

MINUTES
TOWN OF SWANTON
REGULAR SELECTBOARD MEETING
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
In-Person & By Zoom
TUESDAY, June 17, 2025, 6:00 PM

Present: Joel Clark-Chair, Earl Fournier, Steve Bourgeois, Nicole Draper, Nicholas Brosseau-Members, Brian Savage-Town Administrator, Cathy Fournier-Town Clerk, Christina Candels-Assistant Town Administrator, Bob Nielson, John Kaczowski, Bob Nielsen, Chris Goulette
Zoom: No Attendance

A. Call to Order

Mr. Clark called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

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

C. Agenda Review

Mr. Clark reviewed the agenda.

Ms. Candels requested to add Proposed Swanton Zoning & Planning Schedule Fee Increases under New Town Business.

Mr. Fournier requested to add a Swan Pond Update under New Town Business.

Mr. Clark requested to move up after Public Comment A.M. Peisch 2023 Town Audit.

Mr. Clark requested moving up Swanton Cemetery after A.M. Peisch.

Mr. Bourgeois said the agenda lists 2023 Town Audit and he thought it should be the 2022 & 2023 Audits. They are discussing 2023. The 2022 Audit was discussed at a previous meeting.

Mr. Savage requested to add authorization to hire an attorney for the FEMA buyout program under Old Town Business.

Mr. Savage stated he received bids from Painting RFP and the Sale of the Plow Truck RFP (late bid), they will be added under New Town Business.

Mr. Savage prepared and RFP for a 4x4 new pick-up truck chassis, will be added under Highway.

D. Meeting Topics

1. Minutes

a) Regular Selectboard Meeting of June 3, 2025

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the Regular Selectboard Meeting Minutes of June 3, 2025, as written, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

2. Public Comments

None

3. 2023 Town Financial Audit performed by A.M. Peisch-Chris Goulette

Mr. Goulette came before the board to review the 2023 Town audit. Mr. Goulette went through the 2023 Swanton Town Audit and overviewed it with the board.

Mr. Goulette said they are finally caught up and plan to have the 2024 audit completed in July.

Mr. Goulette said the Selectboard previously discussed the Town of Swanton should transition to the GASBY financial accounting practices. After discussing this with him it was decided the Town of Swanton is small and does not meet the requirements for this, this would come at a substantial cost to the Town and a complete overhaul/change to the way they operate. The Town Clerk contacted NEMRC, whom they work with, and they agreed this is a much too costly and unnecessary change.

Mr. Goulette said the audit did not uncover any major discrepancies; minor discrepancies were, for example, Recreation payroll entered after-the-fact. This changed effectively in 2025. Another discrepancy is the transfer of the wrong amount from the general fund to the highway fund. This required an after-the-fact adjustment.

They showed a discrepancy in the Cemetery Fund because they are required to report these funds, this discussion discovered that this is the Trustee of Public Money funds not the Cemetery Funds. This fund has no activity, that's why there were no changes.

Mr. Clark asked if there were anything significant notes they needed to focus on? Mr. Goulette said no. The Town of Swanton has very low debt, the only outstanding debt is the Town garage.

Mr. Goulette did note according to the State of Vermont that the pension liability for the Town of Swanton is \$512,576.00. This would only be an issue for the Town if the State retirement system was to fail.

Mr. Clark opened the floor to questions from the board members:

Mr. Bourgeois asked if there were any new pronouncements fourth coming, they should be aware of. Mr. Goulette said no.

Mr. Bourgeois asked what were the civil matters of opportunity mentioned and were they implemented/dual controls? Mr. Goulette said technically financial statements are supposed to be prepared by the Town and they are just reporting on them. The Town does not require the internal auditors to do that therefore A.M. Peisch must show that as a material weakness. It is not cost beneficial to the Town to do so. Therefore this will be mentioned every year for reference. This is usually only done by larger cities and towns who hire an outside CPA to prepare these then they would interpret their findings.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if the Risk Management plan needs to be looked at and reviewed annually? Mr. Goulette said they review it and if there have been no changes that is fine. That would be up to the Selectboard if they want to approve every year. There is no State statute requiring this. Mr. Goulette said they do request any changes to the policy's.

Mr. Bourgeois asked for the funds not included, what were they and what was done? Mr. Goulette said it was the Cemetery Trust Funds. (Trustees of Public Money Funds) and Recreation Payroll need to be added to NEMRC system trial balances. Ms. Cathy Fournier said effective January 2025 the Recreation payroll is done live not after the fact. This will be shown in the 2024 Audit but has been addressed. Ms. Cathy Fournier said She enters the payroll, and the Recreation Commission gives a check for the full amount. Mr. Clark asked if the Recreation Special Funds are confusing? Ms. Cathy Fournier said they send in their trial balances and accounts for review to A.M. Peisch. Mr. Clark said the board is still waiting for them.

