

**MINUTES
TOWN OF SWANTON
SELECTBOARD MEETING
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
TUESDAY
December 3, 2024 - 6:00 pm**

Present: Joel Clark-Chair, Earl Fournier, Nicole Draper, Steve Bourgeois, Brendan Long-Members, Brian Savage-Town Administrator, Cathy Fournier- Town Clerk, Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant, Chief Matthew Sullivan
Zoom: Suzie Kelleher

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. Cathy Fournier requested to add under New Town Business, signing a New Corporate Resolution.

Ms. Draper requested to add under Old Town Business survey discussion about the Welcome to Swanton Signs.

Mr. Clark requested to add under Old Town Business Library Weatherization RFP.

Mr. Fournier asked to discuss the New Sholan Road to the State Highway garage. This will be added to the next Selectboard Meeting Agenda.

D. Meeting Topics

1. Minutes

- a) Regular Selectboard and Joint Meetings with Village Trustees of November 19, 2024

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Regular Selectboard and Joint Meetings with Village Trustees Meeting of November 19, 2024, minutes as written, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

2. Public Comments

None

3. Law Enforcement

- a) Swanton Police Department

Chief Sullivan came before the board to share November 2024 Incident Analysis.

Chief Sullivan said in November the Swanton Village Police responded to 91 incidents. The top ten incidents were as follows: 24 traffic stops, 23 directed patrols, 5 crashes/property damage, 4 motor vehicle complaints, 4 agencies assist, 4 citizen assist, 3 suspicious person/circumstance, 2 threatening, 2 community outreach, 2 welfare/suicide check. Of the 24 traffic stops 3 tickets and 24 warnings were issued, with 1 arrest of 1 individual receiving 4 charges related to a drug investigation. The Swanton Village Police provided 4.75 hours of additional services.

Chief Sullivan said part of the additional services was the traffic stop with arrest.

Chief Sullivan said officers are working on completing the training required before the year-end.

Mr. Clark asked how illegal drug activity is? Chief Sullivan said he believes there is a downturn since 2022, but there are locations they are keeping close eyes on, both in the Town.

Mr. Bourgeois asked when they identify a location that is selling drugs how long does it take before they can enter and arrest individuals? Chief Sullivan said each case is different with different situations.

Mr. Clark asked if they have had any luck with new applicants? Chief Sullivan said yes, they have two strong applicants they are going to interview. One is from out of State with experience. They would be able to hire both as a level 3 certified officer.

The full-time officer that had requested to go down to part-time has changed their mind and wants to stay full-time.

b) Swanton Town Health Officer

Mr. Savage updated that there were no health-related incidents in November. Mr. Clark said Ms. Suzie Kelleher's appointment has been approved by the Vermont Health Department. Ms. Kelleher said she has received an email about training from them.

4. Highway Department

a) Revised New Road Takeover Policy

Mr. Clark said the board has received the updated Road Takeover Policy in their packets with the recommendations from the last meeting. Mr. Clark said Maple Grove Estates will not come to the board until spring for the Town to take over the 2nd part of the road.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the New Road Takeover Policy as presented, seconded by Mr. Long. Motion carried.

Mr. Fournier asked if it is a legal issue for the Town to maintain a road that is not a Town road? Will the State accept this policy regarding stormwater? Mr. Clark said the HOA would still have to maintain the stormwater permit, the Town would only maintain the road, that's it. Mr. Long said it depends how the State defines the road, is the watershed part of the road? Mr. Clark said they're totally separate permits. Mr. Fournier asked if other Towns are in the same situation with stormwater permits, has VLCT given information? Mr. Savage will send this policy to VLCT legal review to ensure. Mr. Long asked how this policy gets communicated to developers in the future? Mr. Clark said through the Development Review Board's review of site plans, and the Zoning Administrator.

c) Discussion of draft of 2025 Proposed Highway Budget

Mr. Clark said this is the beginning draft. The top numbers for payroll, taxes and insurance because they have not decided on the wage increase yet. Mr. Fournier asked how much the insurance went up? Ms. Cathy Fournier said it is a 9% increase. Mr. Bourgeois asked if that is shopped? Ms. Cathy Fournier said there are only two available to the Town MVP & Blue Cross Blue Shield. MVP is the lower cost plan. Mr. Clark said then the individuals then choose the plan they want. Yes, the cost is based on what plan the employee chooses. Mr. Bourgeois asked for clarification on the draft, 2024 budget, 2024 actual to date, 2025 proposed. Mr. Long asked what the percentage change is? Change from 2024/2025 budgets.

