

**MINUTES
TOWN OF SWANTON
SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING
AND JOINT MEETING WITH SWANTON VILLAGE TRUSTEES
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
In-Person & By Zoom
Monday
June 17, 2024 @ 6:00 p.m.**

Present: Joel Clark-Chair, Earl Fournier, Steve Bourgeois, Nicole Draper, Cody Hemenway-Members, David Winchester-Village President, Suzie Kelleher, Adam Paxman, Eugene LaBombard-Village Trustees, Brian Savage-Town Administrator, Cathy Fournier-Town Clerk, Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant, Bill Sheets-Village Manager, Alan Norris, Todd Minor, Sarah Minor, Betsy Liley, Michael Toussaint, Diane Toussaint, Sheri Moore, Linda White, Thomas Parah
Zoom: Lin, Judy Ashley

A. Call to Order

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

Mr. Paxman called the Village Trustees 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.

Mr. Fournier requested to add 4th Street update under Old Town Business.

Mr. Savage requested to add personnel to the Executive Session.

D. JOINT MEETING WITH VILLAGE TRUSTEES

1. Expansion of Village Designation Area

Ms. Liley came before the Selectboard & Village Trustees as a representative of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church to discuss the Expansion of the Village Designation Area.

Ms. Liley said the Village Designation is approved by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. Changing the Village Designation would have nothing to do with zoning or Village & Town boundaries. The change request is for tax credit purposes. The State of Vermont encourages Village & Downtown businesses development. Ms. Liley's ask to expand the Village designation area for Holy Trinity Episcopal Church is so that Mary Jane Sheldon property located at 44 Grand Avenue will become a Village designation. The property has sat empty since Ms. Sheldon died in 2019. This is a historic home. Ms. Sheldon left money for the rehabilitation of the home. Since Ms. Sheldon died, they have not been able to find a non-profit to take on this project. Champlain Housing Trust has agreed to take on this project, to do this they need the tax credits that the Village Designation Area would allow. Ms. Liley said in previous talks with Swanton Village and Swanton Town they suggested including more than just 44 Grand Ave. The proposed designated line would continue to Farrar Street to include Veterans Memorial Park. Ms. Liley said the last update to the Village designated area was in 2017, this is not a complicated process but does take legislative approval. There is no cost for this proposed change.

Ms. Sheldon asked that the home be given to a non-profit. Ms. Liley shared Ms. Sheldon family history and they had deep roots in Swanton & Morrisville.

The projected cost to renovate this home is close to \$800,000, this is why they have not been able to get a non-profit to take on this project until now. Champlain Housing Trust is willing to do this project with their funding, tax credits and the money Ms. Sheldon left to turn it into a perpetually affordable home. The home could then be sold but remain perpetually affordable. Champlain Housing Trust would own the land, and they intend to restore the property within their means to the historic home it once was.

Mr. Bourgeois asked for clarification on “perpetually affordable” Ms. Liley said because Champlain Housing Trust would own the land the house could be sold at what the federal government considers affordable housing if the buyer will qualify within the income guidelines. The buyer could accrue equity, but not at market rates.

Mr. Bourgeois asked what the town receives for tax revenue currently? The property would be owned by a non-profit, but the home would be taxable.

Mr. Clark asked for clarification on Downtown Designation, and if there would be any restrictions on what can be done with the properties. Ms. Liley shared the state’s definition and there are no restrictions.

Mr. Clark said it is his understanding the Town & Village need to approve this change?

Mr. Sheets said legally that may not be true but in 2017 both governing bodies approved the change, and since both boards are together tonight it make sense. Ms. Liley said in 2017 both boards separately sent letters approving the amendment. Ms. Liley said the timeline is very tight and they need to get this amendment in by July 1st, so they can apply by August 1st for the tax credits. Ms. Liley said this is the first partner for the project they have found in 5 years. Ms. Moore stated that the conditions of the guardians deed the property must go to a non-profit.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the expansion to the Village Designation Area, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

Mr. Paxman made a motion to approve the expansion of the Village Designation Area, seconded by Ms. Kelleher. Motion carried.

2. Swanton Block Party

Ms. Kelleher shared an update on the Swanton Block Party scheduled July 26th 5-8pm.

Ms. Kelleher said they have the bounce house lined up, band, banners are ordered. The “Downtown Bucks” will be given to the first 100 people who go to the Chamber of Commerce booth. These can be used at the downtown business. Ms. Kelleher said the businesses are on board they just need to figure out how they will process them with their books, but they’ll figure that out after. Ms. Kelleher told Mr. Fournier as soon as she knew if the band needs an equipment trailer, she will let him know. Swanton Village Public Works will block off the square, leaving outlets if trucks miss the signs for detours.