Mr. Brosseau asked if the Library Payroll is similar? No, the Library Payroll is done by Ms. Cathy Fournier. The adjustments were made from the correct lines.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if A.M. Peisch was aware of a loan that was taken out? (Swanton Recreation loan for a lawn tractor) That will show in the 2024 Audit.

Mr. Bourgeois says this is a well-functioning office everyone covers and helps each other. Do they need any practice of dual controls? Ms. Cathy Fournier shared how they do dual control/checks in the office between the Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk and Town Administrator. For example, Ms. Cathy Fournier will make a deposit slip and Mr. Savage will take it to the bank. The NEMRC system creates a report every day for comparisons also. (Also noted is the Town Clerk & Assistant are they the only people who can sign checks.)

Mr. Goulette will send examples of dual controls to Mr. Savage he can share with Ms. Cathy Fournier and the Selectboard.

4. Swanton Cemetery Commission- John Kaczkowski

Mr. Savage said they have three of the five members of the Cemetery Commission present this will qualify as an official meeting. (Mr. Savage, Mr. Brosseau & Mr. Kaczkowski)

Mr. Savage called the Cemetery Commission meeting to order at 6:48 pm.

Mr. Kaczkowski came before the board to share plans for the Corporal Leonard Lord roadside marker & dedication planned for April 12, 2026. The marker will be placed at Riverside Cemetery.

Mr. Kaczkowski said they have been working with the Vermont Army National Guard, National Guard Museum and online research they have proceeded with the dedication. The marker and the pole expenses are covered by the State. The dedication on April 12, 2026, is the anniversary of Corporal Lord's death in France.

Mr. Kaczkowski shared the challenge coin they have designed for Corporal Lord.

They have worked with the Vermont Army National Guard, Swanton VFW. They will hold a post reception at the VFW after the dedication.

They have not been able to locate and relatives of Corporal Lord, the last known descendant died in 2024.

Mr. Kaczkowski shared the next steps in preparation.

Mr. Fournier asked if the info is available to post on the website? The Cemetery Commission has a Facebook page, but they will share the info to add to the website.

Mr. Savage closed the Cemetery Commission meeting at 7:00 pm.

5. Law Enforcement.

a) Swanton Animal Control

The board reviewed the report sent in by Mr. Benson. The dog bite listed, the dog is vaccinated and registered. The dog was on his own property.

6. Expenditures of May 21, 2025, to June 17, 2025.

a) General Orders

Mr. Brosseau made a motion to approve the General Orders of 5/21/25 to 6/17/25 in the amount of \$120,825.69, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

b) Highway Orders

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Highway Orders of 5/21/25 to 6/17/25 in the amount of \$54,799.01, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

c) Special Orders

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the Special Orders of 5/21/25 to 6/17/25 in the amount of \$95,118.28, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

Mr. Fournier asked if these are kept track of by location? Yes, Library, LVRT, Recreation, Welcome to Swanton Signs. Ms. Cathy Fournier gave them an updated sheet.

d) Library Orders

Mr. Fournier made a motion to approve the Library Orders of 5/21/25 to 6/17/25 in the amount of \$10,903.51, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

e) Highway & General Payroll Orders

Mr. Brosseau made a motion to approve the Highway & General Payroll Orders of 5/21/25 to 6/17/25 in the amount of \$37,206.68, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

f) Library Payroll Orders

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the Library Payroll Orders of 5/21/25 to 6/17/25 in the amount of \$9,296.40, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

7. Highway Department

a) Monthly Report on Highway Department Matters

Mr. Clark, shared the Highway Department is prepping for paving, have changed a culvert on Sweet Hollow Rd. They have completed the first round of roadside mowing. Today they were notified of a sink hole on South River St., and it has been repaired. Paving is scheduled for August.

b) Discussion of Paving Quote – Maquam Shore and County Road

Mr. Clark said Pike Industries has agreed to do the sections on Maquam Shore and County Rd at the same rate as the Town contract. (\$80.64 per ton)

Mr. Clark said they should request Pike add to the contract this is subject to the Town having the money in hand from the grant awarded by the State to cover 80% of this project. The estimate for these two sections is \$190,874.88.

The Towns portion is \$38,000. That is the balance left in the paving budget.

