

MINUTES
TOWN OF SWANTON
SELECTBOARD MEETING
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
In-Person & By Zoom
Tuesday, December 16, 2025

Present: Joel Clark-Chair, Steve Bourgeois, Earl Fournier, Nicole Draper, Nick Brosseau-Members, Brian Savage-Town Administrator, Cathy Fournier-Town Clerk, Christina Candels-Assistant Town Administrator, Bob Nielsen, Ron Underwood, David Horton, Betsy Fournier, Kevin Nichols, Chief Matthew Sullivan
Zoom: Sharon Percy

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 MVSD Order to the agenda.

Mr. Savage requested to add Library Elevator update under Old Town Business.

Mr. Savage requested to add Town Office energy audit and Central Dispatch billing change under New Town Business.

D. Meeting Topics

1. Minutes

a) Regular Selectboard meeting of December 2, 2025

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the Regular Selectboard meeting minutes of December 2, 2025, as written, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

2. Public Comments

None

3. Law Enforcement.

a) Swanton Police Department

Chief Sullivan came before the board to share November 2025 incident analysis. In November Swanton Village Police responded to 81 incidents in the Town.

The top 10 incidents were as follows: 24 traffic stops, 18 directed patrols, 6 suspicious person/circumstances, 4 agencies assist, 3 crashes/property damage, 3 citizen assists, 2 motor vehicle complaints, 2 trespassing, 2 custodial interference and 2 motorist assists. Out of the 24 traffic stops 2 tickets and 22 warnings were issued. No arrests. All tickets and warnings were associated with traffic stops.

Swanton Village Police provided 40 hours of additional services. This number increased due to the availability of a part-time officer assisting NUSI (Northern Unit for Special Investigations) with their case load. This is 100% refunded by a grant.

Chief Sullivan said the grant will cover up to \$20,000.

Chief Sullivan said they have finished up use of force training for the year.

They do have one full-time officer leaving at the end of the year. They have four officers in the pipeline. Two are certified officers and two have no law enforcement experience at all, all very strong candidates.

Mr. Brosseau shared he had seen the story on the news recently regarding Operation Stone Garden. Chief Sullivan shared how the staff can participate and is refunded 100% by the government and the equipment received.

The board discussed traffic stops and drug investigations.

Mr. Clark asked what the Town can do regarding people living out of their car at the LVRT in regard to an ordinance. Chief Sullivan suggested a loitering ordinance or researching Burlington's overnight camping ordinance for the Town to draft its own ordinance.

b) Swanton Animal Control

The board reviewed the report, requesting follow-up on listed unlicensed dogs.

5. Highway Department

a) Barry Road culvert funding

Mr. Clark shared two proposals listed below for options to pay for the culvert listed:

Barry Road Culvert Replacement (\$700,000 +/- for construction)

Still working funding sources

1. If district structural grant approved:

- a. \$160,000 from grant (Town is currently 21 out of 32)
- b. \$350,000 from 2026 budget (less paving, roads in very good shape, can also apply for class II highway grant for additional paving needs)
- c. \$90,000 from uncommitted special funds
- d. \$100,000 from Rec facility project, pay back in 2027.
 - i. Leaves plenty of money to complete rec building design
- e. Could be completed in 2026.

2. Other AOT sources

- a. If federal funds, timeline similar to LVRT project
- b. Have to redesign, select design firm.
- c. Grant in 2026, design in 2027, NEPA, permits and ROW 2027 / 2028. Construction in 2029-2030
- d. Increase in project costs of \$150,000.

The board discussed both options. Mr. Bourgeois asked if this is a safety issue? Mr. Clark said in his opinion there is a possibility it could collapse at some point; it is in bad shape. The Town has the design completed with the State having signed off if they were to go with option #1.

Mr. Fournier asked how much money is in the capital fund for trucks? \$106,747.61 in the truck/equipment fund. This was approved as an equipment fund.

Mr. Fournier said if there was major flooding up there it could take the culvert/road out.

Mr. Clark said that's why the State wants to go with a 35' culvert.

No decision was made.

