

**Draft Minutes**  
**TOWN OF SWANTON**  
**SELECTBOARD MEETING**

**Town Office Building**  
**1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488**  
**In-Person & By Zoom**

**Tuesday, November 21, 2023 @ 6:00 p.m.**

Present: Earl Fournier-Chair, Ed White Sr, Nicole Draper, Steve Bourgeois, Cody Hemenway-Members, Brian Savage-Town Administrator, Cathy Fournier-Town Clerk, Kevin Lapan-Road Forman, Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant, Kurt Hansbury, Betty Cheney, Chevon Cooper, Betsy Fournier-Recreation Chair, Alicia Bourdeau-Recreation Treasurer, Abigail Gaudette, Becky Rupp, Vawn Edele, Pete Garceau, Rich Kelley  
Zoom: Lin

A. Call to Order

Mr. Fournier called the meeting to order at 5:58 pm.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

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

C. Agenda Review

Ms. Cathy Fournier requested to add discussion to update the Town's line of credit under Old Town Business.

D. Meeting Topics

1. Minutes

a) November 7, 2023 Regular Selectboard meeting

b) November 13, 2023 Joint meeting with Village Trustees

**Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve November 7, 2023 Regular Selectboard Meeting and November 13, 2023, Joint Village Trustee's Meeting as written, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.**

2. Public Comments

None

3. Law Enforcement

a) Swanton Animal Control Report

Board members reviewed the October Animal Control report from Animal Control Officer Jim Benson.

4. Expenditures

- a) General Orders  
**Ms. Draper made a motion to approve General Orders for 10/18/23 to 11/21/23 in the amount of \$284,864.31, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.**
- b) Highway Orders  
**Mr. Hemenway made a motion to approve Highway Orders for 10/18/23 to 11/21/23 in the amount of \$411,514.30, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.**
- c) ARPA Orders  
**Ms. Draper made a motion to approve ARPA Orders for 10/18/23 to 11/21/23 in the amount of \$14,124.92, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.**
- d) Library Orders  
**Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve Library Orders for 10/18/23 to 11/21/23 in the amount of \$1,324.53, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.**
- e) School Orders  
**Mr. White made a motion to approve School Orders for 10/18/23 to 11/21/23 in the amount of \$8,542,981.42, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.**
- f) Highway/General Payroll Orders  
**Mr. Hemenway made a motion to approve Highway/General Payroll Orders for 10/18/23 to 11/21/23 in the amount of \$40,727.58, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.**
- g) Library Payroll Orders  
**Mr. White made a motion to approve Library Payroll Orders for 10/18/23 to 11/21/23 in the amount of \$9,030.49, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.**

5. Highway Department

Mr. Lapan updated the board that he is working on a proposal for budgeting the repairs needed on Swanton Hill Road.

Mr. Savage told the board that some of the truck's radios cannot communicate with Swanton Village trucks, this is important during storms and emergencies. Swanton Village has recently made their radios encrypted that's why they don't communicate now. Mr. Savage will contact Falcon Communications to see if he can fix this issue, they have used them before, he has the serial numbers for each trucks radio so they can find out their approximate age.

Mr. Lapan stated he has also ordered a new street sign for Dawn's Way.

Mr. Fournier stated they still have not removed the pass with care sign on route 78, that is a state of Vermont highway.

Mr. Lapan stated they are ready for winter, they have removed trees on roads, at this time all trucks are running well.

6. Old Town Business

a) Sign new accounting policies that were approved on November 7, 2023

Mr. Savage passed out the new accounting polices approved for the Selectboard members to sign.

b) Swanton Public Library liability insurance

Mr. Fournier opened the discussion with board members about the response from the underwriter from Vermont League of Cities & Towns in regards to liability.

Mr. Savage shared the underwriter stated they feel there is a significant liability to the town by allowing the library to allow homeschooling and employees to bring their children to work. The underwriter stated the way to address this is for the library to carry their own liability insurance. They would be the insured and the Town of Swanton to be listed as additional insured. She suggested they carry their own liability and content insurance and the town continue to carry fire insurance.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if they carry their own insurance whom pays for it, why should the taxpayers vs. those whom are bringing their children.

Mr. White agreed they should follow the insurance companies' recommendations.

Mr. Hemenway asked if the library currently has their own insurance?

