

**SWANTON VILLAGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SWANTON TOWN SELECTBOARD
SWANTON VILLAGE MUNICIPAL COMPLEX
120 FIRST STREET
SWANTON, VT 05488**

**PUBLIC HEARING &
REGULAR MEETING
Monday, November 27, 2023
6:00 PM**

PRESENT: Neal Speer, Village President; Chris Leach, Trustee; Adam Paxman, Trustee; Eugene LaBombard, Trustee; William “Bill” Sheets, Village Manager; Dianne Day, Village Clerk; Brian Savage, Town Administrator; Steve Bourgeois, Selectman; Ed White Sr., Selectman; Earl Fournier, Selectman; Nicole Draper, Selectwoman (via Teams); Heidi Britch-Valenta, Grant Specialist; Matthew Sullivan, Chief of Police; Damon Broderick, Karen Sentoff, VHB; Linda Wirts, Hank Lambert; Swanton Beautification Committee; Corrina King, Missisquoi River Basin; Jessica Hubis, Missing Piece Bakery and Ch 16.

Unless otherwise noted, all motions carried, unanimously.

1. Call to Order:

Neal Speer, Village President, called the Joint Town SLB and Village Trustees Public Hearing with VHB to order at 6:10 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance:

Everyone in attendance stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Joint Town SLB and Village Trustees Public Hearing with VHB for Exit 21 Northbound Project:

Karen Sentoff thanked the Board for meeting jointly and said tonight she will be bringing forth some potential alternatives for the Interstate and discussing what the implications might be. She said she is also looking for an endorsement to proceed and push this process along. She said she had a letter of support ready showing that the Town and the Village are behind this project. Karen said intersection projects like this one where the Town and Regional Planning Commission have come together and identified alternatives out of this process, she is seeing these projects being processed right away. She said the timeline is very encouraging. Karen then provided another Power Point presentation for the Board members:

Project Background

- Existing Conditions
- Confirm Purpose and Need
- Envision Potential Improvements / Alternatives for Evaluation
- Identify Project Constraints / Challenges
- Endorse Advancement of Project to Supplemental Scoping
- Next Steps

VPSP2 Vermont Project Selection and Project Prioritization Process

VPSP2 is a mechanism to identify, prioritize, and select state transportation capital improvement projects on the federal aid system. VPSP2’s Vision: Develop a performance-based, data driven project selection & prioritization framework that maximizes the “transportation value” delivered to Vermont taxpayers. This will be done through:

- Providing a defined, consistent, and transparent process for selecting and prioritizing projects that make up VTrans’ Capital Program,
- Providing a mechanism for input from the RPCs and communities in the selection and prioritization of transportation projects,
- Utilizing criteria that delineate the “transportation value” that potential and planned VTrans' projects will provide to the statewide transportation network.

Regional Priority Project Refinement Process

- VTrans is evaluating regionally identified projects for consideration in the Capital Program
- May not have been identified prior to the VPSP2 process
- May not have all the supporting documentation in place
- Collaborative process (VTrans + RPC + Community) to refine projects and fill any gaps in project

development to date.

Project Identification

- I-89 Exit 21 NB / VT 78 identified by issues of queuing on I-89
- No Prior Scoping Study
- Pedestrian improvements at Exit 21
- Explored in the 2017 Swanton Sidewalk Scoping Study
- Preliminary design plans in 2023 - STP BP 19(5)

Existing Conditions

6 crashes with 2 injury crashes associated with the I-89 Exit 21 NB Ramp / VT 78 intersection - greater than similar Exits on I-89.

Categorized as Primary Risk for left turn crashes at minor stop-controlled intersection.

Karen talked about the backup on the off ramp and also discussed the deceleration in that area.

Confirm Purpose and Need

PURPOSE The purpose of the project at the intersection of the I-89 Exit 21 NB ramps and VT-78 is to improve traffic operations and safety by reducing queuing and spillback onto I-89 in current and future traffic scenarios.

Karen said she added one piece to her Need statement and that is the deficiency in deceleration lane length.

NEED The needs for the improvements at this location are identified by the higher-than-average crashes relative to similar exits on I-89, observed queuing on the interstate off-ramp, and deficiency in deceleration lane length.

Eugene LaBombard said he liked the additional statement. Chris Leach said the additional crashes at this intersection would be reason enough to move forward with this project. He also said he hoped there would be a traffic light installed.

Preliminary Alternatives for Evaluation

- No Build
- Two-Lane Approach
- Signalization
- Deceleration Lane Extension
- Roundabout

Karen said it's pretty clear where they might be headed but wanted to make sure consensus was there. She said the intersection should be lit because it's very dark in that area. She said the road safety audit also identified overhead signage and they may want to consider that as well. She also mentioned advanced warning signage.

