

**DRAFT MINUTES
TOWN OF SWANTON
SELECTBOARD MEETING**

**Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488**

**In-Person & By Zoom
Tuesday, December 2, 2025**

6:00 pm

Present: Joel Clark-Chair, Earl Fournier, Steve Bourgeois, Nick Brosseau, Nicole Draper-Members, Brian Savage-Town Administrator, Cathy Fournier-Town Clerk, Christina Candels-Assistant Town Administrator, Amy Giroux, Bob Nielson, David Horton, Darci Benoit, BJ Benoit, Kevin Nichols, Bianca Braman, Abigael Gaudette, Becky Rupp

Zoom: No Attendance

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. Candels shared she had a policy to add to the members binders.

Mr. Clark added and email correspondence under Any Other Necessary Business.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if they need to build a reserve account for the culvert on the Barry Rd? Mr. Clark said that it will be part of the Highway budget discussion at the next meeting.

Mr. Savage asked to add a request from the ACO under Any Other Necessary Business.

D. Meeting Topics

1. Minutes

a) Regular Selectboard meeting of November 18, 2025

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the Regular Selectboard meeting minutes as written of November 18, 2025, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

b) Special Joint Meeting with Highgate Selectboard and Swanton Village Trustees of November 25, 2025

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Special Joint Meeting minutes as written of November 25, 2025, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

2. Public Comments

None

3. Law Enforcement.

a) Health Officer Report

The board reviewed the Health Officers' report with no questions.

4. Highway Department

Mr. Clark said all vehicles are in good running order.
The sand and salt storage are full.

5. Old Town Business

a) LVRT update

Mr. Clark shared the metal roof is completed. Mr. Clark shared the project came in under budget; the Town has set aside \$145,000 for the match and will come in around \$112,000. The balance can be used for other projects.

Mr. Clark said they will discuss at another meeting what signage can be put up to assist the Police with people who are living in their cars trying to park in the parking lot. Overnight parking is allowed if people are using the trail, but overnight camping/living in your vehicle is not allowed.

b) DRB requests for tablets

Ms. Candels said at the last meeting the DRB discussed the request for tablets and have said they do not want them.

Mr. Clark said in the future they can discuss it if anyone else wants them in the future.

c) Proposed Amendment to Road Takeover Policy

Mr. Fournier said he reviewed other Towns, spoke with contractors, developers and engineers to draft his suggestions to change the policy.

Mr. Fournier feels in the future waiting until the road is complete to core test the road is a way to verify they meet the Town's standards, for example in the Southern Growth District. Working with them as they are building the road is in the best interests of the Town.

Discussed edits are listed:

- Compaction of roads according to AOT, A-76 standards, compaction test requirements, stone size requirements
- Core samples for existing roads.
- Require existing roads to be paved as well as thickness.
- Recording in the Town records if the road was reviewed and built to standards during construction, and sent to the developer (By the Zoning Administrator)
- Addressing concerns during the construction process, recording this will inform property owners in the future.
- Cost of engineering/inspection will be paid by the developer not the Town.
- Zoning administrator will keep files on developments/roads, add this to the Land Use Bylaws
- Zoning Administrator will give developers a copy of the road standards policy.

d) Cash Management Meeting review

Mr. Bourgeois said he wanted to make it very clear that the Town has one of the best teams in New England that run the Town office.

Mr. Bourgeois said a few weeks ago he had a meeting with Ms. Cathy Fournier, Joel Clark, Brian Savage and Barb Toof from Peoples Trust Company to review the Towns of Swanton's cash management accounts/process with the bank.

Mr. Bourgeois has three suggestions:

- Creating a finance committee of the board. They currently have three people with bank experience; this may not always be the case in the future. (Brian, Cathy and Steve all have banking experience)
- Guidelines for management of funds. This is a way to invest money in a high yield account. Document what rates banks give when calling around.
- RFP for the Towns banking every three years. This will ensure the Town is getting the best rate, connected to an index beyond the bank's control. (looking at this after the annual meeting in 2026)

Discussion:

Mr. Fournier asked how often the contract is renewed? Ms. Cathy Fournier said the contract is ongoing and the contract can be broken whenever the Town of Peoples Trust chooses.

Mr. Clark said they are very comfortable with Peoples Trust they are doing a great job.

Mr. Clark said they do not have a lot of local options for banks, Peoples Trust and M&T in Swanton. Peoples Trust does not charge the Town any fees. M&T's fees are unknown.

Mr. Bourgeois said that it would come out in the RFP.

The board discussed what the criteria would look like if they were seeking an RFP.

Mr. Bourgeois said these banks pay taxes, but there are operations available to do remote banking and this doesn't restrict them to banks that are local. Ms. Cathy Fournier said she does that now with Peoples Trust.

