

**Swanton Enhancement Project (SEP)
Steering Committee Meeting
February 1, 2024, 6pm
Swanton Public Library-Childrens Room**

Minutes

Present: Betsy Fournier-Chair, Joel Clark, Michelle Desautels, Brian Savage, Bill Sheets, Neal Speer, Suzie Kelleher, Nicole Draper, Abigaile Gaudette, Fellicia Cota, Midred G. Hall, Nicholas Brosseau, Sarah Garvey, Sandy Skeels-Kilburn, Ron Kilburn, Hank Lambert, Molly Lambert, Ali Boren, Faith Dubois, Chevon Cooper, Christina Candels

1) Welcome and Review Agenda

Besty opened the meeting at 5:30 pm and thanked those in attendance.

Betsy added Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi & Circle of Courage to Committee Chair & Stakeholders Report.

2) Review Minutes of November 2, 2023

Minutes from 11/2/23 were available to approve.

Molly Lambert made a motion to approve minutes as presented, seconded by Joel Clark. No Discussion, Minutes approved.

3) Public Comment

Molly took a moment to thank Bill Sheets and the Village team for their work on informing the community of the new proposed Public Safety facility with the open houses.

4) Finance Update-Joel Clark

Joel Clark provided the financial report as of 12/31/23.

Unrestricted balance:

Balance \$11,482.96

Activity since last report, paid \$70.00 to Secretary of State, received \$1,500 from Town of Swanton.

Restricted balance:

Balance \$32,719.21 (\$3,800 of this is committed to LVRT)

Activity since last report, moved \$57.62 from Grant Writing to Substance Misuse Category.

Balance by Category:

Bike/Signs \$88.95 (\$3,800 LVRT)

Capacity Bldg. \$1,477.25

Substance Misuse \$1,625.61

Beautification \$6,912.40 (\$18,000 in CD)

Marble Mill \$815.00

Mural \$0- Will drop off.

CD Beautification \$18,000.00 will draw down \$2,000+/- each year.

Molly asked about using the Marble Mill funds for pickleball improvements. This is still in the works. Bill Sheets said they are working with Swanton Rec on this as well.

Nicole Draper made a motion to accept the financial update, seconded by Nick Brosseau. Motion carried.

5) Presentation from Fellicia Cota-Creative heART inc, Creative heART Counseling LLC

Fellicia Cota is a board-certified Art- Therapist and shared her background in Art Therapy. Fellicia has created a non-profit called Creating heART inc. Fellicia shared upcoming events /projects in the community. Please see the attached flyer. Fellicia recently purchased 63 Grand Ave. for Creating heART inc. non-profit studio.

Betsy Fournier then opened the floor for questions:

- Besty asked what kind of art programs are offered in groups? Art based therapy/treatment plan, this gives specific goals & materials.
- Hank asked for an example or two of what is expected in the creative process? Art is healing, repetitive, creative balancing, expressive and centering.
- Ali asked if Fellicia offers a 1:1 therapy session, if so, does insurance cover this? Fellicia used to be able to bill insurance, beginning in 2023 she now cannot bill insurance due specific state licensure needed. This has changed what she can offer to people. The State of Vermont does not offer a license for Art Therapist, the process they previously used they cannot bill through anymore.
- Nick asked where most of the funding comes from? Grants through the school, ESSR funds (money from Covid-19) that will end at the end of the school year. Many people are carrying the lasting effects of Covid-19.
- Molly spoke of Fellicia's portfolio of work, what kind of support do you have to support the "I"? Fellicia has had to focus and support since creating a path from billing insurance, the school year coming to an end and asking for help from other organizations in the community for help. There has been a shift statewide.
- Nick asked if she had worked with legislators to try and change this. Fellicia said she has presented to the legislator multiple times; they recognize who Art Therapist are but not giving them the licensure they need.
- Sandy asked if there are many other Art Therapist in Vermont? 20-30 active therapists statewide. Sandy suggests a support group for Art Therapist.
- Chevon clarified that Fellicia has the education to support this? Yes, Fellicia has a master's in art therapy. To call yourself a "Art Therapist" you have to have a Masters.
- Betsy asked if the new space will be open to the public as a drop in opportunity or by appointment? Currently it will be scheduled due to MVUSD

commitments until June. There are posted events also. These are Grant funded through Maquam Bay Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi.