3. Promote Swanton Program

Mr. Fournier shared an update from a meeting he had with Ms. Draper, Mr. Paxman, Ms. Darci Benoit, and himself. Everyone agrees they need to promote themselves more, especially with the LVRT.

Ms. Draper shared some books, flyers, and pamphlets; there is very little to promote Swanton in them. Ms. Benoit has been working with local businesses owner to have a larger ad in the Discover Northwestern Vermont, this is put out by the same media group that published the St. Albans Messenger. Ms. Draper shared how well other areas and communities advertise. Ms. Benoit has been working hard on a proposal she will share soon. Swanton is open for business. Ms. Draper shared, an amenities guide she has from another community. Ms. Draper has had a youth intern working with her to view it from a youth’s perspective. Ms. Draper thinks if they did this collectively as the Town & Village to promote their amenities more they could do more. This could help support downtown businesses. Ms. Draper shared the town of Bethel’s guide as an example that could be done on the website or in a printed form. This could be a great resource for people who live in Swanton and people coming to visit know where to go for what. For example, if an annual update was sent to people with their tax bills or utility bills, they would know what’s happening each month.

Mr. Fournier said there are a lot of groups in Swanton trying to promote. Mr. Fournier said having a member from each board involved and shared updates back to their boards, coordinate things and hopefully move things along faster. Other communities are doing an excellent job, Swanton can. Ms. Draper said there are grant funds available.

Ms. Kelleher said they have missed the date to publish with O’Rourke Media today, what if the two boards put together a brochure to get out to people? They could work on it together and fund it together. Mr. Fournier said this is what they need to do to get it out there, anything created could be used not only for the rail trail but all of Swanton.

Mr. Winchester shared an app that St. Albans uses to share dining, shopping options, everything is linked together. Very user friendly for people to use.

Mr. Fournier asked how they can make the website they have do more for them.

Mr. Clark said they are interested in working together with the Village to promote Swanton on the web, brochure. Ms. Draper said she had started a template with a lot of this information.

Mr. Paxman said he likes where this is going but is concerned that he does not want it to be the same 4-8 people that are on every other committee in the Town & Village. Mr. Paxman says an app would be a game changer bringing people into Town. Mr. Paxman honestly thinks they should consider hiring a marketing person for the Town & Village of Swanton who can take the lead on this. Go to all the locations & businesses and move this forward. This will be money well spent. Mr. Clark said he sees this as the group sitting down and suggesting what they think they should move forward with, the group shouldn't need to do everything, they should make suggestions/recommendations. Mr. Paxman said they should still consider part-time/full-time marketing for the future. Mr. Clark asked if that's the group's recommendations. Mr. Fournier said he agrees, and that they need to get other partners involved. This group could get together with what could be done and the cost to present back.

Mr. Fournier made a motion that the Swanton Selectboard will commit to the Promoting Swanton program, to at least one Selectboard Member to be on the board, commit to use in house resources to promote the program, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Mr. Paxman made a motion that the Swanton Village Trustees will commit to the Promoting Swanton program and commit to one Swanton Village Trustee to be on the board, seconded by Mr. LaBombard. Motion carried.

Ms. Kelleher said it can only be one Trustee or they would have a quorum.

Mr. Paxman made a motion to appoint Ms. Kelleher as the Swanton Village Trustee representative to the Promoting Swanton board, seconded by Mr. LaBombard. Motion carried.

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to appoint Mr. Fournier & Ms. Draper as the Swanton Selectboard representatives to the Promoting Swanton board, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

4. Any Other Necessary Business

Mr. Fournier said he was approached by someone with a concern regarding the truck route during the upcoming bridge closure. Mr. Fournier said they are concerned with the ability to turn right with a 53' trailer from route 7 onto Beebe Road. Mr. Fournier suggested moving the stop line back on Beebe Road.

Ms. Kelleher said during the meeting on Monday they discussed that they would be adding stop signs on Route 7 at Beebe Road, the stop signs on Beebe Road are on a Town road they cannot move that. This intersection will become a 3-way stop.

Mr. Clark said the concern can be shared with Public Works; they are in charge of the signs. Mr. Garrett said TAC (Transportation Authority Committee) also said they have concerns about trucks being able to turn on Robin Hood Drive from Route 7, Turn off Robin Hood Drive onto Route 78. Mr. Garrett said trucks turning off Beebe Road should have to turn right on Route 7 towards St. Albans, traffic does not follow the zipper traffic rules.

Mr. Clark suggested someone get in touch with a local truck driver with a 53' trailer and drive this route to see if there are any problems. Mr. Clark said the state has approved the signage for the detour. Mr. Sheets said yes, the State of Vermont has approved the signage for this detour to include turning radius' at intersections, but they will be happy to have a truck drive the route.

5. Adjourn Joint Meeting

Mr. Paxman made a motion to adjourn the Village Trustees meeting at 6:50 pm, seconded Mr. LaBombard. Motion carried.