Ms. Draper stated it is in their budget because it is in the MOU. (The town carries insurance for building and employees & the library carries liability and contents insurance)

Ms. Rupp with provide Mr. Savage a copy of the policy that states the town is additional insured to share with the board. Ms. Rupp stated their agent at Kinney Pike assured them employee children and homeschool students are covered by their current liability policy. Ms. Rupp will provide this in writing as well from them for the Board.

Ms. Draper stated these children are coming into library as patrons. Ms. Draper stated she has not been able to talk to those whom have made complaints and feels those providing the home schooling should be able to speak for themselves.

Mr. Fournier stated this is not a typical practice, Ms. Draper stated it has not been a traditional practice but if you look at new age companies there are many professional companies making a practice for working families. If this continues there needs to be a system and accountability. Mr. Bourgeois asked for a list of these companies. Mr. Hemenway stated he didn't think as a board they have no say just opinions.

Mr. Fournier asked Ms. Rupp if they have a policy for this? They do not, but would like to see these complaints come to the board. S. Rupp stated they can add these to their policy.

Mr. Fournier asked if they know how other towns are putting this into their employee contracts?

Mr. Bourgeois stated he didn't believe until the last meeting tax payers didn't know this was going on.

Ms. Rupp does not see the difference between a child being educated at the library vs a child coming to the library to get a book.

Ms. Gaudette feels there is a misconstrued vision of what's going on at the library. She stated their kids are using the library like any other kids they are not sitting there actively educating their kids. She stated here kids are educated at home and with her during the day at the library like any other kid. They are engaging in programs offered or sitting reading books.

Ms. Gaudette stated the numbers show they are not just sitting there. The library is doing better than it has in 30 years.

Ms. Rupp would like to see the complaints go to the library board.

c) Update on Swanton Community Center – Cross Consulting Engineers

Mr. Garceau & Mr. Edele came before the board to present two concepts for proposed community center as previously requested. Both concepts show access, parking and building. Option #1 is one story and 157 parking spaces, option #2 is two story with field access and 170 parking spaces.

Mr. Garceau stated as engineers they see concerns with the use of Blake Street with the rail trail and Platt Street all entering on route 7, they would prefer to see the entrance stay on Jewett Street.

Mr. Garceau stated using Blake Street as the primary entrance will also take a lot of work to redesign the Grand Ave. connection and that can take years working with the railroad because they still own the rights to the “Dick Thompson Fit & Healthy Trail”. Blake street is also narrower than Jewett Street.

Mr. Edele shared prints and drawings of both concepts. Ms. Bourdeau stated adding an elevator would help compliance with being “equal opportunity employer” as well.

After much discussion the Selectboard, Ms. Betsy Fournier and Ms. Bourdeau agreed they all would like to go with the two-story option.

They would like to see in the artist rendering an elevator added, paved parking lot, airconditioned building and updated cost estimate.

**Mr. Hemenway made a motion to approve option #2- two story building concept, seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried. Ms. Draper obtained.**

Mr. Fournier asked Ms. Betsy Fournier if they have looked into grants or donations? Ms. Betsy Fournier stated she will work with Mr. Savage to put out an RFP for a grant writer. Ms. Draper stated they will also have a sponsorship plan going forward for this project also.

d) Update on Bushey Road/Highgate Road scoping study

Mr. Savage shared with the board an email containing an update from Kyle Grenier from Northwest Regional Planning stating they have received the funding from VTrans the end of October and anticipate the project to beginning December. Once Mr. Grenier has a timeline, he will forward it to Mr. Savage.

e) Discussion on Joint Police Board proposal

Mr. Bill Sheets, Swanton Village Manager sent Mr. Savage prior to the meeting a Joint Police Board Proposed Governance Structure. (JBB)

The board would be constructed of 3- Village Trustees or appointees, 3- Selectboard Members or appointees, Village Manager and Town Administrator. This is similar to what St. Albans Town & St. Albans City have constructed. Mr. Savage stated the Village owns the Police Department and insures the department and assumes the liability. That is why they have to have control over who's hired.

Swanton Village is still working on the cost of fire protection.

Ms. Cooper stated she has met with Mr. Sheets to clarify questions she had after last weeks joint meeting. Ms. Cooper would like to see a mental health worker included in the future plans and Police Advisory Board.

**Mr. White made a motion to bring a proposal of full-time 24/7 police coverage before Swanton Town voters, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.**

Mr. Fournier also stated he has had a conversation with Highgate and they are seriously looking to have Swanton provide coverage, therefor this would lower the cost for Swanton tax payers.

