters with this budget? The increase will be \$.13 over last year for Swanton residents. Mr. Fournier asked what the rollover was from the last budget. Ms. Regimbal said they typically roll over around \$1,000,000,000 because they must have a surplus for unexpected expenses. This rollover is typically spent on projects after it's audited and what's left goes back to the taxpayers. Mr. Fournier asked how does the smaller projects add up to? This varies from year to year, but what is added to FY25 is what was rolled over from FY23. Mr. Fournier asked what the tax rate would be if their property values were 100%? Ms. Regimbal is unsure that is a CLA question that is influenced by the State. Ms. Regimbal said they have done their best with the budgets every year, by controlling spending, knowing their pupil counts. Even during covid their pupils dipped some, but the average is strong. The school portion of the budgets has gone down since the merger but at the same time the CLA portions of the budgets have gone up, this is why people have not seen the savings they have been trying to give them. Mr. Clark asked how the ARPA funds will affect the budget, Ms. Regimbal said they were careful how they spent the ARPA funds. They did not use these funds to hire a lot of people.

Mr. Bourgeois said he understands they work hard on this he was on the board before; how many students are there now? The district has 1806, MVU has 750-760. Mr. Bourgeois asked what the student-teacher ratio is. Ms. Regimbal said the State does that differently and requires each student to have multiple teachers. They are diligent when someone vacates a position about how and if it needs to be filled. Ms. Regimbal said as a district they are looking at all class sizes, for example special ed, interventionists, coaches, middle school to maximize classrooms. Mr. Bourgeois asked how much deferred maintenance has been deferred the last few years due to budgets? Ms. Regimbal said they have a very good 5-year capital plan together for all their schools. They have maximized the food service to use the surplus to upgrade kitchens HVAC systems with the surplus vs adding it to the budget. The roof in Highgate has been repaired many times and will come back to the budget as it needs to be replaced. This year they cut the MVU parking lot and the Highgate roof. Mr. Fournier asked for clarification on the Highgate roof. This budget includes the MVU roof. Mr. Bourgeois asked for clarification on how much the increase will be over last year. This budget is closer to a 10% increase, this deferred maintenance will cost more in the long run. Mr. Bourgeois concern is there are a lot of people who cannot afford to buy food, meds and this increase may not sound like a lot, but it is. Mr. Bourgeois also said he was disappointed they did not come with more information. Ms. Regimbal encourages people to attend their informational meeting.

3. Public Comments

Ms. Draper shared that Swanton Public Library and Swanton Recreation had the first annual Youth Appreciation Gala. They recognized twelve phenomenal young people in the community as participants in their school programs.

4.. Law Enforcement

a) Swanton Police Department

Chief Sullivan came before the board to discuss May 2024 Police report. The Swanton Village Police responded to 113 incidents in the month of May.

Those 113 incidents represent 53 directed patrols, 14 suspicious person/circumstance, 7 community outreach, 5 agency assistance, 5 traffic stops, 4 motor vehicle complaint, 3 alarm, 3 welfare/suicide check, 3 property watch and 2 juvenile problems. Traffic stops were low due to one officer away for training for 3 weeks. This officer primarily does traffic patrol.

The 5 traffic stops resulted in 4 tickets, 3 warnings, 2 arrests, 4 arrest charges of 4 individuals. 12.8 hours of additional services also. Mr. Clark asked for clarification on additional services. Following school buses have been a focus.

The speed trailer was on Maquam Shore Northbound 5/14-5/30 during this time 18,489 vehicles passed through the speed breakdown is as follows.

41-50 mph 7578 vehicles =41%

51-60 mph 867 vehicles=4.7%

61-70 mph 82 vehicles=.44%

71-80 mph 13 vehicles=.07%

81-90 mph 58 vehicles=.31%

91-100 mph 2 vehicles=.01%

101+ mph 2 vehicles=.01%

Chief Sullivan said these high rates of speeds are concerning because they were between the hours of 6-8 pm, at these rates of speed they are likely motorcycles. Mr. Hemenway asked what the common practice is? Do the officers sit and watch for this? Chief Sullivan said he will sit in a spot where he is not easily observed. Vehicles are equipped with radar units while they are driving on routine patrol. Mr. Bourgeois asked if they could be more aggressive on Maquam Shore. Chief Sullivan said they do not have a hard line for officers, every incident is different. Chief Sullivan said there is not a quota that officers need to hit.