1. Minutes

a) Regular Selectboard Meeting of June 4, 2024

Mr. Fournier made a motion to approve June 4, 2024, regular Selectboard meeting minutes as written, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

2. Public Comments

None

4. Law Enforcement

a) Swanton Animal Control

Mr. Savage said he does not have a May report from Mr. Benson because he is out of town.

Mr. Hemenway shared he has been informed about one dog bite incident on June 13th. The person did seek medical attention, the animal is vaccinated but not registered. Mr. Hemenway said the animal had been previously registered just not this year. Ms. Fournier said they had not been in yet. The individual who was bitten did not want to pursue anything because they did go on their property and there were signs on the fence.

5. Expenditures

a) General Orders

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the General Orders for 5/22/24 to 6/17/24 in the amount of \$42,216.18, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

b) Highway Orders

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to approve the Highway Orders for 5/22/24 to 6/17/24 in the amount of \$51,409.86, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

c) Library Orders

No Library orders.

d) Highway/General Payroll Orders

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the Highway/General Payroll Orders for 5/22/24 to 6/17/24 in the amount of \$35,821.56, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

e) Library Payroll Orders

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Library Payroll Orders for 5/22/24 to 6/17/24 in the amount of \$9,006.62, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

f) Special Orders

No Special Orders.

6. Highway Department

a) Highway Report

Mr. Clark shared the paving has been completed and they should receive the bill soon.

Mr. Clark said they did a good job. Mr. Clark said at the last meeting they discussed a second bid for road stripping, he has received the second bid, and it was higher at \$.24 a foot. They will go with the less quote of \$.22 foot approved.

Mr. Clark said they are working on mowing, tree removal and some routine culvert work.

Mr. Fournier asked if when they strip South River Street with the yellow center line will they do the white line? Mr. Clark said yes Swanton Village agreed to strip it at their expense. It is a class 2 highway, and the State will do the double yellow line.

b) Maple Grove Estates, road takeover request

Mr. Clark was contacted by Mr. Norris with his request to the Town of Swanton to take over the second section of the Maple Grove Estates.

Mr. Norris passed out information with the number of homes, grand list, highway budget and highway property taxes paid by Maple Grove Estates residents.

Mr. Norris said the first part of Maple Grove Estates was taken over by the Town of Swanton in 2006, they are now requesting the Town of Swanton take over the second section (.20 of a mile). The developer requested it in 2018 and the request was denied.

Mr. Norris said the total value of the homes in Maple Grove Estates currently is \$8,698,100 as of 2022. Mr. Norris stated they are currently paying roughly 1.5% of the Highway budget and there are roughly 10 more homes to build.

Mr. Norris says the road is built to the A76 standard and the right-of-way exists for the Town to take the road over. The developer will apply the topcoat when the Town commits to take the road over as a Town road.

Mr. Clark said he has been up into the development and the road looks to be in good shape but cannot tell just by looking what the base is like. The road has had a lot of construction traffic on it. Mr. Clark asked Mr. Norris about the stormwater permits related to the second section. The Town is working with the state regarding another development, this would need to be figured out before they could ever take over that section of the road. Mr. Norris said as far as he understands it is a low-risk permit. Mr. Clark is more concerned about the changes required vs the annual cost. This all needs to be addressed. Mr. Parah said he was told it is currently in review. Mr. Clark said the homes are assessed at full property value and they are not getting a discount due to being on a private road. Mr. Clark said he has spoken with Mr. Jim Pratt, and they have not lowered the land assessments. Mr. Clark said he has spoken with the road foreman, and he is fine if they continue to plow to the second cul-de-sac as they are already up there. Mr. Bourgeois asked how many requests they have received in the last 5 years for developments to be taken over as Town roads. Mr. Norris said he reviewed all Selectboard minutes since 1999, he saw 3-4 requests since 2018 and the board had various reasons why they denied the request. Mr. Clark said he remembers a previous road and it was not to the Town specs, he has made a list of private roads in the Town and went to look at them and most of them are not to their standards so it's not an option, they would need work to come up to their standards. Mr. Parah said the bus does not go up to their section either because it's a private road, he requested they make a motion with their requirements to move forward.

Mr. Bourgeois asked how many homes will be in the development once it's completed. Mr. Norris said 29.

Mr. Fournier said its going to be hard to say no to the next development, there all in the same situation as far as tax generation. Mr. Clark said the Selectboard needs to work with the Development Review Board and have that developer come the Selectboard for a commitment then, it will be on record.

Ms. Draper is fine with the Town taking the road over her only concern is to make sure the Towns interest is protected for the storm water permit; due to the issues the Town has had with other developments.