Mr. Fournier asked if they needed to make a motion for this? Mr. Clark said he feels this is an amendment to the original contract.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if it falls withing the Towns purchasing policy? Yes.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to approve the proposed contract from Pike Industries contingent, State approval of the grant in the amount of \$190,874.88, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Mr. Bourgeois said that included the amount the Town will pay after the grant that is a budgeted item.

Mr. Fournier amended his motion to include Mr. Savage in signing the contract, and the Town agrees to pay their portion after the grant, seconded by Ms. Draper.

Mr. Clark said they are moving forward with Swanton Hill Rd redesign. Both landowners met with Mr. Savage and signed the temporary easements for construction. The work is planned for late July.

Brooklyn St easements are prepared, that work will be done in the Fall when it is dryer.

Mr. Clark said Line-stripping will be done in early September. Mr. Clark has asked the State to hold off painting Maquam & County Rd as they are Class II roads until after they are paved.

Mr. Clark said they are at 153 and counting in trees that in the Towns right-of-way that need to be removed. In 2026 they will increase the budget for these; some will need to be removed by tree service.

Mr. Clark said the State passed a new law requiring signs be posted for bikes to travel on the travel lanes. Many roads have bicycles. They have a budget line item for signs; they will start with busier roads first.

c) New Pick-up Truck RFP

Mr. Clark asked Mr. Savage to put together an RFP for a new 4x4 pick-up truck without the body they would put the box on. The plan is to send this to the area car dealerships to send a proposal.

Mr. Clark said they do not want the plow package; this is to be a work truck not a plow truck.

d) RFP for Plow Truck-Received

Mr. Clark suggested they wait on opening this because they have calls out to dealerships to get accurate value on the truck.

8. Old Town Business

a) Adoption of Updated Purchasing Policy

Mr. Savage provided the new updated Purchasing Policy previously discussed.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to accept the Purchasing Policy as written, seconded by Mr. Fournier.

Mr. Fournier said the Selectboard must approve any borrowing of money that was missed and will be added before the Selectboard signs.

b) Adoption of Whistleblower Protection Policy

Mr. Clark said in reviewing the Policy it mentions "Protected Employee" multiple times but does not give the definition.

The document came from Vermont Leagues of Cities and Towns.

Mr. Fournier asked if it was created specifically for the Towns liability? Mr. Savage said the Ethics Legislation that was passed, this the League came up with to protect Whistleblowers.

Mr. Savage will find out what the definition of a "Protected Employee" is to create this policy.

c) Signing of 2025 Contract for Missisquoi Valley Rescue, Inc.

Mr. Savage said this was agreed upon previously and available for approval.

Mr. Bourgeois asked the MVR agrees with this? Yes.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to approve the contract with Missisquoi Valley Rescue in the amount of \$259,400. With monthly payments listed: \$64,872.47 March 15, 2025, followed by 9 monthly payments of \$21,614.17 due on the 15th of each month

after that ending December 15, 2025, and for Town Administrator Mr. Savage to sign the contract, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

d) Ratification of appointment of Attorney Vaughn Comeau to represent the Town in Tax Sales.

Mr. Savage said this is to follow up from the last meeting. Mr. Savage received clarification that Mr. Comeau is paid based on State Statue and the fees are recovered when the property is sold. The board members agreed via email to move forward. Mr. Savage would like it noted in the minutes.

Mr. Brosseau made a motion to approve using Attorney Vaughn Comeau for tax sales, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

e) Discussion of State Drive

Mr. Savage said State Drive is the new access to the new VTrans location.

Mr. Richard Cummings is developing on Lydias Ridge adjacent and would like to access them via State Drive. Mr. Cummings is currently working with the DRB for approval of this project. Mr. Cummings said he can sell two additional lots if he is able to access via State Drive vs a cul-de-sac. By doing the cul-de-sac it would cost \$200,000 for the lost lots and the cost of the cul-de-sac.

Mr. Savage said the State fully anticipated this, that's why they built it the way they did and they support Mr. Cummings request for an access. Because the State still has the easement it's not just up to the Town, this will take time.

Ms. Candels showed on the map where Mr. Cummings is planning to enter on State Dr. The State will continue to maintain the road, and work on having the easement turned over to the Town.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve Mr. Cummings to contact Lydias Ridge to State Drive pending DRB approval and State approval with no liability to the Town, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

f) Promote Swanton Update & Graphic Design Selection

Ms. Draper said after receiving feedback they have a final design proposal from the graphic designer from Synchronicity. They are now looking for the Selectboards approval to accept this design and move forward with the construction of the new "Welcome to Swanton" signs. Ms. Draper and Mr. Fournier have also been visiting local businesses to share the new revamp of the joint Town & Village website that will include links and information on local businesses. They shared the concept, and the community has embraced the design and is already asking for merchandise with the logo on it. Mr. Fournier noted they visited business Friday and Ms. Candels has already received 6 emails from business with information they want listed for their businesses on the website.