Mr. Clark said the new truck is down due to the DEF system and is under warranty.

6. Expenditures

a) General Orders

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve the General Orders of 11/19/25 to 12/16/25 in the amount of \$252,961.73, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

b) Highway Orders

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Highway Orders of 11/19/25 to 12/16/25 in the amount of \$147,679.93, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

c) Library Orders

Mr. Brosseau made a motion to approve the Library Orders of 11/19/25 to 12/16/25 in the amount of \$2,450.57, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

d) Highway & General Payroll Orders

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Highway & General Payroll Orders of 11/19/25 to 12/16/25 in the amount of \$48,007.87, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried.

e) Library Payroll Orders

Mr. Brosseau made a motion to approve the Library Payroll Orders of 11/19/25 to 12/16/25 in the amount of \$9,953.53, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

f) Special Orders

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve the Special Orders of 11/19/25 to 12/16/25 in the amount of \$1,509.39, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

g) MVSD District Orders

Mr. Brosseau made a motion to approve the MVSD District Orders in the amount of \$9,760,558.05, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

7. Old Town Business

a) Swanton Listers - RFP for re-appraisal

Mr. Horton and Mr. Nichols came before the board to share they had contacted VLCT since the last meeting. VLCT did not have a template or a draft process, but did send them a sample of another town. They have not made any changes to the draft RFP. They are ready to send it out. They will send the RFP to the list of approved appraisers from the State of Vermont.

The listers will include at least 1-2 Selectboard members in the review process. The current estimate is 2029-2030 for reappraisal.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to put the RFP out as presented at the last meeting, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

b) Update on Fourth Street Environmental Work

Mr. Savage spoke with Erik from Atlas, and they are still working on the final report. This will be forwarded to Montpelier once it is completed.

Mr. Clark said they will get the final report with a proposal/final plan for the site. Mr. Savage said if he doesn't have it after the holidays he will contact him.

C) Library Elevator Update

Mr. Savage said he has scheduled Las Scangas and the engineer to meet at the library to view elevator pit on 1/6/26 at 10 am. The elevator company will be there to lock the elevator out of service at that time. The library has been notified the elevator will be out of service for a limited time.

Mr. Fournier asked where Alliance is? They are on hold until the engineer reviews the elevator and determines why they have so much water in the elevator shaft.

8. New Town Business

a) 2026 Budget Presentation – Swanton Recreation

Ms. Betsy Fournier and Mr. Underwood came before the board to share Swanton Recreations 2026 budget.

Ms. Betsy Fournier said their anticipated ask for 2026 is \$254,992.00 with an increase of 6.39%. Noted changes are:

- Little League is no longer registering through Swanton Rec. (maintenance staff will still need to maintain the fields and line the fields).
- Additional funding for LVRT trailhead maintenance, new program, cellphone stipend, vehicle service.

Mr. Clark suggested using the excess allocated Special Funds left from the construction of the LVRT trailhead for the 2026 maintenance, removing this from the Rec budget. This will also help with budgeting next year to know the true costs.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to remove the \$4,500 for LVRT maintenance from the Rec budget for 2026, the cost to operate the trailhead and will be paid out of the leftover Special Funds already allocated for the LVRT trailhead, seconded by Mr. Brosseau. Motion carried. Ms. Draper abstained. Motion carried.

Mr. Fournier asked about the line for vehicle maintenance. Ms. Betsy Fournier said that it would be just for maintenance. They would purchase the vehicle from the already appropriated ARPA/Special Funds for Swanton Rec. The purchase of a vehicle has not been approved yet.

Mr. Clark asked if they would have a carryover? They will not know until they reconcile the November statement. Ms. Draper said they will have a carryover.

Mr. Fournier suggested using the carryover for the purchase of a vehicle vs using the Special Funds.

Mr. Bourgeois would like to see a decrease for the taxpayers.