- Nick asked without too much detail can you give a success story? For the last four years I have worked with a child with major social anxiety, difficult with transitions, getting to school on time and being there? Working on what you can and cannot control with Art Therapy and time, this child is now attending school regularly.
- Besty asked how do you feel the community and SEP can support you? Fellisha just wants to help people, people to heal and have the space available to people who need it. Share the joy of Art with the community. Accessibility stems from the limitation's insurance companies put on people. Besty wanted Fellisha to share her story and what she does to better help the community by putting the word out.
- Sandy asked if Fellisha can handle the need? Or do you need more people to work with you? Fellisha said she could use the help but is unsure of funding to keep things going. There is such a need.
- Joel thanked her for her presentation. Joel said part of SEP's focus for 2024 is Social Emotional Health, and asked if in the future if she would have groups for families? Fellisha said family groups could be done but sometimes parents/kids need a break from each other, but that family groups would be a great opportunity. Joel said he sees ways in the future SEP can contact her to sponsor events with her for community members.
- Mildred asked for clarification where Fellisha is holding her groups/events? 63 Grand Ave. Specific events are advertised.
- Molly asked if there is contact info on her business cards? Yes, and she passed around cards.

Besty thanked Fellisha for coming to share and Fellisha said you can help and support her just by sharing events.

6) SEP focus of 2024

- 1) Social Emotional Health
- 2) Economic Health

Besty said these are the focus for 2024 and will have presenters in these areas.

7) Committee Chair and Stakeholder Reports

- 1) MVSD-Vacant No Representative

Betsy said she has no update, encouraged people to go to meeting for upcoming school budget.

If anyone knows someone on the MVSD board who wants to come be a member please reach out.

- 2) Swanton Arts Council – Ali Boren

Ali shared that they received a new grant for art. They will offer take/make crafts, classes, public art displays. This is the fourth year they have received this grant.

Currently collecting proposals. They have a report in the Town & Village Reports that include a color page. Edwin Church award is now expanded to children & teenagers. There is a new Eclipse art board, and the plan is to paint the other side with an eclipse also, encouraging people to come to Swanton to watch the Solar Eclipse.

Next Swanton Arts Council Meeting is 2/7/24 6pm Swanton Public Library.

3) Swanton Public Library – Abby Gaudette

Abby shared the planning the library is doing in preparations for summer camp, February & April school breaks. Swanton Arts Council will offer programs at the library also. New programs coming are board game club for adults, youth book club & teen night.

Harry Potter Night is the biggest event of the year.

Sandy told Abby the things offered in the building are amazing. Senior groups/classes are amazing. All these programs are advertised.

Abby shared they were granted an eclipse kit from ECHO and will receive 600 eclipse glasses. They will offer these to participants of their programming first then to other community members.

4) Swanton Recreation Department – Nicole Draper

Nicole shared an announcement letter with everyone from Swanton Recreation. See attached.

Currently they are preparing for spring athletics, little league registration is open. They are currently working on summer youth athletic clinic programs; these details will be released in February.

Swanton Rec will have vacation camp in February & April. They are having youth leadership programs: hunter education, ice fishing clinic, safe sitter course, youth dungeons & dragons club, chess club, around the world culture club, eclipse party, winter escapades, garden workshops, community yard sale, outdoor markets on the green, CornFest.

They are working to add more adult programs this year. Swanton Rec has a great supply of outdoor gear for the community.

The Focus survey is out, and they want to hear from everyone.

SwantonRec.Org

Sandy asked if they are working to still have the Notch summer program.

Nicole stated the Notch Day camp will not be returning to Swanton or Richford this year, The Notch made that decision. They are working with partners and looking for grants to provide this to children still and is affordable. There will be two free weeks: one in June and one in August as of now. There will be five weeks of full day camp in July. They are working with MVSD to be a food site also. Abby said the library will be as well. The skating rink at the rec center is currently closed due to the weather.

Molly asked what the financing gap would be without the Notch. Nicole said they paid for that on their own primarily from grants at a cost of roughly \$7,500 a week. They offer four weeks of camp half days for 114 youth.

Swanton Rec cannot meet that number of youth but actively working to have

as many youth as possible. Molly thinks this is a great time for community funding, “help a kid go to camp”.