Baseline Improvements for Consideration

- Intersection / Interchange Lighting
- Overhead Signage
- Raised Median
- Advanced Warning Signage

Evaluation Considerations

- Delay on Northbound Approach and Overall
- Queue on Off-Ramp
- Deceleration Lane Length – 570'
- Existing Deceleration Lane Length (no queue) – Approx. 700'

Karen said there is a deficiency in the deceleration lane, and they are addressing that also. They talked about the raised median, and she said it would be like Exit 20 in St. Albans. Karen talked about the conceptual cost of each alternative and what the impacts would be and whether it satisfies the purpose and needs.

There was discussion about roundabouts and the wetlands that surround the area. She said she thinks they are heading in the direction of signalization here. Adam Paxman asked if there has been any discussion about adding a curve to the off ramp to achieve deceleration distance. Karen said that's an interesting thought but said the wetlands add an issue to that idea. Bill Sheets asked Karen to email him the Power Point presentation and he would distribute it to the board members. He said they could review it and then forward any questions they may have to her. Karen said that would be great and suggested it be done in the next two weeks if possible. She then talked about project constraints and challenges.

Project Constraints / Challenges

- Pedestrian Accommodations
- Archaeological and Historical Assessments (Completed for Sidewalk Scoping)
- Wetlands Surrounding Intersection
- Overhead Utilities
- Deceleration Lane Length + Taper Limited by Bridge 0097N

Next Steps

- Endorse Advancement of Project to Supplemental Scoping
- Letter of Endorsement
- Draft Refinement Report
- Program Project through VPSP2 Process

Chris Leach said the airport has been upgraded and said that means more traffic. He asked if they took that into consideration. Karen said they can figure that information into her report. Earl Fournier also mentioned the traffic on Frontage Road and Karen said they took that into consideration as well. Neal Speer said what they are trying to address is the back up on the exit ramp and thinks that is what they need to concentrate on. He said widening the off ramp and focusing on what they can do to increase the safety there is what's important.

4. Public Comment:

Damon Broderick asked if the signalization could happen within the next year and mentioned the flashing lights at exit 16. Karen said there is a 3-to-5-year timeline for projects. Damon said because these alternatives had small impacts cost wise, couldn't they be done sooner. Karen said these would be sent to the agency asking to be done sooner rather than later.

5. Heidi Britch-Valenta, Grant Specialist – Village Application for Church Street Streetscape:

Bill Sheets said they are looking at doing a significant project on Church Street in the near future and asked Heidi Britch-Valenta to come up and provide some information on this topic. She said the Village currently has a Transportation Alternatives Grant to do some modifications on Canada Street, Grand Avenue and Merchants Row. She said Karen Sentoff is also helping the Village with an application for the next round which will focus on Church Street. She said they would like to make it a one-way street, add bicycle lanes, replace sidewalks and implement stormwater improvements. Heidi said they have quite a few water issues on this street so the stormwater improvements will be a great asset. Chris Leach asked if there would be diagonal parking. Karen said it looks more like parallel parking on the west side of the street. Bill Sheets said their 74 Merchants Row property will add a significant amount of parking spaces to that area. Adam Paxman asked about the two bike lanes and suggested they take one out and have more parking ability. Karen said they would need more like 18 feet to handle that kind of parking. She said she knows they don't want to touch the green space. Adam thought by narrowing the road some it would slow the traffic down. Earl Fournier agreed that there would be a net gain in parking spaces. Heidi said this Transportation Grant takes 3 to 5 years to implement and the Village is responsible for the local match of \$150,000 for a \$600,000 grant award. She said there is some in kind work that can be done but not all of it can be by in kind. Adam Paxman made the motion to authorize the Board of Trustees to sign the Phase 2 Transportation Alternatives Grant in the amount of \$600,000, with a Swanton Village match of \$150,000. Eugene LaBombard seconded. Motion carried.

Earl Fournier stated that since both boards were together and Hank Lambert from the Swanton Beautification Committee was there, he'd like to ask them to focus on sprucing up the area by the VFW and Swanton Laundromat as your heading up Merchants Row into the Village. He said they do really good work in Swanton and he said this is a very good investment and something to consider.

6. Adjourn Public Hearing:

The Joint Meeting and Public Hearing with VHB for the Exit 21 Northbound Project was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

7. Call Regular Meeting to Order:

Neal Speer, Village President, called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

8. Agenda Review:

Village Manager Bill Sheets stated Jessica Hubis from Missing Piece Bakery was here to discuss her sign. Move to #15. Dianne Day, Village Clerk, stated she needed to add Customer Accounts under Executive Session.