Mr. Clark said the **proposed** increases/decreases are:

Telephone, Uniforms (increase went over in 2024, will shop that around also), stone (decrease for 2025), hot/cold patch (increase), road line painting (increase not getting enough roads), garage maintenance (increase to pave Town Highway parking lot), tree service (increase) stormwater permits(decrease-carry overing \$19,998 form 2024), road improvements (decrease-carry over \$162,000 from 2024 for Swanton Hil) Beautification (increase approved by board), Brooklyn street (not add to 2025, carry over \$35,000 from 2024)

These are all proposed for now. Mr. Clark said once they have final numbers, they may be able to increase the paving budget. Paving of Swanton Hill will come out of that budget once completed. Mr. Long asked why the money was collected if we had not used it? Swanton Hill repair is still permitting taking time, Brooklyn Street Stormwater needs wetlands permit, which is the delay. Mr. Bourgeois asked for a summary, Mr. Clark will have that for the next budget meeting.

Mr. Clark is confident that with this proposed budget the Highway Budget will be level or a decrease in tax rate. Mr. Long asked how many miles they get for road line painting? Mr. Clark said it's roughly \$1,000 a mile, but the State does all class 2 roads as well.

5. Old Town Business

a) Boundary Line Adjustment update

Mr. Savage said the attorneys are still working on this. Mr. Fournier said they are past the 30days? Yes.

b) Fourth Street Property update

Mr. Savage said the engineers are still working on this. Mr. Clark said they had hoped to get approval for the soil testing before frost as well.

c) Correction of New Road name from meeting of November 19, 2024

Ms. Candels said when she brought the road name to the Listers office Mr. Pratt said road gives the idea it goes to somewhere vs drive. Mr. Pratt did speak with the developer, and he likes “drive” better. Ms. Candels said the sign has not been ordered yet.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to change Reeves Road to Reeves Drive seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

d) Library Weatherization update

Mr. Clark said they can move forward with the weatherization of doors, windows and elevator shaft. Ms. Candels has drafted the RFP if everyone agrees we will send it out.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to post the RFP in the newspaper, paid for out of Special Funds, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

Mr. Long asked what the minimum number of bids is? They prefer at least 3.

d) Welcome to Swanton Signs

Ms. Draper put out a Facebook survey and received some interesting feedback. Ms. Draper said she received 97 responses in two weeks as follows: 58.7% graphic design, 24.7% swan logo photo, 7% ariel view photo, 3% village green photo, 2% town hall photo, 1% other options/opinion.

Ms. Draper said there are local artists that may be interested if they go with graphic design. Ms. Draper does not know how that would affect the cost. Mr. Clark said there were also the original photo options. Mr. Bourgeois asked how this survey originated? Ms. Draper said they discussed it at the last meeting.

Mr. Fournier said he’s seen them in other towns, and they look good. Ms. Draper said this could give them the one Swanton look. Some of the feedback was not in support of MVU on the sign, with the majority of it in Highgate. Mr. Long said you are seeing graphic signs in in other communities, and Home of the Thunderbird. Mr. Clark asked, “do they want to put out an RFP for the graphic sign”? Yes. Mr. Fournier said with the graphic sign you can incorporate everything.

Ms. Draper made a motion to put out an RFP for graphic design, seconded by Mr. Long. Motion carried.