- 5) Swanton Historical Society – Nick Brosseau
Nick shared they have recently completed restoration of the toll house. Ongoing programming with Dr. Fred Wiseman. The Historical Society is actively working for funding to buy the Roy’s Insurance building and looking for various sources of funding for that.
- 6) Chamber of Commerce – Nick Brosseau
Nick the Chamber of Commerce recently revealed the new website, and they would appreciate feedback on that. SwantonChamber.Org
They are planning a dinner for Swanton citizen of the year on 2/23/24 @5pm at the VFW.
- 7) Town of Swanton – Brian Savage, Town Administrator
Brian shared the Town Report has been sent to be printed and will be distributed in the community once available. The joint information meeting with Selectboard & Village Trustees will be held 2/26/24 @7pm at the Village Complex.
The Town Plan has been completed, now the Planning Commission is working on a Re-Write of the Zoning Bylaws there will be public hearings for this as well.
Joel shared an update on the LVRT. Design should be completed at the end of this month; it is currently going through NEPA process. Out for construction bids in July to start construction late summer. The timeline to construct the trail head shows completion this fall. They have put in for some additional grants with the match coming from the Town. Bill asked about the Governor coming back for the tour. No talk of it yet.
- 8) Village of Swanton - Bill Sheets, Village Manager
Bill updated the wastewater will go out to bid soon will take upwards of a year. Part of the project is replacing the centrifuge which has failed.
The Riv property they are close to certificate of completion. They will then do a RFP for suggestion on what to do with the property. It is a small lot .6 acre but wants some kind of development. The best idea will be able to develop the property.
The expansion joints on the bridge need to be repaired and will go out to bid next week. The most important part to know is the bridge will be shut down completely for a week and reroute traffic, that is less painful than 6 weeks of work. They will be notified 45 days in advance.
The improvement of crossings will begin soon by Marble Mill & VFW cross walks, one way traffic in front of Merchants Row. Parking will be moved. There will be a 3-way stop sign at 1st street & Grand Ave.
The sidewalks by Merchants Row will come out 12’ as well. This has all been approved and we have had public meetings previously.

Open houses for the Public Safety Facility.

Nick asked what is the feedback they are getting at the Open Houses? Non supporters are vocal, supporters are quiet and share their support. They recognize it's a large ask and they will respect the wishes of the voters.

Betsy said the flashing beacon crossing was part of the Marble Mill master plan and is happy hear this and anything that creates movability.

Bill said the expansion of parking is the next \$600,000 grant they are working on, providing 30+ additional parking and redesign the back side of the park. This is 3-5 years away.

Sandy thanked for all the extra time & miles being put into Swanton.

Neal shared the idea of so many open houses was to inform members of the public on the facts, and they will respect the voters wishes.

Molly said its important to note public officials can do nothing but inform they are not aloud to advocate.

Abby asked if children could go to the wastewater plant for tours? 25 camp kids? Bill said yes hydro, wastewater, fire, police he'd be happy to give tours. Great opportunity to get our kids in the community.

9) Beautification – Hank Lambert

Hank shared what the Beautification Committee was able to accomplish in 2023. See attached.

They had the first 2024 committee meeting last night. Suzie Keller was there and is now the 23rd member.

2024 plans include flowers at the Town Office & Village Complex

They also plan to work on the welcome to Swanton signs, discussions are happening to have a mural on the building coming up the hill by the VFW. Flowers & trees or important.

Sandy thanked Ace Hardware for the Welcome to Swanton sign.

10) Healthy Communities/Substance Use – Besty Fournier

Betsy shared their biggest goal is to have their speakers touch on Healthy Communities/Substance Misuse, continue to work towards that with youth.

11) Communications – Chevon Cooper & Nicole Draper

Chevon said they just had a communications meeting in January. The next meeting is in February. They have plans in place.

Nicole said they are inspired by the informational videos the Village made and they want to make them about community organizations. Roll out w welcoming to the community committee. The next meeting is 2/15/24 @5pm at the Swanton Library.

12) Community and Economic Development – Darci Benoit

Betsy shared an update from Darci. Darci had met with Molly and had a good outcome. They are meeting with downtown business. They had a successful

Small Business Saturday. There is discussion of making a drove video. The next downtown meeting is 2/13/24 @5pm at Vision Nutrition.

13) Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi– Faith Dubois

Faith shared an update they have put in a blood pressure station for use when they are open. They have been involved with open door dinners and checking blood pressure while there. They are still having the once-a-month vaccine/health clinics, wound care & foot care. Foot care you do need appointment. Kat Harson will begin yoga in February. Chair yoga and art journal are offered at the library. Betsy shared two event flyers that are posted at the Tribal Council as well.

Abby said Abenaki Tribal Council will be hosting “Heritage Celebration” Memorial Day weekend at Swanton Rec.

14) Wear Blue Run to Remember-Suzie Keller

Suzie shared they have the event the second Saturday of each month and begin at the old town garage site on Fourth Street. They have a remembrance of whom they want to remember. Walk or run 5k. More info can be found on wearblue.org or runtoremember.org websites. Email SwantonCommunity@Wearblueruntoremember.Org. Link on SwantonRec.Org.

