

**MINUTES
TOWN OF SWANTON
SELECTBOARD MEETING
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
In-Person & By Zoom
TUESDAY
July 16, 2024 @ 6:00 p.m.**

Present: Joel Clark-Chair, Earl Fournier, Nicole Draper, Steve Bourgeois-Members, Brian Savage-Town Administrator, Cathy Fourier-Town Clerk, Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant

Absent: Cody Hemenway

Zoom: Brendon Long

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 would like to add under Old Town Business an update on the LVRT project.

Mr. Savage would like to add under Old Town Business an update on Fourth Street property.

Mr. Savage would like to add under New Town Business an update on the library icing.

Mr. Savage would like to add under Community and Economic Development email received from Dominic Cloud regarding the Southern Growth District sewer.

D. Meeting Topics

1. Minutes

a) Regular Selectboard Meeting of July 2, 2024

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the July 2, 2024, regular Selectboard Meeting draft minutes as written, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

Mr. Bourgeois abstained he was absent.

2. Public Comments

Mr. Clark wanted to say so far, the bridge closure has gone well. Swanton Village has done a nice job of maintaining the detour.

Mr. Bourgeois said he has heard the project is on schedule.

Ms. Draper said she travels the detour every day and thinks it has gone well.

Mr. Savage & Ms. Cathy Fournier agreed.

Mr. Fournier said when they go forward with the next project, they will need to do something at Route 7 & Beebe Rd for turning vehicles. Mr. Clark said there are a lot of options they can offer, and suggested board members should make a list of feedback to give Swanton Village.

4. Law Enforcement

a) Swanton Animal Control

Mr. Savage reviewed the animal control report from AOE Jim Benson.

Mr. Fournier asked about a dog being vaccinated? Ms. Cathy Fournier said yes.

Ms. Draper asked about a dog on Blake Commons being vaccinated? That dog often gets loose and goes to the rec field, Ms. Cathy Fournier will find out.

Mr. Fournier asked about the cat that Mr. Benson brought to the vet that needed to be euthanized, was there a bill? No, the vet did not bill the Town, Mr. Benson took the animal to the Vt Dept of Health to be checked for rabies after. The cat did not have rabies.

5. Expenditures

a) General Orders

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the General Orders for 6/18/24 to 7/16/24 in the amount of \$221,350.49, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Mr. Fournier asked what the Maquam Bay Grant was? That is a pass-through grant for the Abenaki of Missisquoi.

b) Highway Orders

Mr. Fournier made a motion to approve the Highway Orders for 6/18/24 to 7/16/24 in the amount of \$507,857.06, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Mr. Clark said a large portion of this is the Paving that came in just under budget, yes. Mr. Fournier asked how many tons they ended up using? Mr. Clark said he would get that for him, Ms. Cathy Fournier gave Mr. Fournier a copy of the invoice. Mr. Fournier wanted to compare the invoice to the bids.

c) Library Orders

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Library Orders for 6/18/24 to 7/16/24 in the amount of \$4,555.23, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

Ms. Draper said the stone was used for the library garden outside and it looks very nice. Mr. Bourgeois asked whom designed it? Looks nice. Ms. Draper said she believed it was Abby's idea that Trustee Kelleher brought to life with a group of MVU students. Mr. Clark said the whole village looks great with the flowers.

d) Highway & General Payroll Orders

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the Highway & General Payroll Orders for 6/18/24 to 7/16/24 in the amount of \$37,351.37, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

e) Library Payroll Orders

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Library Payroll Orders for 6/18/24 to 7/16/24 in the amount of \$8,955.75, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if this is net or gross pay? Ms. Cathy Fournier said this is net pay.

f) Special Orders

Mr. Fournier made a motion to approve the Special Orders for 6/18/24 to 7/16/24 in the amount of \$10,619.01, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Mr. Fournier asked if the Recreation invoice was already approved? Mr. Clark said yes that was the screen door, they hope to begin the windows soon.