Mr. Clark asked with as small as they are and accessible, if they are do they need a finance committee? Ms. Cathy Fournier asked Mr. Savage for his comments on the need for this?

Mr. Savage said he agrees with Mr. Clark that everyone is very accessible, what value it would add to everything they are already doing. Mr. Bourgeois thought it would help educate members of the board with the functions; we could meet as a board every six months. At the end of the day, they are responsible for the Towns funds and understanding how things are handled.

Mr. Brosseau said they do have other conduits like the library and road Forman, it would be adding another committee.

Mr. Bourgeois suggested they have a meeting with the Town Treasurer every six months with the board. Mr. Clark said they meet with her twice a month already, if you have specific questions, they can ask for it to be discussed. They already have that type of visibility. Ms. Draper shared as well as quarterly reporting, there has never been a question Ms. Cathy Fournier has not been willing to answer immediately or find the answer.

Mr. Fournier thinks an RFP is a good idea to see if there is the potential for more income.

6. New Town Business

a) Property Tax Exemption for Veterans Proposal – Mr. Ron Perron

The board reviewed the proposal from Mr. Perron.

Mr. Fournier asked if they have a program in place for veterans now? Yes, disable veterans can receive up to \$40,000 off there assessed value.

Mr. Savage said Mr. Perron is proposing a \$100 tax credit for all honorably discharged on the total tax due.

Mr. Clark said as a veteran himself, he feels this is nice but there are others (police, fire fighters, emt's) who have served there community well. They have programs to honor veteran's hometown heroes' banners and flags in the park.

Mr. Clark said he is retired and veteran and doesn't think this is something the Town should take on.

Mr. Fournier thought veterans over 65 might be a good idea but across the board it is too much to try and do.

Mr. Brosseau, Mr. Bourgeois and Ms. Draper agreed.

The board discussed this proposal and did not move forward with this plan.

b) Swanton Listers - RFP for Re-appraisal

Mr. Horton came before the board to share how the State has notified the Town they are required to do a reappraisal.

Mr. Horton shared the Towns Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) and Coefficient of Dispersion (COD).

The Town of Swanton has not had a reappraisal since 2007.

The State is trying to streamline reappraisals and have Towns have one every six years.

Mr. Horton shared a list 14 State approved appraisal firms, 7 of them are located in Vermont.

Mr. Horton shared an RFP for reappraisal they have drafted for the Selectboard to review.

Mr. Horton said the last reappraisal was done by NEMRC. Most firms are 4-5 years out for a reappraisal.

Mr. Clark asked if they had checked VLCT for a draft/template for and RFP? No, they used other towns and drafted their own.

Mr. Clark asked what the estimated cost will be? Mr. Horton believes it will be between \$500,000 & \$600,000.

The Town of Swanton currently has over \$600,000 in an account for reappraisal, this is added each year from the State.

Mr. Clark asked Mr. Horton how the approval process for the RFP would work? Mr. Horton said the lister support this RFP and would seek the Selectboards approval of who they choose to do the reappraisal. The Selectboard would need to make a motion to approve the expense of the money.

The listers will review VLCT website for an RFP and come back to the Selectboard.

c) 2026 Budget presentation – Swanton Public Library

Ms. Rupp and Ms. Gaudette came before the board to share the Swanton Public Library proposed 2026 library budget.

The request is in the amount of \$79,400 for operation, The payroll and benefits are a separate Town budget. They do not budget for grants or trust income because that is unknown. Grants are targeted to programing. Line items they plan to go over budget they use the trust income to cover the overage.

d) Amended Resolution relative to Special Funds Account

Mr. Savage shared they signed a resolution of the ARPA funds in 2024 to be used for workforce retention (salaries/benefits), and it would be used as Special Funds. The federal government has come up with other guidelines and this resolution for 2023 & 2024.

VLCT has given this suggestion and has been approved by A.M. Peich who does the Towns audits.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to adopt the resolution of the America Rescue Plan Act for 2023 & 2024, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

e) Line of Credit Renewal

Ms. Cathy Fournier said it is time to renew their line of credit. Ms. Cathy Fournier contacted 5 banks and 2 responded with rates.

Peoples Trust 2.25% & M&T Bank 5.50%

The Town maintains a \$500,000 line of credit; this has not been needed with the Special Funds but still needs to be available.

This is a fixed rate.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to renew the line of credit with Peoples Trust Company for the line of credit, allowing the chair of the Selectboard to sign, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

f) Town Clerk & Treasurer from elected positions to appointed

Mr. Clark said this was proposed by Mr. Bourgeois.

Mr. Bourgeois said this is for discussion purposes, and if it was an appointed position Ms. Cathy Fournier would have the job, he is not dissatisfied with her.

Mr. Bourgeois thinks going forward, going from electing the Town Clerk & Treasurer to appointing them, because of the Town's needs. Mr. Bourgeois wanted to know how many Town Clerk & Treasures as elected or appointed in Vermont.