Mr. Clark will get the size for the RFP,

6. New Town Business

a) Discussion of Salary Increases for Town Employees for 2025

Mr. Savage said the CPI is not available for November yet, but the average is around 3%. Mr. Bourgeois said the CPI is just a shot in time, that’s why averaging is better. Social Security is giving a 2.5% increase. Mr. Clark said with the increases in property taxes and everything else he’d like to see a 4%-5% increase. Mr. Bourgeois said we cannot balance the budget on the back of employees but be careful. Mr. Clark said he looks at the employees’ salaries, they are not a large part of the Highway budget, larger in the General budget but there are other factors. The CPI is not Swanton or even Vermont specific. Mr. Savage said the Burlington area CPI was 3.5%.

Mr. Fournier asked if they have any options with insurance? Health Savings Plan? Ms. Cathy Fourier said they put \$6,000 a year into an account to offset employee’s deductible. That fund has \$34,000 in it. Mr. Fournier asked if they could raise the deductible on insurance and increase what the Town pays for employees’ deductions that way? Net gain? Deductibles are set by the insurance company; we choose MVP or BCBS and then the employee chooses what plan they want; you cannot tell them which plan they have to take, that’s not legal. Mr. Fournier said the only option they would have would be to increase the amount employees have to pay, currently the employees’ contribution is 16.5%. Mr. Clark said that is set by the Selectboard. Mr. Long said some organizations will incentivize by matching HSA with deductible vs no deductible. Employees have a deductible. The Town has its own HAS with the account. Mr. Long asked if deductibles are covered out of the fund? Yes. Mr. Bourgeois asked if they only

get their deductibles out of the fund? Yes, once an employee hits their deductible for the year, they are responsible for copays. Mr. Long asked why would an employee choose a different deductible plan if it covered? Because depending on what plan they choose determines what they pay for prescriptions, weekly costs, number of visits aloud.

Mr. Fournier said employees are not overpaid, but health care costs are high, and they can only do so much. Mr. Fournier would be included in going with a higher pay raise if they paid more for insurance. Mr. Long asked about open enrollment? If they want employees to make changes for themselves, do they have time? No. Mr. Clark clarified the Town is only offered MVP & BCBS. MVP is cheaper this year. Mr. Clark clarified what Mr. Fournier is suggesting give the employees a large pay increase but increase insurance, essentially a wash. That also doesn't work because not all employees use the insurance. Mr. Bourgeois said you can't give on one side and take it on the other. Mr. Savage said the Village is increasing the employee's contribution to 10% they have the same plan, and Town employees pay 16.5% now. Mr. Bourgeois asked what the Village is looking at for pay increases? 3.5%-3.8% will decide at their next meeting. Mr. Bourgeois said when they had looked at the merger of Town & Village years ago one of the concerns was that Village employees were paid much more than Town employees. Mr. Long said not knowing the amount of the increase in the budget is hard to say either way. Mr. Fournier said for example the Highway budget would not be much, and the insurance is listed separately. Mr. Long asked if unemployment is based on salary? Yes, but also based on you have people apply or unemployment also. Mr. Clark said for example a 4% increase would be \$12,000 in the budget. Mr. Long asked if raises were flat, not performance based? Yes, flat across the board. Mr. Bourgeois asked if they give that raise should they cut in other areas? Mr. Clark said even with that they will come in under last year's budget. Mr. Bourgeois said that's an easy sell we gave employees this but cut in other areas. Mr. Long said at the end of the day you're talking about less than 1% over the budget in all areas with cuts in other areas. Mr. Long said he'd rather be aggressive with the budget and retain people, you lose people if you don't treat people fair, pay a livable wage. Mr. Fournier said it's not just 4% on the Highway, but its General Budget, Library and Recreation budgets. Mr. Fournier asked Ms. Cathy Fournier if they would have a rollover in the General Budget? Yes. 4% is not that much the whole budget. Mr. Savage said they do not have Fire, Police or Rescue budgets yet, he was told by the end of the second week of December. Ms. Draper said Recreation's only increase is salary, they need more staff. Mr. Fournier said they are not offering any new spending this year. Ms. Cathy Fournier said the \$25,000 a year in maintenance is annually as well, so not new this year. Mr. Fournier said we have good employees, and we need to pay them, we are not the leaders in salaries.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to give Town Employees a 4% wage increase for 2025, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried. Ms. Draper abstained as a Town employee.

b) Discussion of Employee Christmas appreciation

Mr. Savage said in 2023 Town employees (15) received a \$150 visa gift card. Mr. Bourgeois said part of that was because them as members would forget there's so employees could receive that amount. That will continue. Mr. Clark asked if that is budgeted? Ms. Cathy Fournier said it comes out of miscellaneous in General & Highway budgets.