There will be a public hearing for tax payers to learn about proposed changes in coverage **Monday December 4, 2023 @7pm Swanton Village Complex.**

They would like to see Mr. Sheets expand the cost of homes over (\$350,000 at \$1,000,000) increments for people to know as well as include fire protection costs.

f) Town Line of Credit

Ms. Cathy Fourier state it is time to renew the Town of Swanton's line of credit with Peoples Trust Company.

**Mr. Hemenway made a motion to renew the line of credit with Peoples Trust Company, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.**

7. New Town Business

a) Letter of Support for TA Grant for Village of Swanton

Mr. Savage stated Swanton Village has applied for Transportation Alternatives Grant and needs a letter of support from Mr. Fournier as Selectboard chair in support. Mr. Savage had the letter prepared for Mr. Fournier

**Mr. White made a motion for Mr. Fournier to sign a letter of support for Swanton Village application of Transportation Alternatives Grant, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.**

- b) Franklin County Mountain Bike Club – Kurt Hansbury  
Mr. Hansbury came before the board to tell them all the things Franklin County Mountain Bike Club does in local communities. The next plan is to construct a trail from St. Albans Town forest to Greens Corners. (Route 105) They have been in contact with landowners. This project is the beginning of the future plans for mountain biking in Vermont.  
They also plan to change the name of there club to Franklin County Trails. These trails will be grant funded, Mr. Hansbury is not looking for funding he is looking for the Selectboards support.  
Swanton is in a great location with the LVRT also.  
Mr. Hansbury had previously met with Mr. Savage and they discussed the idea of having a trail go from the “Dick Thompson Fit & Healthy” trail to the Missisquoi Valley Wildlife Refuge. This would be great for Swanton as well. Mountain Biking has been a huge economic boom for the Northeast Kingdom.

**Mr. Bourgeois made a motion for Mr. Fournier to sign a letter of support of Franklin County Mountain Bike Club to apply for grants to construct trails, seconded by Mr. Hemenway. Motion carried.**

Mr. Hansbury will draft the letter and forward to Mr. Savage to have Mr. Fournier sign.

- c) Swanton Public Library – 2024 Budget discussion  
Ms. Rupp, Ms. Gaudette and Mr. Kelley came before the board to present proposed 2024 Swanton Library budget.  
After a review the library’s budget the Selectboard has asked them to review and comeback with a lower salary increase. The proposed budget has a 20.6% salary increase and Mr. Fournier stated that the Town is not giving its employees an increase of that size that they need to cut that back or cut in other areas.  
Ms. Rupp and Ms. Gaudette stated they feel they are trying to offer competitive pay rates.  
The selectboard would also like to see an abstract added to the town report in regards the library endowment accounts.

8. Community and Economic Development

a) Land Inventory listing

Mr. Savage gave the board members a list of properties in Swanton land that is not in the land trust that could be developed.

9. Any Other Necessary Business

None

10.. Correspondence

Mr. Savage and Mr. Fournier received a letter from the Homeowners Association of Glen Ridge. The residents of Glen Ridge would like to have their children picked up at their homes not Highgate Rd Route 207 they currently are. They

have contacted the State of Vermont and were told they need to contact the Selectboard. All of the request they have for Route 207 are required by the state not the town.

Mr. Savage will look into what the rules are of a school bus going on a private road. (Glen Ridge is a private road)

11. Public Comment (Reprise)

None

12. Upcoming Events

- a) Thursday, November 23, and Friday, November 24, 2023 – Thanksgiving Holiday – Town Offices and Operations CLOSED
- b) Saturday, November 25, 2023 – Small Business Saturday – Shop locally!
- c) Saturday, November 25, 2023—Craft Fair- Parish Hall
- d) Monday, November 27, 2023 – Joint SLB & Trustee’s meeting -6 pm Village Complex
- e) Saturday, December 2, 2023 Christmas in the Park 3-5:30 pm
- f) Monday, December 4, 2023—Joint SLB & Trustee’s Public Hearing for police coverage- 7 pm Village Complex
- g) Tuesday, December 5, 2023—Regular Selectboard Meeting- 6 pm Town Offices

13. Executive Session (if needed)

Not needed

E. Adjournment

**Mr. Hemenway made a motion to adjourn at 8:58 pm, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.**

Respectfully Submitted by

Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant