

Swanton Enhancement Project (SEP)

Steering Committee Meeting

March 14, 2024-5:30 pm

Swanton Public Library-King's Daughters Room

Minutes

Present: Betsy Fournier- Chair, Joel Clark, Michelle Desautels, Nicole Draper, Suzie Kelleher, Sandy Skeels-Kilburn, Ron Kilburn, Nick Brosseau, Chevon Cooper, David Winchester, Debbie Lavoie, Molly Lambert, Hank Lambert, Abby Gaudette, Crystal Lampman, Kirsten Bourgeois, Christina Candels

1) Welcome and Review Agenda

Betsy welcomed everyone in celebration of Pie Day to enjoy pie everyone brought to share. Molly asked everyone what comes after 3.146?

Molly requested to add conversation on the Eclipse 4-8-24.

Chevon requested to add a conversation on outdoor markets with her communications update.

2) Review Minutes of February 1, 2024

Molly made a motion to accept as presented, seconded by Joel. Motion approved.

Molly would like typos corrected on name spelling.

3) Public Comment

None

4) Finance Update-Joel Clark

Joel gave financial update as of February 29, 2024.

Unrestricted

Balance \$11,482.96

No activity since last report

Restricted

Balance \$33,919.21 (\$3,800 committed to LVRT)

Activity since last report

\$1,200 to Beautification (donations) Additional \$1,450 to deposit.

Balance by category

Bikes/Signs \$88.95 (\$3,800 committed)

Capacity Bldg. \$1,477.25

Substance Misuse \$1,625.61

Beautification \$8,112.40(doesn't included \$1,450 to be deposited)

Marble Mill \$815.00

CD Beautification \$18,000.00

5) Community & Economic Health

Molly shared update from Darcy Benoit. This update discussed focusses for newly elected officials and SEP Seering Committee Members in recommending they take a look as the downtown as a whole. Molly shared an update from Small Business Saturday from Darcy. As a group they did a \$500 promotion towards advertising. This was successful for the businesses. January, February & March are slow months and typically are good planning months. Due to the local business being self-run they have not been able to meet as a group to do future planning. Molly shared Mr. Ed Daniel has shared an invite to local business to come the April 10th Planning Commission meeting to see if they can assist in any way while they review the business portion of plan. Molly suggested someone attend with Betsy. Molly has also suggested to Darcy to create proposal from group of strong businesses to SEP what they need as a boost.

Sandy asked if everyone was aware of the upcoming ball Divine Treasures was throwing?

Betsy shared another topic discussed was creating a brochure for Swanton, this will highlight local business and direct people to and around Swanton. Surrounding Towns have done this and they look great. Chevon suggested a tourist map.

Molly the importance of this coming from local business/retailer's vs for them, this will give this more umph as a group. In support of them. Betsy shared the importance of supporting local businesses, many of them are privately owned so supporting them as a community is key. Betsy suggested if Heidi the Village Grant writer sees a grant that would benefit them, please share.

Betsy asked Bill for an update on the downtown revitalization project? Bill said it is in the works but obviously things take time. Betsy asked if there are plans for ADA assistance to businesses in the downtown? Bill said there is some.

Debbie suggested contacting United Way. Recently she was on a zoom call and there was a large grant to upgrade ADA accessibility. This did not fit for her project but maybe someone else.

Molly asked if they should encourage business put together a proposal for their needs?

Betsy said yes. Kirsten asked if there should be someone to help them through the process? Darcy has led this process but could use some support. Kirsten will work with Darcy on this. Crystal shared that new business may not know this exists.

Chevon attended the downtown business meeting before Christmas and asked if they have followed back up with the gentleman from tv advertising? Not yet.

Sandy asked if someone should write something to bring to business owners? Molly suggests not directing people, seeing what they see as their need, being more organic.

6) Newly Elected Officials-Welcome

Betsy took an opportunity to welcome Suzie Kelleher & David Winchester as newly elected Village Officials. Joel Clark & Nicole Draper won reelection of their seats on the Selectboard. Nick Brosseau won reelection of his seat as Trustee of Public Money.

They all introduced themselves and gave a little background on themselves to those present.

7) Committee Chair & Stakeholder Reports

- **MVSD-Vacant**

Nicole said she is working on this. Chevon shared that Stephanie Gagne is a newly elected School Board member and has opened the conversation about her attending. If this isn't an option suggested Julie Regimbal send an update to share. Betsy will draft a letter formally inviting them to attend and or send an update. Nicole shared the school district has sent a link for people to fill out in regard to the school budget.

- **Swanton Arts Council-Abby & David**

Abby shared the Arts Council has received a sizable grant for free art programming. This is the same grant they received last year. For more information on that contact Abby to get the newsletter.

David - Swanton Public Art Network (SPAN) has completed the murals at Swanton beach. They are looking at doing something at the VFW also. Abby shared they will have three more eclipse murals will go up this week.

- **Swanton Public Library-Abby**

Abby shared they are they are going to be offering four full day free camps this coming summer at the library.

Swanton Public Library has a new website coming soon.

- **Recreation Department-Nicole Draper**

Nicole shared "spring has sprung."

Little league will start soon, come watch and cheer them on.

Spring track and field sign-ups will start in April

Swanton Rec will offer six weeks of summer camp, one week in June will be free.

They are also collaborating with the school district for half days in August.

Northwest Valley Ducks the youth football team, grades 1-8.

Upcoming things to watch for include: Tennis, Hunters Education Class, Babysitting Classes, Teen Nights/Leadership, Community Yard Sale, Abenaki PowWow, CornFest August 10th, Zumba in Swanton Public Library, Coed Softball (registration now open), Pickleball-Playtime Schedule App, Kayaks, lifejackets & inflatable paddle board, disk golf baskets, fishing poles are available.

Business Sponsorship or Camper Sponsorship links are available on website, as well as their 2024 focus survey. IF you would like the March newsletter, contact Nicole.

- **Swanton Historical Society-Nick Brousseau**

Nick shared an update they currently plan to open the museum in early May.

- **Swanton Chamber of Commerce-Nick Brousseau**

Easter in the Park is planned for March 30th at 9am, arrive by 8:45. Mimis Mini Donuts will be there selling donuts.

Another upcoming event will be Business in the Digital World Marketing Seminar. Swanton Public Library April 24t 10am with WCAX. This is to help improve digital marketing for small businesses. Betsy asked if businesses cannot attend will there be resources to share? Chevon can video this event to share.

Swanton Citizen of the Year was Marilyn Dunbar (Scampers) they had a nice dinner in celebration.

- **Town of Swanton-Joel Clark**

Joel provided after Town Meeting Day reorganization meeting and Joel is the chair of the Swanton Selectboard. All articles passed on Town Meeting Day.

2024 Town Selectboard focus: Economic Development, Southern Growth District (State of VT is currently building new Highway garage) Vermont Army National Guard has shown interest in building by them. This will improve the road and bring water from St. Albans.

ARPA funds to allocate and spend.

Town Facilities and develop a 15-year plan for upkeep and maintenance.

Community & Recreation work closely in improving the community space with the long-term plans of a new facility.

Town Plan has been finalized they are now working on bylaw updates.

LVRT trailhead Joel has received the final design plans, environmental documents are complete. June/July it goes out to bid for construction with completion this fall.

There will be a kiosk at the trailhead that they can put map of local business on.

Nicole shared Northwest Regional Planning has the resources to build a business trail directory like they did with the Missisquoi Valley Rail trail.

Chevon about a recent article in the St. Albans Messenger about the armory coming into the Southern Growth District? Joel said this is a project for the Vermont Army National Guard being built with Military construction money they are still working to acquire. This will be a large facility holding a couple hundred people on drill weekend and 6-10 full time. Its not a done deal until the US Congress allocates the money.

- **Village of Swanton-Bill Sheets**

Bill shared in regards to rail trail this has the potential to draw in a lot of people he gets regular requests about parking at the complex for trail use.

Bill shared time line update with wastewater project to start in April/May and last 455 days. They just received the last grant of 800k and they project to bond around 5 million.

Bill shared the bid opening for the bridge Wednesday 3/20/24 at 10am. It is encouraging that 11 independent firms have downloaded the plans, they are hopeful for multiple bids.

River crossing as of today the river boring folks are not available until June and that will be fine as after walleye season and they plan to restrict the Foundry Street boat access. Project completion planned for the fall of this year.

Bond & facility did not pass. They head the voters loud and clear. Now it is time to see what the next options are, space and police needs are still there.

The next steps are to explore building a new building for the electrical dept, moving all admin staff there and retrofitting and using that space for a police department.

- **Beautification-Hank Lambert**

Hank shared one very nice donation they received to use over the next 10 years.

Second year of a seven-year plan to beautify Swanton with flowers and trees.

Veterans Park, Town & Village Offices. If anyone would like a copy of this plan Hank will share this. Creating a welcoming community with trees and flowers. The goal is to plant 10 trees and two flower beds a year.

Green UP day is going to be 5-4-24. Abby has put together an online street list people can sign up to clean up. Sandy said Suzie has created a map of the Village.

- **Healthy Communities/Substance Use-Crystal**

Crystal shared they have been working with Abby & Nicole planning for summer and leadership.

Summer Junior Teen Institute, will be open to all youth 5-8 in Franklin, Grand Isle, & Chittenden Counties that want to make an impact in their community.

Summer Teen Institute will be open to incoming freshman- seniors the end of June.