Mr. Fournier made a motion for the Town Employees (15) to receive a \$150 visa gift card, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

c) Resignation of Planning Commission Member

Mr. Savage received a letter of resignation from Mr. Ed Daniel, a member of the Planning Commission. Mr. Fournier asked when Ed's term was up, and can they appoint someone? June 2025, and yes. Mr. Savage, in the interest of finishing up the bylaw revisions it would be ideal to fill the seat soon. Mr. Jim Pratt is interested in and agreeable to join the Planning Commission in the short term. Mr. Pratt attends a lot of the meetings currently and sits on the DRB.

Mr. Fournier wants to see the revisions prior to Planning Commission coming to the Selectboard.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to appoint Mr. Jim Pratt to finish Mr. Ed Daniel's term, seconded by Mr. Long. Motion carried.

Mr. Bourgeois asked how long Mr. Daniel has been on the Planning Commission and they need to recognize him for that. Mr. Savage will order a plaque for his service. Mr. Bourgeois noted in Mr. Daniel's letter the importance of an enforcement officer for zoning, which will be part of the update.

d) Status on Zoning By-Law revisions

Mr. Fournier said they Selectboard needs to see the changes prior to the Planning Commission coming to the board for approval. Mr. Savage said the Village Trustees need to have a copy to see prior as well.

Ms. Candels said there is a meeting Monday December 9th and will share that the Selectboard wants a copy of the proposed changes 30 days before they will approve it. Mr. Bourgeois said if they have thoughts they can send them to Mr. Savage.

e) Municipal Corporate Resolution

Ms. Cathy Fournier said the board needs to sign a new updated resolution because the assistant Town Clerk has been added as well as Mr. Long as Selectboard member.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to approve a New Corporate Banking Resolution, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

7. Community and Economic Development

Mr. Savage, they have been busy with zoning. Mr. Bourgeois wanted to mention the new business in Swanton.

Mr. Savage updated that he will be meeting with Mr. Bill Sheets to get the outline of what the Legislature will draft for the new bill. Mr. Fournier requested to see the outline ahead of time.

8. Any Other Necessary Business

Mr. Clark said the Highway crew has been out to plow/sand/salt Friday and Monday to keep the roads safe for buses and commuters.

9. Correspondence

None

10. Public Comment (Reprise)

None

11. Upcoming Events

a) Monday – Dec. 9, 2024 – Planning Commission – 5:00 pm- Town Offices and Zoom

b) Thursday – Dec. 12, 2024 – DRB – 6:00 pm – Town Offices and Zoom

c) Tuesday – Dec 17, 2024 – Regular Selectboard Meeting – 6:00 pm
Town offices and Zoom.

d) Tuesday – Dec. 24, 2024, and Wednesday – Dec. 25, 2024 – Christmas Holidays – Office and Operations Closed

12. Executive Session (personnel)

Ms. Draper made a motion to enter into an executive session at 7:24 pm, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried. Roll Call Vote: Mr. Bourgeois, Mr. Long, Mr. Fournier, Ms. Draper and Mr. Clark all voted Iye.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to exit executive session at 7:39 pm, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Actions Taken:

Mr. Fournier made a motion to increase Ms. Candels salary to \$25 per hour effective immediately, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

Mr. Fournier stated that Ms. Candels will also receive the same 4% increase in January as all Town employees. The board thanked Ms. Candels for all she does for everyone.

Ms. Draper motion to pay the Health Officer \$350 per month, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

13. Adjourn

Mr. Draper made a motion to adjourn at 7:42 pm, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted by
Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant

Received and filed by:

Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk

Date