9. Public Comment:

None.

10. Approve and Accept Minutes from Monday, November 13, 2023 as presented:

Chris Leach made the motion to approve and accept the Minutes from November 13, 2023 as presented. Adam Paxman seconded the motion. Motion carried.

11. Approve and Accept Village Warrants through Wednesday, November 22, 2023:

Eugene LaBombard made the motion to approve and accept Village Warrants #114 thru #118 as presented. Adam Paxman seconded the motion. Discussion: None. Motion carried.

12. Swanton Beautification Committee Request 2024 Funding with Hank Lambert:

Hank Lambert was present for this request and handed out copies of the following report:

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 as well as 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: November 2023 FYI letters to donors and the public.
- Arrange clean-up and plantings with laundromat owner, Merchants Row.

Hank said he wanted to thank everyone who helped the Beautification Committee this past year and said they are very grateful for everyone's hard work. He thanked the Village again for the automatic water lines that Public Works installed and said that has helped tremendously. He said they are requesting the same amount of money the Village gave last year which was \$5000.

Adam Paxman made the motion to approve the Village of Swanton allocating \$5000 to the Swanton Beautification Committee for the 2024 season. Eugene LaBombard seconded. Discussion: Bill Sheets stated they would handle invoices the same way they did this past year. Motion carried.

13. Corrina King – Presentation from Missisquoi River Basin on Water Quality and Conservation:

Corrina King introduced herself to the Board and said they work on protecting all sources of water in their watershed, specifically the Missisquoi River. She advised the Board that she could help them with projects in this area if needed. She said they work on everything from tree planting, education and also

works with Friends of Northern Lake Champlain. She said they're expanding into local schools to help create good stewards of our waterways. She asked the Board what their relationship with the river is. Adam Paxman said they own a bridge, Chris Leach mentioned recreation, Dianne Day mentioned the removal of phosphorus, and Adam said the Village of Swanton is a very good steward of the river. Neal Speer mentioned the hydro plant and how we generate electricity. Corrina mentioned the flooding that happened, erosion on the riverbanks and asked about what impacts the river. Adam Paxman talked about fish coming up river from the lake and said if they did some dredging bigger fish would come up. Corrina said dredging has been discussed but said the State has some concerns about that. Chris Leach said it would be important at the mouth of the river because it's probably impeding the sturgeon from coming up. They also discussed the breeding grounds and how important they are. Corrina asked if there are any river related policies in place. Chris Leach said no but because of the flooding in 2018 FEMA has decided to purchase those properties right on the river. They talked about the Northern Canoe Forest Trail and Corrina said they work with them also. Corrina asked if there were any river-related projects they needed help with. She said they work on river walks, community education, stream bank erosion control, and river tree planting. Corrina said they also work on storm water projects. Chris Leach mentioned Marble Mill and said it seems like there's an opportunity for people to access the river there. Neal Speer asked if she worked with the federal government at all and mentioned the Wildlife Refuge. He said that area is basically untouched because it's federal property. He thought some of the debris there should be cleaned out. Corrina said the State is all about leaving logs in the river now because it's good fish habitat. She asked if there were any water quality concerns that are impacting the waterways. Dianne Day stated she is required by the State of Vermont to mail a Source Protection Plan to residents who live on Maquam Shore Road near the water intake valve. She said this educates them on using pesticides and to be aware of things that could enter the water via their property. Corrina said there are programs out there pertaining to grass clippings called Raise the Blade and said they encourage residents to leave their grass at least 3 inches high. She said this is very beneficial and Dianne said she would look into sending those residents more information. Chris Leach mentioned the hydro plant and said the dam there helps keep the erosion down and helps keep the river healthy. The Board thanked Corrina for coming in and she encouraged them to reach out if they have any concerns.

14. Swanton Village Police Department Update with Chief of Police Matthew Sullivan:

Chief of Police Matt Sullivan stated the Village police department responded to 128 incidents during the month of October. He said those incidents included 12 traffic stops with 3 tickets being issued as well as 7 warnings and 1 arrest and 25 arrest charges with 10 individuals. He said the top ten calls for service were 12 traffic stops, 11 community outreach, 7 theft, 6 search warrant, 6 alarm, 5 citizen assist, 5 welfare/suicide check, 5 directed patrol, 5 agency assistance, and 19 suspicious person/circumstance.