Suzie is also facilitating sign language at the library.

8) Public Comment

Molly asked if there are conversations about eclipse event planning? Yes, Bill shared there is an upcoming conference call about this.

Sandy thanked everyone and shared her inspiration from these meetings and to count our blessing for a great community.

9) Upcoming Meetings

3/7/24 (tentative), 5/2/24, 7/11/24, 9/5/24
Annual Meeting 11/7/24

10) Adjournment

Joel made a motion to adjourn at 7:03 pm, seconded by Nick. Motion carried.

Minutes submitted by Christina Candels



Announcements from Swanton Recreation

- Youth Athletics
 - Little League with Northwest Little League-
 - Registration is OPEN NOW on our website, www.swantonrec.org
Registration closes March 1
 - Spring Track and Field, we are looking for interested coaches for this community requested program, if you are interested please email Athletic Director Nick Michaud at athletics.swantonrec@gmail.com
 - Summer youth athletic clinics/camps are in the making, we are looking for coaching and support people to host these programs. If you are interested in joining us and making a difference in a young person life, email Athletic Director Nick Michaud at athletics.swantonrec@gmail.com
 - DATES TO REMEMBER FOR UPCOMING SEASONS
 - Fall Soccer- Registration opens in June, mark your calendars now!
 - Fall Field Hockey- Registration also opens in June!
 - Youth Football with the Northwest Valley Ducks- Registration also opens in June!
 - Youth Basketball- Registration opens in August!
- Day Camps - For Youth in Grades K-6
 - February Vacation Camp- Feb 26- March 1. 8am-3pm- Registration is open!
 - If you have a teen that is looking to build leadership skills, we have limited volunteer opportunities available for this day camp
 - April Vacation Camp- April 22-26 8am-3pm
 - If you have a teen that is looking to build leadership skills, we have limited volunteer opportunities available for this day camp
 - Summer Vacation Camp- We are working on the final details of our summer programming, as well as a financial aid program for Swanton residents that would like to attend, but need extra financial support.
 - BE ON THE LOOK OUT FOR SUMMER PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS ON FEBRUARY 19!
- Youth Programs
 - Hunters Education- Our Friends from VT Fish and Wildlife will be back to host Hunters Education in April 27, Registration opens for this workshop March 25 on the fish and wildlife website. This is a full day in person class that has a home study component. If you need a work book please reach out to our office as we have some copies available
 - Safe Sitter workshops for youth in Grades 6-8, is a great way for our young people to learn valuable skills to help them become a safe experienced

babysitter. Workshops now listed on our website. Limited space available. Sign up soon!

- Around the World Culture Club- Join us as we embark on a journey around the world here at Swanton Recreation. We have designed this program to build cultural awareness and understanding as well as increased educational opportunities to learn about the diverse cultures of the world. We will explore various aspects of different cultures, from food and popular holiday celebrations to music and dancing. Activities include group discussion, exploring different foods, virtual museum tours, arts, movies and lots of fun. Youth Culture Club-meets third Monday of the month ,5-630 Grade 3-6, If you youth is not in this age category but interested in this program, please reach out directly to programs.swantonrec@gmail.com
- Chess Club- 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month 530-630, come learn how to play chess, or play a game or two with your peers, More info available on our website
- Youth Dungeons and Dragons with Beyond the Bell @MVSD Afterschool, Fridays 3-530, Youth Grade 7+
- Teen Nights- Happening throughout the year with the help of our community partners
- Teen Leadership Opportunities- Ongoing throughout the year, if you have a young person that is a natural born leader, or looking to develop their leadership skills, email programs.swantonrec@gmail.com to do an intake into this ongoing program of community service opportunities and workforce development
- Community Events offered by Swanton Recreation
 - Winter Escapade Join us for February 23, 5-7 for some outdoor fun and games, hot cocoa and smores!
 - Day in the Dirt, Join us in the community garden for the 2024 growing season, (Early May)
 - Swanton Community Yard Sale- Get your name on the list for the sale of the year, an opportunity to get out meet your neighbors and do some treasure hunting (Late May)
 - Swanton's Outdoor Markets on the Green- Watch for these events as they pop up all summer long and help turn the Village Green into a vibrant marketplace (May-September), WE ARE LOOKING FOR A MARKET MANAGER TO HELP PLAN THESE EVENTS. If interested please email programs.swantonrec@gmail.com
 - Pollinator Garden Party- (June)
 - Corn Fest, Join us here for some Corny games, Live entertainment and food offerings (August 10)
- Adult Programs
 - Zumba with Sarah Tanner, Tuesday and Thursday 6:15 at Swanton Public Library

- Co-ed Athletic leagues are coming this spring, summer and fall, if interested please email athletics.swantonrec@gmail.com
- Pickleball at Marble Mill, check out Playtime scheduler for all the groups playing
- Rental equipment
 - Snowshoes and Walking poles, Kayaks and Inflatable Stand Up Paddle Boards, Life Jackets from our SeaTow Life Jacket Loaner Station, Disc Golf, Fishing Poles, Yard Games

As always we are looking for ways to best serve our community and your feedback is incredibly valuable, please consider taking our [2024 Focus Survey](#), by clicking on the link.