Ms. Betsy Fournier said they will come to the next meeting with the budget.

b) 2026 Highway Budget Presentation

Mr. Clark shared the Highway Budget, noted changes are:

- Culverts/signs will be separate line items.
- Decrease paving from 450k to 200k (for Barry Rd culvert line, can be moved if they don't proceed in 2026)
- Garage maintenance decreased as the parking lot was paved this year.
- Decrease parts/supplies by 5k.
- Increase tree service from 12k to 18k.
- Carry over from Swanton Hill project to be added to Barry Rd culvert line item. (\$56,469)
- Barry Rd culvert line will be 300k.
- Insurance costs are not known yet.

Mr. Clark said this budget resulted in a 3.63% decrease.

Mr. Clark said he reviewed the Town Report from 2020, and the Highway budget was 900k, a 30% increase in 5 years. Showing a decrease in the budget this year and next is good. Swanton roads are in good shape. The cost of paving has increased a lot, which is why it has increased so much.

Mr. Clark asked if Beautification needs the 4k in the budget? Mr. Fournier said they are suggesting that it be added to the Promote Swanton budget in the General Budget by removing it from the Highway and the Village. Mr. Fournier said in the Promote Swanton budget they propose 9k for beautification.

The Promote Swanton budget was not shared prior to the meeting to be included in the General Budget; Mr. Savage printed it for them to review.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if 50k into the Capital Reserve is enough? Yes.

With proposed LOT and school increase, Mr. Clark suggested leaving it and showing a tax decrease.

c) 2026 General Budget & General Library Budget Presentation

General Budget:

- Health Insurance will need to be adjusted for a decrease in Health Insurance. (Family plan going to a single for one individual)
- Building insurance is not known yet.
- Franklin County tax is not known yet.
- Appropriations: Northwest Access is requesting an increase from \$2,500 to \$4,000. Vermont Center from Independent Living is asking for an increase from \$500 to \$1,000. They sent a letter with information on what they assist with people in Swanton.

Ms. Draper shared the work Northwest Access provided to the community.

Ms. Draper made a motion to increase the appropriation for Northwest Access to \$3,500, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

Mr. Brosseau made a motion to increase the appropriation for Vermont Center for Independent Living from \$500 to \$1,000, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Promote Swanton Proposed Budget:

Mr. Fournier shared the proposed budget of 20k. Half of it is not all new money; half of the items are currently in the budget. (Moving Town Celebration and cutting Beautification by 5k).

They did not include the cost of a new electronic sign they would like to take that out of Special Funds. Included in the proposed budget was the website maintenance, a search engine optimization for the website, and beautification committee.

Ms. Candels will request the cost for 2026 from Ecopixel.

Town Celebration 5k line item can be moved from the General Budget to Promote Swanton.

Mr. Clark suggested dropping the beautification from 9k to 4k. They have been raising their own money as well.

Mr. Brosseau asked if Promote Swanton has looked into fundraising? Ms. Draper said no but there may be grants available. Promote Swanton has three members, Nicole Draper, Earl Fournier and Suzie Kelleher.

Library Payroll & Maintenance Budget:

Currently at 1.30% increase.

- Deduction in unemployment/training.
- Deduction in sprinkler repairs (that has been completed this year).
- Building insurance is not known yet.
- Employee salaries did not increase as much because the library had a different number on their budget.
- Building maintenance will stay at 20k.

d) Conversation of changing Lister positions to appointed vs. elected

Mr. Brosseau said this has been discussed before, many towns are finding it difficult to fill lister position due to the required training, technical expertise. Towns have been voting to go from elected listers to a full-time assessor. Mr. Brosseau said the pay range he has found online is \$25-\$35 an hour for a full-time assessor. Mr. Brosseau said Georgia, St. Albans, Woodstock, Hardwick all employ full-time assessors.

Mr. Brosseau said it is something they are discussing for the future if David or Kevin leave.

Mr. Bourgeois asked how this would make finding people easier? They would not be limited to Swanton residents.

Ms. Draper said for an appointed Lister or hired assessor they would not need to be a Swanton resident either.

Mr. Savage said they would be professionally credentialed.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if an assessor could handle the number of parcels Swanton has? Mr. Horton said no, an assessor just assesses properties and they would need someone else.