Chief Sullivan said they have seen since Covid how people operate with lack of respect for the general population. Mr. Bourgeois said they have a lot of VBRO on Maquam Shore and these people who rent them come from out of state and want to go for a walk and are not aware of how fast people drive. This is a concern that someone will get injured. Mr. Clark said he's concerned if there is one officer that prefers traffic stops, which means there are some that do not. Is the Town getting coverage at night? Chief Sullivan said yes, they are always out on patrol. Chief Sullivan said they have areas he wants them to increase their presence. They are not required to park and sit. Mr. Clark really encourages this happens for example what is going to happen on South River St. let people see them. Chief Sullivan said the speed trailer is on South River St. currently. Mr. Fournier said there is a space just after you turn on Beebe Rd that would be a good place for the officer to sit. Mr. Fournier asked if the State is paying for some of the bridge project. Chief Sullivan said he believes there may be a little money from the State, but it is a substantial cost to the Village. Mr. Fournier said he has seen more Swanton Village Police in the Town in the last two months than he has in the past three years, thank you. Chief Sullivan said the guys are out there and traffic enforcement is a priority. Mr. Hemenway said he has seen an increase in State Police, and Ms. Draper said she has seen DMV Officers as well. Mr. Clark reviewed the crime info in Chief Sullivan's report, Chief Sullivan said there was four arrests. Two of those arrests were related to the vandalism on Maquam Shore & Route 7. The other two arrests were for DUI, and an outstanding warrant. Mr. Bourgeois asked for an update on a recent "mugging" of an elderly gentleman. Chief Sullivan said the individual has been identified and officers are working at holding him accountable for Simple Assault. The officer in charge was immediately dispatched to an Aggravated Simple Assault after this incident at Marble Mill Park. The legal process takes time. The officers can only do their part in the case, then it goes to the courts. Mr. Hemenway said some departments now are posting reports "they have done their part, now it's up to the judicial system", this is very frustrating to officers.

Chief Sullivan said there is a new report from VLCT (Vermont Leagues of Cities & Towns) regarding the state of law enforcement in Vermont. Chief Sullivan will share this information with the Selectboard.

b) Swanton Town Health Officers May Report

Mr. Savage provide the board with the Swanton Health Officers May report. The report included details of 4 incidents. Mr. Bourgeois asked if they had been resolved. Mr. Savage believes 3 out of the 4 have been. 3 of them we have not received any other complaints about them. One is an ongoing issue; the property is owned by a out of town landlord.

Ms. Candels said the Health Officer has been very responsive via email with these issues.

5. Highway Department

a) Maquam Shore Road Culvert

Mr. Clark shared a patch has been made to the upper band and should not be a problem. The problem with the lower section is it appears the water is running under the culvert affecting both bands, the water ran under the culvert and washed away enough material to allow it to settle. Mr. Clark said they are working with Tyler from East Engineering & the contractor on how best to seal/fix those two bands.

c) Swanton Hill update

Mr. Clark said the Selectboard at a previous meeting approved to go with East Engineering for this project design contingent on the meeting with the landowners. Mr. Clark said they have met with the landowners, and they are going to work with the Town on this. Mr. Clark said they will sign the contract with East Engineering now that they are on board. Mr. Clark said he did speak with Tyler and he is going to see if they can lower the existing road vs. straitening the road. Once they have the two options the board can decide. Mr. Fournier asked about the landowners. Mr. Clark said they did not sign any letters of agreement but they are in agreement. The landowner with the biggest impact likes the idea of staying with the existing road and lowering it but is open to work. This may require a wetland permit.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to have Mr. Savage sign a contract a contract with East Engineering for Swanton Hill Road, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

c) Brooklyn Street update

Mr. Clark said he has met with the wetland coordinator for this project. They will need to do a general wetland permit. Mr. Clark said he has asked Tyler from East Engineering for a proposal for the permit and surveying for this project. The permit can take months. Mr. Fournier asked if there is a design yet? Mr. Clark said it will not require much design, just the permit and property boundaries.

d) Line Striping

Mr. Clark said the Road Forman has been working for a couple of weeks trying to get pricing for line striping. So far, he has received one. The one estimate he has received is for \$.22 per square foot. Mr. Clark said they would like to get a contract written soon. If they do not get a response from the other contractors in the next 3-4 days.

Mr. Bourgeois asked how many miles can be striped with the \$12,000 budgeted. Mr. Clark did the math and with this budgeted amount they can get roughly 10 miles painted. This is only for Town roads. The State will do class 2 roads, Woods Hill, South River. Mr. Lapan is trying to get the State to do South River before the bridge closure.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to authorize the Selectboard Chair to sign a contract for line striping of Town roads up to \$.22 a square foot, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

e) Maquam Shore Road Right-Of-Way

Mr. Clark said there is a property on Maquam Shore Road that has put in a new mound system. This property has then lined the mound with large cement blocks and fill that are in the Town's right-of-way. Mr. Clark said they are large retaining wall blocks. Mr. Clark said there are some questions on the right-of-way on Maquam Shore Road if it is 50' or 66'. Mr. Clark said the pins by his house are 50'. Mr. Clark said the wall should not be at least 25' from the center of the road if a car goes off the road there. Mr. Clark said there should be a permit on file for this new system and they should not build around them like this, the system will fail. Mr. Clark would like the Zoning Administrator to look at this. Mr. Fournier asked whom enforces wastewater permits? The State of Vermont. This should be shared with the landowner. Mr. Fournier asked about the setback? That is a zoning question, as a retaining wall is a structure. Mr. Fournier said if it is an issue with the septic the State should be made aware of it. Mr. Savage thought if it is brought to the Zoning Administrator's attention they are obligated to inform the State possibly. The wastewater permit is based on a design, if the design isn't followed that is an issue. Mr. Savage will discuss this with the Zoning Administrator and Mr. Clark will be available if needed.

6. Old Town Business

a) Robert's Rules of Order – clarification of what constitutes a quorum

Mr. Savage shared the expert from Roberts Rules of Order, this explains that question raised at a previous meeting about a quorum to vote.

Mr. Savage said the number present is based on the total number on the board, not the number present. Mr. Clark thanked him for checking.

b) Letter to VTrans requesting lower speed limit on Highgate Road

Mr. Savage shared the drafted letter for VTrans requesting the speed be lowered on Highgate Road. Mr. Savage said he was informed that it was likely too late for it to be added the June agenda for the Safety Committee but will be added the September meeting agenda. The Safety Committee is the Agency of Public Safety Commissioner, Agency of Secretary of Transportation, Agency of Department of Motor Vehicles. Mr. Clark said if they need to attend, they will. Mr. Fournier said it is important to include some of the residents' concerns for their children on the bus route. Mr. Savage said he can add it in there; this is the same person Mr. Savage communicated with regarding the speed study and the signs for school bus stops. Ms. Draper agreed that needed to be added.

c) Recreation Building

Mr. Clark said they previously approved up to \$20,000 to be spent to modify and upgrade the recreation facility. The highway crew will do the drainage. Mr. Clark said they will still have the work done by volunteers. Inside the garage they have changed their plans. Instead of putting a wall in it they would get a Conex box for storage. Mr. Clark said what they need approval for is to change the spending of money on the flooring to purchase the box instead. The garage can then still be used for the kids or storing equipment. The cost difference is a couple gallons of paint vs \$6,700 on flooring. Ms. Draper has a estimate for a Conex box 40'x8' for \$3900 from a Fairfax company, this would be owned not leased. Mr. Bourgeois asked where it would be put? Ms. Draper shared a picture of locations. Mr. Fourier said he would check with one of his contacts for a price estimate as well, but asked if that was a delivered and set in place price. Ms. Draper will ask.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion for part of 20k in lieu of flooring be used to purchase Conex box instead of flooring, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried. Ms. Draper abstained.

Mr. Clark will advertise for volunteers when they plan to do the work on the building.