6. Highway Department

a) Report

Mr. Clark provided an update on the Highway Department. Mr. Clark said they have engine computer issue with the 2009 Volvo. Mr. Lapan is having this looked at. The Kubota tractor has been overheating but is back running; Mr. Clark said they should consider looking at replacing this in the next year they have had it 11 years. Mr. Fournier asked if that was the lawn mower? Yes, has a bucket also. Did they buy it brand new? How many hours on it's a Kubota should run good. Mr. Clark said he would find out the hours. The engine is starting to have problems. Mr. Bourgeois said not everyone drives it the same either. Mr. Clark said yes, and this doesn't just do with a 1-acre lawn. Mr. Clark said the Highway Dept has done some tree removal. Brake work on the Volvo. Repair to the Mac's clutch. The Highway Dept did help Swanton Village with signage for the detour.

Next week they will change the culvert of Bushey Road, ditch work out in Hog Island, Maquam Shore Road. Continue roadside mowing and tree removal.

Mr. Clark said they have had no movement on the projects lined up with the engineer. Brooklyn Street and Swanton Hill Road. Mr. Fournier asked about easements for Swanton Hill? Mr. Clark said they have not worked on the easements because they are looking at possibly lowering the existing road vs. moving. This would save permitting with wetlands. Tyler said once he gets the reports together, he will present these options to the Selectboard. This would keep one lane open also because there is no other way through.

7. Old Town Business

a) Proposed policy relative to taking over private roads

Mr. Clark said he made the changes discussed.

Mr. Fournier asked if this road construction is A-76 standard, is that where these numbers came from? Mr. Clark said it is part of the adopted Town of Swanton Road standards. Mr. Clark said next year the Town will adjust their standards also. The Town standard does not talk about thickness and should. Mr. Bourgeois asked for clarification. Mr. Clark shared the difference between roads & driveways thickness. Mr. Fournier said if the Town standards don't list the thickness, they should update it now. Mr. Clark said that is if they're building their own roads. Mr. Fournier asked if this is available in the office now? This should be the same as the Town. This will be shared with the Zoning Administrator, and she should stress to the Development Review Board that developers should meet with the Selectboard during the process to see if they are interested in taking the road over.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if guidance is strong enough, or should it be requirements. Guidance will be removed, either way it is the Selectboard sole discretion.

MR. Fournier asked if there is a cost involved to verify the road is built to the standards?

Mr. Clark said, "the owner/developer shall have a licensed engineer provide a letter that states the road meets the requirements listed above before the Town agrees to take over the road". They will need to pay and an engineer to provide a letter, and engineer is not going to sign off on something without checking to protect their reputation/license.

Mr. Fournier wanted to ensure the Town has to verify the cost will be on the developer.

Mr. Clark said it's the Selectboards sole discretion.

Mr. Fournier clarified that the storm water permits for roads will be separated. If the developments and the road are together the Town will not take the road.

Ms. Draper said that is how she interprets it, that they have to be separated permits.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the Town of Swanton Road Take Policy as amended, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

b) Proposed policy on Animal Control dealing with sick or injured cats

Mr. Clark said they discussed this at the last meeting.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the Town of Swanton Policy on Cats, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

c) LVRT Update-Joel Clark

Mr. Clark shared the invitation for bit has will go out Wednesday 7/17/24. On July 23rd there will be a site visit meeting for contractors to view. The planned completion of the project is January 31, 2024. The hope is the recent state flooding will not delay contractors. Mr. Clark said if anyone knew of contractors who would like to bid on the project let him know.

The LVRT was damaged due to recent storms in some areas. Ms. Draper said the LVRT is open from Swanton to Cambridge. The bike transportation shuttle is moving people around closed areas.

d) Fourth Street Update-Brian Savage

Mr. Savage said he checked in with Alex from Atlas Engineering. He did not have any update from DEC.

8. New Town Business

a) Discontinuance of Revolving Loan Fund

Mr. Savage said this had been discussed about six weeks ago. Mr. Savage has had a conversation with the ACCD office about what will need to be done with these loans. Quarterly reports, marketing plan, explanations why people are not applying etcetera. Mr. Savage said the program sounds to be more work than what they would get out of it, Cassie from ACCD said they prefer if the Towns would send the money back so they can use it statewide. Mr. Bourgeois asked if the funds were turned back over would they earmark it for Swanton? No. Mr. Savage said if the board wants to discontinue and return the funds they need a motion to return the funds to the ACCD office plus any interest earned. Mr. Savage has a phone conference with them next Monday.

Mr. Bourgeois said there is too much work around it for \$50,000.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to send the money back to ACCD. There was not a second.

Mr. Fournier said we don't even have the revolving fund. Mr. Savage said yes, they have the funds they have been waiting for them to approve the loan policy. Mr. Fournier asked about the quarterly and annual reports they want for the loans. Ms. Cathy Fournier said the criteria are pretty strict, they need to be under the poverty line.

Mr. Bourgeois said his concern from the start was the confidentiality of these loans. If someone must qualify that information will need to be kept safe and we don't want that responsibility/liability. They will need to collect annual financial statements for the loans from people.

Ms. Draper said it could be a huge incentive to people in the community that are not aware of the funding. Mr. Draper passed out information on how Rutland, Plainfield, Hardwick used these loans. Ms. Draper does not believe discontinuing because reports need to be filed is a disadvantage. If a committee was formed and a process put in place how it is done and handled it could be an advantage to folks in the community. The loan could go hand in hand with tax credits. Ms. Draper encouraged them all to read the information she provided before making a decision to discontinue. This loan came from the Leader Evaporator Grant that was supposed to be an investment into the community. Continuing to have the revolving loan fund no matter how difficult it would be to report they can build a marketing plan as an incentive to Promote Swanton.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if anyone present wanted to sit on a committee to approve loans? Would they feel comfortable sitting on a committee to approve loans without experience?

Ms. Draper said she was never a Selectboard member until she educated herself, she feels she could make a good decision for the community. There are others out there who may have more experience. Ms. Draper feels discontinuing it without exploring the options first maybe passing up a great opportunity for the community.

Mr. Clark said he was not on board when this started but knows a little bit about the Leader Evaporator Grant. Mr. Clark asked if any businesses request any of the money?

Mr. Savage said they had two. One did not qualify due to income; one did not wait for the policy to be approved by ACCD. This was when the Town passed the financial policies. Swanton Village has a different revolving loan fund. Mr. Bourgeois asked if these loans would fall under the new policies? Yes. Ms. Draper said they reach everyone in the Village & Town, for example food truck, home grooming business. Marketing could make it successful. Mr. Fournier said it comes down to Promoting Swanton and this could be in the toolbox. Mr. Fournier said it will be work but if you want to Promote it's going to take work. Mr. Savage said most businesses need more than this loan, Mr. Fournier said yes in farm business has seen small loans like this help them be successfully.

Mr. Savage said originally the Revolving loan was supposed to be \$500,000 not the \$50,000 they have.

Mr. Clark said they should let Mr. Savage contact these communities and find out the success they have had and report back how difficult the loans are. Mr. Savage said the original grant was a HUD grant. Ms. Draper said she has attended fair housing seminars for recreation to increase awareness and education.

b) Basement water situation Swanton Public Library

Mr. Savage said last week heavy rains caused water to go into the library basement thought the wall in the utility closet. Mr. Savage called Mr. Lapan and he put up some signs against the building to get the water away, it worked. They will do the same drainage work they did on the other side to get the water away from the building. Mr. Fournier said they never did gutters on the building? No. Mr. Fournier said they can do the gutters but if you get a lot of snow and ice it will rip them off again.

c) Library Ice update

Mr. Savage said he has contacted Laz Scangas and is waiting for dates to set up a meeting. Mr. Savage has a request out. Mr. Clark said maybe they don't need gutters if they work on the other side.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if they should be looking for another consultant? Laz has been at this a year. He did agree to work on this as time allows but they do not have a contract. He did do the air test and has a lot of work into it to start over. He has not sent any bills except the air testing. Mr. Fournier asked if they should offer a contract to get this going? At this point it doesn't make sense to look for someone else, just need to get this going.