Chief Sullivan said the police department responded to 254 incidents in the Town and Village combined. He said those incidents resulted in 45 traffic stops with 9 tickets being issued, 29 warnings and 2 arrests, and 32 arrest charges with 14 individuals. He said the top ten calls for service in October were 45 traffic stops, 19 directed patrol, 23 suspicious person/circumstance, 15 community outreach, 9 search warrants, 10 welfare/suicide checks, 9 citizen assist, 10 alarm, 15 agency assistance, and 18 property/home watch.

Matt said his officers have been very busy investigating cases and are doing a tremendous job. Eugene LaBombard mentioned the amount of arrest charges and felt it was higher than usual. Chief Sullivan said some of these charges pertain to fraud cases and that can amount to a lot of separate charges. He also said a lot of these fraud cases stem from substance abuse addiction. He said they're doing a good job of pushing drugs out of this community. The Board thanked Chief Sullivan for his report.

15. Missing Piece Bakery – Jessica Hubis, Request for Sign Funds:

Jessica Hubis, owner of Missing Piece Bakery, was present for this request. She informed the Board there are numerous start up fees associated with her opening a bakery on Canada Street. She acknowledged that she has been approved for a \$5000 revolving loan from the Village of Swanton, but asked if there was any other financial help they could offer to help cover the expense of her new sign. She showed them a quote along with a picture of the new sign. The quote is \$5300 to \$5700. Adam Paxman said he'd rather think about this for a while before deciding. Neal Speer said the Board could set a precedent at this time if they decided to give her money and said they would have to give money to all businesses who came in asking for help. Neal talked about the \$400 that was given to a business on Merchants Row that came out of ARPA funds for help with their sign. He said the ARPA funds are gone or already allocated for other projects. Adam asked that this item be tabled until further notice.

16. Village Manager Update:

6 South River Street: On 11/17 the State of Vermont (SOV) signed off on our proposed plan for corrective action alternatives, to include additional soil sampling and groundwater sampling. KAS will be onsite this Thursday, 11/30 to Pre-mark the property for drilling. Drilling has been scheduled for the week of 12/4. Based on those samples, KAS and the SOV will sign off on the final criteria required to obtain a certificate of completion for this site.

Social Media: Two MVUHS Field Trips were here at 120 First Street, highlighting the Police and Fire Departments. We host those same two classes this week at Hydro and will post some photos and a brief description on Facebook.

We are in the process of working with our UVM intern to create an Instagram page and we will also be creating our own YouTube page to ensure that our citizens are better informed of projects and initiatives.

Northwest Regional Planning Commission: Heidi and I will be attending the NRPC annual meeting this Wednesday evening the 29th. I will be giving a presentation on all the Village projects, to include the proposed Public Safety facility.

Public Safety Proposal update:

124 First Street:

We have another Joint meeting with the Selectboard scheduled for Monday December 4th starting at 7 PM here at 120 First Street. That discussion will be related to the future of policing.

December 7th: Reminder this will be the kick-off meeting for the Proposed Public Safety Facility and renovations. This meeting will start at 6 PM here and it is the first of 10 meetings/open houses scheduled in December alone.

17. Any Other Necessary Business:

Adam Paxman wanted to remind everyone that Christmas in the Park will be held this Saturday, December 2nd from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. He also wanted to remind everyone about the Winter Parking Ban taking effect on December 1st.

Chis Leach stated he has heard a couple complaints about the Post Office removing the mailbox from the park. He said this is the perfect opportunity for them to install a drive-thru mailbox and said he would talk with the Postmaster.

18. Executive Session to Discuss Real Estate and Customer Accounts:

Adam Paxman made the motion to enter Executive Session at 8:35 p.m. to discuss Customer Accounts and Real Estate. Eugene LaBombard seconded. Motion carried.

Adam Paxman made the motion to exit Executive Session and Re-Enter Open Session at 10:02 p.m. Chris Leach seconded. Motion carried.

ACTION TAKEN: Adam Paxman made the motion to enter Water Commissioner's meeting at 10:02 p.m. Eugene LaBombard seconded. Motion carried.

Adam Paxman made the motion to approve the Village of Swanton to write off \$16.45 in the water department and \$23.35 in the sewer department for a total of \$39.80. Chris Leach seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Chris Leach made the motion to exit Water Commissioner's meeting at 10:04 p.m. Eugene LaBombard seconded the motion. Motion carried.

19. Adjournment:

Eugene LaBombard made the motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of the Trustees meeting at 10:05 p.m. Adam Paxman seconded. There being no further business at hand, Neal Speer, Village President, adjourned the meeting at 10:05 p.m. Motion carried.

Neal Speer, Village President

Date

Dianne Day, Village Clerk

Date