Mr. Savage will find out, he believes the majority of them are elected.

Mr. Bourgeois thinks going forward they should find out more information.

Mr. Brosseau asked if there have been contested elections in the last 50 years? When Ms. Cathy Fournier was elected that was a contested election.

Mr. Fournier said he doesn't see the need for the change unless Ms. Cathy Fournier is ready to retire. She said she is not.

Mr. Brosseau said there are more pressing positions they could look at, for example, the listers. The Selectboard agreed.

The Selectboard will discuss the lister positions with them at the next meeting.

Mr. Brosseau said other Towns have struggled to find someone to run for the Town Clerk, this could be an issue when Ms. Cathy Fournier retires.

Mr. Clark wanted to reiterate in his 10 years of working with Ms. Cathy Fournier he has always had great results and make it very clear to people there is nothing wrong with the Town Clerk and Treasurer duties.

g) Town Administrator position to Town Manager

Mr. Bourgeois requested this to be added as well.

Mr. Bourgeois said they have a very good Selectboard who puts in a lot of time between meetings and it's becoming more difficult to attract people to spend the time. Mr. Savage does a great job as Town Administrator and allowing the Town Administrator to do the job more efficiently they should consider moving to a Town Manager taking some of the Selectboard members' duties. Mr. Bourgeois said he did not know Mr. Savages retirement plans, but he is a valuable asset to them. Going forward they may need to enhance their position.

Mr. Savage said when he was hired, he would do the job for a minimum of 5 years, next year at this time. Mr. Savage said he would not expect someone to come into the job on January 1st. Mr. Savage said he does not intend to retire before July 1, 2027, he enjoys the job. Ultimately the change to Town Manager form of government would need to be approved by the voters.

Mr. Bourgeois asked how many towns this size have a Town Manager vs. Town Administrator. Mr. Savage will find out.

Mr. Bourgeois said Ms. Candels is a valuable player all over the building and we don't want to discredit what she is doing either.

Mr. Clark said this is something to research and plan after elections.

h) Vote on Salary Increase for Town Employees for 2026

Mr. Savage said this was discussed at the last meeting, but it was not voted on.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to set the salary increases at 3%, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried. Ms. Draper abstained.

i) Christmas Employee Appreciation

Mr. Savage said in the last couple of years they have given employees \$150 gift cards and they are very appreciative.

Mr. Fournier said they have a good group of employees and suggests \$200. Other companies give sizable bonuses.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to give \$200 gift cards to Town employees, same positions as last year, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

7. Community and Economic Development

a) Update on Promote Swanton

Mr. Fournier said they are still waiting for Ecopixel to finish the update.

Mr. Fournier suggested having the Recreation Director be the point person to send information on community events to get them to Ms. Candels to get it listed.

Mr. Clark asked that that be approved by the Recreation Commission first.

8. Any Other Necessary Business

a) Email regarding Police Contract

Mr. Clark said they received an email from the Village requesting changing the Police budget/contract to be effective January 1st. Mr. Clark said he doesn't think that is a good idea because the budgets are not approved until Town Meeting Day. The Town would be on the hook for that amount even if the budget didn't pass.

Mr. Savage will let the Village know the will continue with the same schedule.

b) ACO request for a safe dog trap

Mr. Savage has a request from Mr. Benson for the Town to pay 1/6th of the cost of a dog trap. (Mr. Benson serves 6 towns as ACO) He frequently has requests for help finding their lost dogs.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to approve up to \$100 towards the trap as long as the other Towns agree to pay 1/6th, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

Mr. Savage showed the board a picture of the trap.

Ms. Draper asked who will incur the cost of a dog if it is trapped? Mr. Savage will find out. He believes this is for people searching for their lost dogs.

9. Items for Regular Selectboard Agenda of December 16, 2025

Highway Budget, General Payroll Budget, Library Payroll Budget

Mr. Savage will reach out Swanton Rec for their budget, when they can come.

10. Public Comment (Reprise)

Mr. Brosseau shared Christmas in the Park this past weekend was great and thanked everyone who participated.

Mr. Bourgeois shared the Governor has put out the projected school tax increase at 12%, shared the importance of keeping this in mind while they create budgets.

Mr. Fournier shared at the TAC meeting they discussed transportation funding, and it appears the Town funds will be the same, maybe a little more.

Mr. Savage said they are expecting more money for transportation from the Federal Government.

12. Upcoming Events

a) Tuesday – December 9, 2025 – Planning Commission – 5:00 pm – Town Offices

b) Tuesday - December 16, 2025 – Regular Selectboard Meeting – 6:00 pm – Town Offices

13. Adjourn

Mr. Brosseau made a motion to adjourn at 7:54 pm, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted by

Christina Candels-Assistant Town Administrator