9. Community and Economic Development

a) Email from Dominic Cloud

Mr. Savage shared the email from Dominic Cloud with the board members. The correspondence discussed sewer allocation for the Southern Growth District with the potential to tie Police, Water & Sewer. Mr. Fournier said the interesting thing is tying police, water and sewer.

Mr. Clark said they should not discuss policing tonight. Mr. Fournier said he did put the option out there and they should discuss it.

The sewer would be based on allocation. Mr. Clark said they have not done any groundwork to see what kind of development and the allocation needed. They do not have any engineering or consulting information saying what allocation would be needed.

Mr. Bourgeois said this is a cost that should be incurred by the developer, why are they going down this path when you have no control over the landowners? 100 acres has already been sold and they don't know about PILOT taxes yet. Mr. Clark said this is from a discussion and questions Mr. Fournier recently brought up. Mr. Clark said he agrees a developer needs to pay for this not the Town. Mr. Bourgeois said he was involved with developing lending, and this is what they do. Mr. Fournier asked why St. Albans Town had to make an agreement with the City? It was due to the cost of the annual fee. The City agreed to waive the annual fee if they paid half the police contract. Mr. Fournier said it doesn't guarantee and these things usually always involve intervention of local government to make it happen. The area may have been more of an interest if they knew it was available. Ms. Draper said it was not just business, it could increase the housing stock in the area if they knew they had the support of the Town of Swanton. Mr. Bourgeois asked if they should ask the developer to reimburse the Town for fees? Mr. Fournier said he's not talking about spending money at this time. They have had this discussion with Tim Smith before and he tried to get someone to develop a master plan with no luck. Do they do an RFP for a master plan?

Mr. Bourgeois said they offered to meet with the landowners. No one responded. They are going to sell to the highest offer. They don't control who the landowners sell to. Mr. Fournier said no but the land is more valuable to everyone with these services.

Mr. Clark said part of what Mr. Fournier talked about was meeting with the senators to see what can be done out there, they need help. Mr. Clark said unless they have cooperation with the landowners there isn't anything they can do. Mr. Bourgeois said they had been contacted and no response. Mr. Bourgeois asked how many lots were there?

It's zoned for anything they want to do.

Mr. Clark said what they need is the plans to say what would go where. Mr. Clark said they tried this on another property and was too expensive, so they sold the property.

Mr. Fournier said they just need a consultant of what they would need. Ms. Draper said the landowners may want to talk now that there is more conversation about sewer. Mr. Bourgeois didn't think they would come up with a plan that would work anyway because the landowners had expressed unwillingness to meet and incur expenses. Mr. Fournier didn't agree. Mr. Clark asked Mr. Fournier if he would meet with the landowners and let them know. Mr. Fournier will reach out to them all and see if they will talk.

10. Any Other Necessary Business

None

11. Correspondence

Mr. Savage shared a letter received from VHB on a project Vermont Agency of Transportation is doing along the interstate. They were required to notify the Town.

12. Public Comment (Reprise)

None

13. Upcoming Events

a) Tuesday, July 23, 2024 – Planning Commission – 5:00 pm – Town Offices and Zoom

b) Thursday, July 25, 2024 – DRB – 6:00 pm – Town Offices and Zoom

c) Friday, July 26, 2024 – Swanton Block Party – 5:00 to 8:00 pm In the Square

d) Saturday, July 27, 2024 – 14th Annual Swanton Chamber of Commerce Car Show – 9:00 am – Village Green

- e) Monday, August 5, 2024 – Special Selectboard Meeting – 6:00 pm – Town
Offices and Zoom
- f) Tuesday, August 6, 2024 – National Night Out – Village Green – 5:00 pm

14. Executive session
Not needed

15. Adjourn
**Mr. Fournier made a motion to adjourn at 7:06 pm, seconded by Ms. Draper.
Motion carried.**

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Respectfully Submitted by,
Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant

Received and filed by:

Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk

Date