Both events will be staffed with youth from Swanton.

They tasked their group with creating an event. They are planning a Solar Soiree the Sunday before eclipse tickets Bliss Room St. Albans Museum. This will be a safe substance free event. Tickets will go on sale soon.

Ron wanted to compliment Abby for cleaning up the King's Daughters Room it looks great.

- **Communications-Chevon Cooper**

Chevon shared that Outdoor Markets last year were not very successful. The weather was not great along with other events in other towns. Chevon has been speaking with vendors to see what they need.

Chevon asked about municipalities putting money aside for community events? Joel said this is money organizations ask for ahead of time not money they are sitting on to share in 2024. Joel will look into this.

Chevon said Sundays seem to be the best days for markets. Chevon suggested for next year signs directing people to vendors.

Signs, number of markets, food trucks are questions they are looking at. Last year they had 5.

Nicole said the food trucks alone have not been a big enough draw to bring the community out. They are looking for input from people. Nicole said vendors are

contacting her for this year. Local business question if they are benefiting from these. Nicole has reached out the Chamber of Commerce to see what music will be like in the park this year. Community members enjoy it and the Arts Council has money to help with it. National Night Out event is very successful. What do people want to see?? Are the outdoor markets being viable for Swanton.

Betsy asked what last years vendors are saying? Last year they were not successful enough to come back. Crystal suggested changing the format or the days? Crystal discussed other towns that do them during the week. Abby said it would be nice to include things for kids during these events. David said Father's Day weekend is hard because of LCI fishing derby. Hank suggested inviting business to provide food vs food trucks? Is this an option. Chevon asked if people would be comfortable eliminating May and September and focus on June-August.

Sandy like the idea of a Monday night event.

Michelle said Enosburg has bands in the park on Mondays and they have food trucks and vendors.

Weekends are tough in the summer people are busy.

- **Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi- Debbie Lavoie**

Debbie shared free upcoming events & programs

Beading with TK once a month, Burnout Workshop with Felicia Cota,

Monday 3/25, 4/15, 4/29 Elders art 930-1130(all supplies included), Saturday 3/16

Moms creative group 830-10, Saturday 4/13 adult art studio 10-12 & children's 1-3,

Saturday 4/6 10 am basket making, blood pressure checks

PowWow will be 5/25 & 5/26 dancers, drummers, singers

Food pantry numbers are skyrocketing, four grants we applied for last week were granted.

6185 clients they fed last year which is 1885 families. Debbie thanked the Town of Swanton for there support this year.

Crystal said if people have not seen the food pantry they need to stop and check it out. Since Covid the food panty has skyrocketed. They are serving people across the county and they are a no barrier food shelf, come in they will find a way to help them. Liz Curry helped write a grant that will fund a walk-in cooler for them. Right now, they are using 17-19 freezers & refrigerators. The back building is on hold and they can use the grant funds for the front of the building they received for the desperately needed repairs. Debbie said a large cost is the milage paid to volunteers, she is currently looking for a grant to pay for a vehicle for this.

David suggested she reach out to M&T transportation for assistance. Debbie said there is news to come soon on this. Suzie asked if once a week they could share their critical needed items? Yes. Cereal, pasta, snack food for kids, household items for people living in hotels (dishes, utensils, can opener) they're seeing 21-25 families a day. The food shelf is open Monday Wednesday Friday 9-2

Crystal said they have been very intentional in being a no barrier food shelf to reduce the stigma for people asking for help. This required changing policies and procedures and how people access them without shame. This has made them successful. Dignity and food safety are two main focuses.

8) Public Comment

Chevon said 3/27 at 11am Amy Brewer (Franklin Grand Isle Tobacco Prevention Coalition) Next Steps in transportation conversation on Microsoft Teams. Chevon will share the info.

Joel shared the answer to Molly's question in the beginning of the meeting what comes after 3.146, the answer is 3.159.

Sandy said they had talked about having someone come speak to them about substance use, Melinda White, and asked for an update with that. Sandy said Melinda will make herself available anytime. Joel thought they had time to prepare.

Crystal said she is still working on Screenagers documentary, just working on timing.

Abby & Nicole would like to offer a St. Albans pool pass accessible to the community. Is this something SEP would be willing to contribute towards the cost of \$1200 for year for family pass of four people. The library and Rec have money to put towards it. This is an asset to the community; all neighboring community library's offer it. Crystal proposed using Substance Misuse funds for this purpose.

Crystal made a motion Substance Misuse pays for one- third of the cost of the pool pass, seconded by Hank. Motin carried.

9) Adjournment

Betsy adjourned the meeting at 7:15 pm.

2024 Meeting Dates 5/2/24, 7/11/24, 9/5/24, 11/7/24

Minutes Submitted by Christina Candels