Mr. Clark asked if the Village Trustees have scene the design yet? No.

Mr. Fournier discussed the location ideas for the "Welcome to Swanton" signs the design will go on. Mr. Fournier and Ms. Draper suggested moving one to Lakewood Dr as you come off the Swanton/Alburgh bridge. That discussion can take place once the Village has had a chance to view the design.

Mr. Clark also suggested having the graphic design be the center of the new art board by the VFW with other emblems around it.

Mr. Fournier would like to see this sign where you transition from the Town to the Village.

Mr. Clark will share the graphic design with the company making the new "Welcome to Signs".

Once the Village has reviewed and agrees with the design the Selectboard can approve.

9. New Town Business

a) FEMA Buyout – Hire Attorney Vaughn Comeau

Mr. Savage said there are three properties participating in the FEMA buyout program. Two have accepted the values appraised and are ready to move forward. This has been a two-year process. One would like to move forward now and one next year. The third property owner has not accepted the appraisal.

Mr. Savage said to move forward he needs to hire an attorney for the title work; the deed and Mr. Savage would like to hire Vaughn Comeau. This is all reimbursable expenses with the program.

Mr. Savage will also ask if he is willing to expand more work for the Town.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve Mr. Savage to have Attorney Vaughn Comeau do the work on behalf of the Town for the FEMA buyout program, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

All funds are committed by FEMA.

b) Proposed Zoning Fee Increases

Ms. Candels said she has worked with Amy and has compiled the fees from neighboring towns and compared them to Swanton's.

Ms. Candels gave the board a copy of the proposed increases for their reference. This will be part of the next Public Hearing with the Planning Commission on July 1, 2025. This has been approved by the Planning Commission members.

c) Swan Pond Update

Mr. Savage said they have been working on it this week. Many people have asked what is going on. Neal Speer has stepped up to help move the project forward. It has been done will volunteer labor. The pond will be enlarged, a larger structure, sidewalk and more fencing will all be done with the project.

They have also been cutting down trees in the park as planned.

d) Town Office Painting RFP Received

Mr. Savage said he received one bid for the Town Office painting from Guilmette's Handyman Services.

The bid is for three areas inside the Town Office, remove everything from the walls, paint two coats on the walls, repair the minor ceiling damage in the back conference room.

- Front Entrance, Clerks Office and Kitchen will be \$5,000.
- Board Room, hallway, restrooms and conference room will be \$6,000.
- Listers Office, Town Administrator's Office and Zoning Office will be \$5,000.

The Town will provide the paint, and Mr. Guilmette will provide the materials for painting and repair. The walls will receive two coats of paint.

There will be a \$500 discount if all three areas are done.

The bid is valid for 15 days.

Ms. Fournier said they budgeted \$20,000 in the budget for office maintenance. Only \$810 has been spent to date.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve Guilmette's Handyman Services for all three sections with the discount for a total of \$15,500.00 seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

10. Community and Economic Development

None

11. Any Other Necessary Business

None

12. Correspondence

None

13. Public Comment (Reprise)

None

14. Upcoming Events

a) Thursday – June 19, 2025 – Juneteenth Holiday – Town Offices and Operations
Closed

b) Thursday – June 26, 2025 – DRB – Town Offices – 6:00 pm

c) Tuesday – July 1, 2025 – Regular Selectboard Meeting with Public Hearing with
Planning Commission on Zoning By-Law Update - Town Offices – 6:00 pm

d) Friday – July 4, 2025 – Independence Day Holiday – Town Offices and Operations
Closed

15. Executive session (Legal/Real Estate)

Mr. Brosseau made a motion to enter executive session at 8:01 pm, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to exit executive session at 8:09 pm, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

Actions Taken:
Mr. Fournier made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator Mr. Savage to spend up to \$5,000 to clean up and to secure 33 Fourth St., seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

16. Adjourn
Mr. Fournier made a motion to adjourn at 8:10 pm, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

MOTIONS FOR ENTERING EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION #1: I move **that we find** that we enter executive session for the Selectboard to receive (confidential contract, personnel, Legal or Real Estate) information for which the premature disclosure of it to the public would clearly place the Selectboard & others at a substantial disadvantage.

MOTION #2: I move **that based on our just made findings** that premature disclosure would place the Selectboard & others at a substantial disadvantage, we enter executive session.

Respectfully Submitted by
Christina Candels-Assistant Town Administrator

Received and filed by:

Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk

Date