7. New Town Business

a) Heather Lavoie – Swanton Historical Society Update on Possible Building Purchase

Ms. Lavoie was not in attendance; this conversation was tabled until another meeting.

8. Community and Economic Development

a) Promote Swanton

Mr. Fournier said he has had a conversation with Ms. Draper about what they would like to do, they are still working on setting up a meeting with other key stakeholders.

Ms. Draper said Darci Benoit has been assisting through the Economic Task Force & Swanton Enhancement to come up with a plan to promote downtown businesses. Ms. Draper has had a conversation with Ms. Benoit, and she is concerned about what the bridge closure is and what to expect. Ms. Draper has a meeting set up with Adam Paxman from the Chamber of Commerce to get his input. Ms. Draper has heard from Trustee Kelleher and Abenaki Chief Brenda Gagne. They will set up a time to meet on what promoting Swanton looks like moving forward. Mr. Fournier said there are a lot of things going on and this coordinates them.

Mr. Clark said once they have a meeting and plan, they can then have a joint meeting with the Village. Ms. Draper agrees to continue the conversation as a community.

Ms. Kelleher has been gathering a running list of Swanton Town & Village businesses she has been giving shout outs to on Facebook. Ms. Kelleher has been trying to sort them out. Ms. Kelleher shared the discussion had at a previous

meeting regarding a business listing on the back side of the new LVRT trailhead opening. Ms. Kelleher said the Town of Cambridge Vermont has a nice sign to check out. This is at their LVRT stop. Mr. Clark said they will get a large kiosk for the sign; the State stipulates what you can put on the front, but they can use the back. Mr. Clark said what is important is they also want to promote more than just business. For example, Historical Society, Wildlife Refuge, Abenaki culture. Ms. Kelleher has been working with Heather Lavoie from the Historical Society regarding what they can do to assist.

b) Swanton Block Party update

Ms. Kelleher said they have asked the Historical Society, Age Well, Abenaki, Swanton Enhancement & Swanton Arts Council to all attend the Swanton Community Block Party.

Mr. Clark said he has also mentioned the Swanton Community Block Party to the Army National Guard, Ms. Draper will follow up with them with the request.

Mr. Bourgeois said he thinks this is a great idea because when they shut down the bridge it is going to be an economic hardship for the businesses. Mr. Bourgeois would like to know if there is any financial relief out there for those affected.

Taking all the traffic out of town is going to be a hardship. Ms. Draper said a lot of the business owners are very worried about this as well.

Ms. Draper said they would like to bring back the “Downtown Bucks” program for the Swanton Community Block Party. This is a way to support local businesses during this time.

Ms. Kelleher shared some great information on this. **Please see attached document.**

Village Public Works will block off the area for the event.

The band is being paid for by Swanton Arts Council.

Star Hose or the Swanton Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary will have a lemonade stand, this will not be free. This money goes toward the free BBQ in the park after the Memorial Day parade.

Ms. Kelleher’s request from the Selectboard is to provide the funds to purchase 2 banners at \$120 each, \$350 for bounce house if SEP does not agree and \$1,000 for Downtown Bucks These Downtown Bucks would be \$10 cards given to the first 100 people. The cards can be used at business and then they would be refunded for them.

Mr. Bourgeois asked how much in total? \$1590. Mr. Bourgeois asked if the Village was contributing any money? Ms. Kelleher said there is \$5,000 in the General Fund for Town Celebration that is paid by both Town & Village residents.

Mr. Clark clarified this, and it would be less if SEP contributes. Ms. Kelleher said if they choose not to approve the banners the Village Trustees have approved the purchase.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to appropriate up to \$1500 from the Town Celebration General Budget for two banners and Downtown Bucks, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried. Ms. Draper abstained.

Mr. Clark asked how the cards would be handled? Ms. Kelleher said they will have a booth, and check with the businesses to ensure they will accept them.

9. Any Other Necessary Business

a) Flags for Veterans

Mr. Savage shared how well the flag installation and takedown went this year. This year they had the MVU girls’ softball team to help install.