Mr. Fournier made a motion that the Town of Swanton would take over the second section of Maple Grove Estates (.20 of a Mile) under the following conditions:

- **The developer has the topcoat of paving put on the road**
- **The developer pays for core testing to ensure the road is built to A76 standards**
- **The developer pays all legal fees the Town will incur**
- **The Town of Swanton will have in writing the approved storm water permit plans and will not incur a large cost to the Town of Swanton.**

Seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

Mr. Savage said there are also renewal fees each year for storm water permits also, they can find out the details.

c) TAC Report – Harold Garrett

Mr. Garrett came before the board to share that TAC has concerns about the bridge work and detour as well.

Mr. Garrett said at their May meeting TAC had a representative shared information on blacktop and how they are paving roads now. This gives insight into how they are projecting costs and how there can be price differences. One example of cost cutting is the spray they are applying before lying down on the pavement. Mr. Garrett said they were told they can be given spec numbers for higher traffic areas.

Mr. Garrett said the State of Vermont has taken away some of what TAC can do with their recommendations.

Mr. Garrett said they are working with landowners on the rail trail to build area for portlets in Sheldon.

Mr. Garrett says they don't have a start date for the redesign of route 78 yet, they are still working with landowners for rights-of-way.

Mr. Garrett shared a list of current state highway projects. Mr. Garrett shared his concern for the interstate bridges. Mr. Clark suggested reaching out to representatives for inspection reports.

Mr. Garrett shared they state is in the design process for redesigning exit 19.

7. Old Town Business

a) LVRT update

Mr. Clark said he received the final design paperwork for this project today and will share it with the board members. The tentative date for the project to go out to bid is July 17th, with a 3-week bid period. The concrete and asphalt should go in by November. Mr. Clark said most State projects require this work to be done by October 15th, but because this is municipal project they will have more time as long as weather permits.

Mr. Clark said it will need to be advertised in the newspaper.

Mr. Fournier asked what happens if they cannot get a contractor to complete by then? It will follow into the spring, weather dependent, the time frame will be included in the bid package. This project will require the contractor to be pre-qualified with the State.

b) Surplus land update

Mr. Savage said the letter of agreement was signed with the Supervisory Union and Mr. Rowell. The day everyone signs, Mr. Savage sent the request to Mark Day for the survey to be completed. Mr. Day responded saying it would begin in two weeks.

Mr. Fournier asked if Mr. Day would prepare the mylars to take to the Development Review Board? Yes.

c) Fourth Street Update

Mr. Savage said they have received the final report, and it has been forwarded to the State of Vermont and are awaiting their response. The final report did not give recommendations on what to do, just what was found in the soil. Mr. Savage will forward the complete report to the board members.

8. New Town Business

None

9. Community and Economic Development

None

10. Any Other Necessary Business

None

11. Correspondence

None

12. Public Comment (Reprise)

Ms. Draper said she will be traveling to St. Johnsbury Thursday for the 2024 Vermont Walk and Bike Summit, as a representative of Swanton Recreation and to learn more about what amenities Swanton can provide.

Ms. Draper invites the community to Swanton Recreation starting Friday June 21st at 6 pm for the first tournament game of district 3 8-10 softball. These will be hosted until July 1st.

Ms. Draper said tennis in Marble Mill Park begins July 8th-August 12th on Mondays.

Chill (Burton Foundation) will hold a skateboarding clinic on Thursdays beginning July 11th – August 1st.

Corn Fest will be August 10th, there will be a 5k down the Fit & Healthy Trail, LVRT to Waugh Farm Road and back starting at 1pm. More information can be found at SwantonRec.Org

Ms. Draper shared they have a large group of camp counselors to welcome back campers June 24th-August 2nd. Half day programing will be available August 5th-August 9th partnering with MVSD After School. Ms. Draper said the first week they have 65 kids signed up, this is a free week due to a grant provided by the United Way. July camps have an average of 20 campers signed up. They have the staff to accommodate more.

13. Upcoming Events
- a) School Budget Vote – Tues., June 18, 2024 – Polls open 7:00 am to 7:00 pm – Village Complex – Town Offices will be CLOSED.
 - b) Juneteenth Holiday – Wed., June 19, 2024 – Town Offices and Ops will be CLOSED.
 - c) DRB – Thurs., June 27, 2024 – 6:00 pm – Town Offices
 - d) Regular Selectboard Meeting – July 2, 2024 – 6:00 pm – Town Offices
 - e) 40th Army Rock Band Iron Sights- July 3, 2024-Village Green 5pm
 - f) Thursday, July 4, 2024 – Independence Day – Town Offices and Ops CLOSED

14. Executive session (Personnel)

Ms. Draper made a motion to enter executive session at 8:03 pm, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to exit executive session at 8:23 pm, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.

15. Adjourn

Mr. Hemenway made a motion to adjourn at 8:24 pm, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted by
Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant

Received and filed by:

Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk	Date
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