We are also working hard on putting together more information about the proposed Swanton Community Center. To find the most up to date information visit www.swantonvt.gov

If you are interested in becoming more involved with any of our programs or events, or looking to become a bigger part of the community never hesitate to reach out to us at swantonrecreation@gmail.com

We look forward to continuing to serve you! Our office hours are from 8:30-4:30, we have an open door to stop by and check out all the great things going on.

Please reach out to us with questions or concerns, by email swantonrecreation@gmail.com by phone 802-868-2493.

Nicole Draper, Executive Director

Beautification Committee Summary 2023

Added:

4 new bridge boxes, 7 hanging baskets, 5 planters at Merchants Row

Renovated

Fountain flower bed and the totem pole bed both on the Village green

Created new beds at Veterans Park

Planted 9 new trees: 4 at NOTCH, 1 at library, 1 at corner of York and First, 2 at Veterans Park, 1 at 33 First Street (*Consolidated Communications*).

Planted 5 hydrangeas on First Street

Could not have accomplished this without:

The devotion of **20 citizen volunteers** who cared for all flower planters and beds
The generous financial assistance of citizen donors, **Trustees and Selectboard,**
Dean Ryan, Village Public Works Director, who installed water pipes to the bridge
flower boxes and flower beds on the village green at no cost to SEP
Linda Cross of *TLC Lawn Care* whom we hired to hang hanging baskets, water
and weed when necessary and perform much grunt work throughout the season.

Tentative Plans 2024 (second year of 7-year plan)

- Plant 10 streetside trees.
- Plant an undetermined number of hydrangeas on First Street.
- Create new beds and window boxes at the Town Office Building and the Village complex.
- Increase hanging baskets on Grand Avenue.
- Work with owners of the diner on Grand Avenue to install window boxes.
- Expand plantings at Veterans Park
- Collaborate with Swanton Public Arts Network to install a painted mural at the VFW green strip by the laundromat building on Merchants Row
- Address improvements to the bandstand
- Explore erecting attractive welcoming signs at entrances to the community
- Involve the young: Green Up Day; plant and/or tend gardens & planters
- Raise necessary funds
- Arrange clean-up and plantings with laundromat owner on Merchants Row

Fellicia Cota M.A., ATR-BC
The Creative heART, Inc
Creative heART Counseling, LLC
63 Grand Ave. Swanton, VT 05488

Fellicia Cota is a Board-Certified Art Therapist who has provided art therapy services and community art classes to the Swanton Community for the past 6 years through her business, Creative heART Counseling, LLC. In new efforts to expand support and services, she has created a non-profit:

Mission Statement: The Creative heART, Inc. promotes and inspires innovative and healing experiences through a hands-on art approach. In an effort to support mental health through art-making, participants practice self-expression and intentionality around self-care, supporting their social, emotional and spiritual needs. The Creative heART is a community where expressive arts are inclusive and accessible to everyone.

Past, Present & Future Community Support:

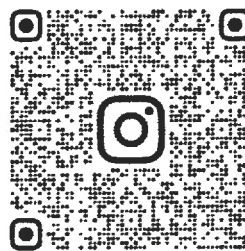
- Collaboration with Monarch Maples Pediatrics, offering Art Therapy groups for children and teens experiencing anxiety.
- Collaborate with Voices Against Violence to offer art classes and groups for domestic violence victims.
- Continue collaborating with the Abenaki Community (Circle of Courage, Maquam Bay, Tribal Council, etc.) offering classes, groups, workshops as needed.
- Continue collaborating with MVSD schools for Art Therapy support to students
- Offer Workshops that focus on “Helping the Helpers” (Teachers, Medical and Mental Health providers, Emergency response workers, etc.) in response to lasting impacts from COVID-19.
- Continue offering art classes to small groups of children, teens and adults
- Begin offering Monthly Open Art Studios (Elders, Children, Adults & Moms)
- Continue offering art day camps for small groups of children during school breaks

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