Mr. Savage said they have had a waiting list for some time of people looking to purchase a flag if the Town decided to increase the number of flags, currently there are 31 on the list. Mr. Savage said he has priced the same set up they currently have, and it is \$122.49 each. (9’ white spinning pole & 3’x 5’ flag) The flags they currently have are in good shape but going forward they should try and build up a fund in case they need to replace some. Mr. Savage suggested the new kit be sold for \$150. Mr. Savage hopes if they placed the order he can negotiate a better price. Mr. Fournier asked whom decides where they go in the park? Mr.

Paxman is good at planning the rows out. Mr. Paxman & Mr. Clark lined them all out this year.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if they could send the principal a letter to thank the team for their help. Mr. Savage will also reach out in November for help too.

Mr. Clark said they need to cap it at some point due to the future potential cost to replace them.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if they had thought of adding some to Veterans Park? That has been discussed but that park would be tough. Mr. Clark said some white flag poles would make that park look nice, they have also planted a lot more flowers there this year.

The drone video of the flags this year was wonderful.

They would also need a new sign, and new cards created.

Mr. Clark said with help it goes quick. Mr. Savage said since they were installed, they have only had to replace one that was stolen.

Ms. Draper shared that she thinks it is a wonderful display for the community,

Mr. Fournier said we just can't keep doing more and more of them, there does

need to be a limit. If you cannot make more flags in the future, what can they do?

Ms. Draper said in many communities though New York they have recognition flags hanging from utility poles. Ms. Draper has had community members ask for this before, this would need to be a coordinated effort. They are purchased the same way.

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to increase the number of flags by 50 for Memorial Day & Veterans Day at the price of \$150 each, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried. Mr. Savage will coordinate this.

b) Beebe Road

Mr. Savage shared with the Selectboard a draft letter written by Mr. Clark to the residents on Beebe Road & North River Street detour route.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to approve the letter as drafted to the residents on Beebe Road & South River Street about the upcoming bridge closures, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

c) FEMA Buyout

Mr. Savage shared the State a couple of years ago and had a program to make up the gap for the FEMA buyout of homes in a flood zone, prior to the FEMA would only pay 75% fair market value. The last round Swanton had three properties apply. Everyone in the flood zone was sent notice and eligible to apply. Many people thought it was a scam. There is a tight window for people to apply again. This is a tight window only until August.

The Selectboard agreed to move forward. If properties in the Village want to apply it will be done through the Town.

Ms. Draper agreed the communication was not the best, Mr. Savage would have liked to see a public meeting for it.

10. Correspondence

Mr. Hemenway thanked Swanton Rec for their collaboration with the Abenaki Pow Wow they 1400 people and had planned for 400 people. With 1150 the first day.

Ms. Draper said it was a wonderful time.

11. Public Comment (Reprise)

None

12. Upcoming Events

a) Planning Commission – Wed., June 5, 2024 – 6:30 pm - Town Offices

b) MVSD Budget Conversation – Sat., June 8, 2024 – 8:30 am – Swanton School Central Building Library

c) Joint Trustees & Selectboard Meeting June 10, 2024 – 7: 00 pm- Village Complex

d) MVSD Budget Meeting at MVU June 10, 2024-7:00 pm-MVU

- e) Planning Commission – Wed., June 12, 2024 – 6:30 pm – Town Offices
- f) Special Selectboard Meeting – Mon., June 17, 2024 – 6:00 pm – Town Offices
- g) School Budget Vote – Tues., June 18, 2024 – Polls open 7:00 am to 7:00 pm – Village Complex
- h) Juneteenth Holiday – Wed., June 19, 2024 – Town Offices and Ops will be closed.
- I) June 19, 2024- Community Family Night 5-7:30 pm
- j) DRB – Thurs., June 27, 2024 – 6:00 pm – Town Offices
- k) 40th Army Rock band Patriotic Celebration July 3, 2024-Hosted by Swanton Rec-Village Green

13. Executive session (If needed)

Ms. Draper made a motion to enter executive session at 7:55 pm, Roll Call Vote. Yes, from everyone.

Ms. Draper made a motion to exit executive session at 8:12 pm, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

14 Adjourn
Mr. Hemenway made a motion to adjourn at 8:12 pm, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted by
Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant
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Received and filed by:

Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk

Date