Mr. Horton felt they are discussing two different concepts: appointed listers and an appointed assessor. Mr. Savage said if you're not a elected lister you're an assessor.

Mr. Clark said this change would give the board more control over the work done in the office.

Mr. Horton shared the transition the State is requiring more people to have the title of assessor.

Mr. Clark suggested a member of the board visit other towns to see how they handle assessors and what they have for staff. More research is needed.

Mr. Horton said if someone is elected as a lister with no experience it will take at least 3+ years to learn the job.

Mr. Nichols said he did not think other towns have less staff and how much there is to learn.

Ms. Draper found information online and sent emails to members to review. This change would require a charter, needing the State legislator's approval also.

e) Conversation of whether or not to remove "No Postmarks Allowed" on tax due language

Mr. Clark shared his thoughts sometimes he feels they are punishing taxpayers who have good intentions. This item is voted on every year.

Ms. Cathy Fournier shared how the process would change if you went with post marks. There is many pros/cons to this. When is the cut off? The mail sporadic. The Town relies on that money to pay bills. Mortgage companies would delay mailing. Postage metered mail could be held.

Out of the close to 4k tax bills sent out 1-2 people complaining a year.

Mr. Brosseau asked if they should consider a grace period? People would use that date as the date they need to pay.

The board agreed not to pursue this.

f) Town Office Energy Audit

Mr. Savage said the Town Office is very cold and has spoken with Vermont Gas to have an energy audit done on the building. This is scheduled for 1/9/26 at 10 am.

The heat pumps are just for cooling not heating and cooling.

Ms. Cathy Fournier said they were also told the furnace is too small for the area it is trying to heat.

g) Central Dispatch Billing from Rescue Services

Mr. Savage received an email from the Director of Financial Administration from St. Albans City. They currently bill Missisquoi Rescue (MVR) for dispatch services. They

include it in their budget. MVR is the only establishment they bill this way; they are billed to the Towns. For example, the fire department is billed to the Village.

They are looking to bill it to either the Town or the Village.

Mr. Savage shared the current cost (\$74,400) and the change that takes effect on July 1st (\$101,800). This is for both fire & rescue dispatching fee.

Mr. Savage will meet with the Village and work out the details.

h) Library Ice on the Entrance

Mr. Fournier said he was at the library and Mr. Lapan was there and showed him a picture of ice on the entrance they had broken off.

Mr. Clark said the entrance is insulated but with out snow guards there will be ice buildup.

Mr. Clark said he will take a look when he goes for the elevator inspection.

9. Community and Economic Development

a) Promote Swanton update

No additional updates besides the budget.

10. Next Meeting Agenda Items

a) Swanton Police and Fire Budgets

b) Rescue Budget

c) Town Report Dedication

d) Highway & General Budgets

Ms. Draper asked if they have a schedule for employee reviews? Mr. Clark said they will add that to the 2nd January meeting agenda.

11. Any Other Business

None

12. Correspondence

a) Email from Emily Walke regarding Community Shoe Closet

Mr. Savage received an email from Ms. Walke.

Ms. Draper said Ms. Walke runs the Cleats for Feet and is looking to place a shed for shoes in general for people to access.

The board discussed it and decided Mr. Savage will discuss it with Mr. Sheets about having the building at the complex.

13. Public Comment (Reprise)

Mr. Brosseau asked where they were with the Road Takeover Policy. Mr. Fournier is still working on it, and he needs to work with the Planning Commission.

14. Upcoming Events

a) Thursday, Dec. 25, 2025 & Friday, Dec. 26, 2025 – Christmas Holiday – Office and Operations CLOSED

b) Thursday, January 1, 2026 & Friday, January 2, 2026 – New Year's Holiday – Office and Operations – CLOSED

c) Tuesday, January 6, 2026 – Regular Selectboard Meeting – Town Offices – 6:00 pm

d) Tuesday, January 13, 2025 – Planning Commission – Town Offices – 5:00 pm

15. Adjourn

Mr. Fournier made a motion to adjourn at 8:28 pm, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted by
Christina Candels-Assistant Town Administrator

Received and filed by:

Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk

Date