

Draft Minutes
TOWN OF SWANTON
SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING
PUBLIC HEARING
Swanton Central School Cafeteria
24 Fourth Street, Swanton, VT 05488
In-Person & By Zoom
Wednesday, January 10, 2024
7:00 PM

Present: Earl Fournier-Chair, Nicole Draper, Steve Bourgeois, Cody Hemenway, Joel Clark-members, Brians Savage-Town Administrator, Cathy Fournier-Town Clerk, Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant

Community Members Present: Christopher Lake, Nancy & Dick Hazard, Greta Boulerice, Dee Krzynski, Karen Bratland, Eileen Skiff, Tim Skiff, Kevin Daignault, Deb Bourgeois, Julie Regimbal, Maurice Gagne, Jennifer Fitzsimmons, Raymond Tardif Jr, Allen Letourneau, Suzie Kelleher, Anna Rocheleau, Sandra Dubois, Alexis Dubois, Harry Curth, David & Clare Beebe, Patti & Mike Arnold, Alan Norris, Scott Godin, Lisa Quimette, Nancy Barkyoumb, Lyle Poirier, Gordon Winters, Karen Luneau, Ron & Sandy Kilburn, Michelle Racine, Shawn Flanagan, David Winchester, Lynn Savage, Stephanie Menard, Colen Gurwitt, David Chevalier, Jason Cross, Richard Bushey, Brian Burns, Ray Trombley, Heath McAllister, Lora McAllister, Yashua Pastina, Shawn Howe, Charles Godin, Kim Pedersen, Jeanine Domey, David Hubbard, Carol Hubbard, Ashley Rox, Brian Desrochers, Chevon Cooper, Casey Stetson, Ronnie Ouimette, Mike Barkyoumb, Bill Nordberg, Michelle Nordberg, Scott & Jori Dean

Zoom Participants: G. Horton, David Horton, Kyle, Citizen. Linda, Mike Walke, Katie Gordon, Mary Stanley, Danci, Kevin's iPad, Justina Jannett, Amy Foster, Darcy Scott, 802-734-0078, Dillon Dupon, Steven Martel, Josh Ellerbrock, Amy Fletcher, Meagan Conly, Nicole Cross, Chad, T Entered

**QUESTION: DO THE RESIDENTS OF THE TOWN OF SWANTON
WANT FULL TIME POLICE COVERAGE?**

We want your input on what you want for future police coverage.

- I. Call to Order
Mr. Fournier called the Public Hearing to order at 7:05pm.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
Mr. Fournier led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- III. Power Point Presentation
Mr. Fournier asked those present to hold questions until after Mr. Savage's presentation. The question Mr. Fournier stated they would like to know as a board is are the residents of Swanton happy with current Police coverage and do they want to see more?

Mr. Savage presented a PowerPoint presentation. Please see attached.

Mr. Fournier then opened the floor to questions & comments.

IV. Public comments and questions

Members of the community spoke and asked different questions to which Mr. Fournier did his best to answer. Mr. Fournier asked everyone whom spoke to state their name, if they live in the Town or Village and how they feel about Police coverage.

Do the Town residents want full time police coverage in 2025? Are they satisfied with the 2024 proposal of 10 hours a day?

Members of the community whom spoke are listed below:

Alan Letourneau, Karen Bratland, Casey Stetson, Ashley Rocks, Alan Norris, Raymond Tardiff, Brian Desrochers, Tim Skiff, Moe Gagne, Heath McAllister, Jennifer Fitzsimmons, Carol Hubbard, Michelle Norberg, Shawn Howard, Scott Dean, David Winchester, Gordon Winters, Sandy Dubois, Chevon Cooper, Sandy Kilburn

Members in Zoom whom asked questions read aloud listed below:

Dillon Dupont, Amy Fletcher, Justina Jennett

V. Wrap up

Community members present & on Zoom asked if the board members supported the increased police protection?

Mr. Joel Clark does not support the village proposed project the cost is too expensive to Town residents. Mr. Clark does support the Swanton Village Police and the increase to 10 hours a day effective 4/1/24.

Mr. Steve Bourgeois supports the increase to 10 hours a day but does not support the new facility/full time coverage. Mr. Bourgeois feels there is other options out there not yet considered, this full-time option is too expensive. Mr. Bourgeois fully supports the Fire & Police departments.

Mr. Cody Hemenway does not support the full-time coverage project. Mr. Hemenway supports the 10 hours a day contract but that the Town should have more of a say & voice. Mr. Hemenway fully supports the Police department. The increase in the 2024 budget includes a lot of uncontrollable expenses.

Ms. Nicole Draper thanked everyone for coming, Ms. Draper does support the 10 hour a day coverage for 2024 to vote on at Town Meeting Day. Ms. Draper stated the monthly updates does show what the Police are doing in the Town. Ms. Draper feels they need to ensure the Town residents have a say and a voice.

Mr. Earl Fournier supports the 10 hour a day coverage to be voted on at Town Meeting Day. Mr. Fournier has concerns about the amount Swanton Village is putting before the Village residents. Mr. Fournier believes the

affordability can be worked out by partnering with other Towns. Mr. Fournier stated no matter what direction it will cost more.

VI. Adjournment

Ms. Draper made a motion to adjourn at 8:45pm, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted By
Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant

TOWN OF SWANTON

PUBLIC HEARING

JANUARY 10, 2024

7:00 PM

“The future of police coverage for the Town of Swanton “

History and Background

- *Prior to 2005, the Town of Swanton depended primarily on the Vermont State Police for police coverage.*
- *Voters approved a 2 year joint contract with the Town of Highgate at Town meeting in 2005 for a total of 56 hours per week of coverage from the Franklin County Sheriff's Department.*
- *In 2012, the Selectboard, acting on concerns of local residents decided to reach out to the Swanton Village Police Dept. for 8 hours of coverage per day, seven days per week for a total of 56 hours of coverage. This is the present coverage that continues today.*

Levels of activity - incidents

	<u>VSP</u>	<u>SVPD</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
2012	629	426	1,055
2023	517	920	1,437

Incident details - 2023

Total Incidents: 920 (27% increase over 2022)

Traffic Stops: 200

Tickets Issued: 72

Warnings: 173

Civil Tickets: 11

Traffic Arrests: 18

Arrests: 43 with 75 charges

Other Activity - 2023

• Alarms:	27
• Welfare Check:	29
• Community Outreach:	30
• Citizen Assists:	34
• Motor Vehicle Complaints:	38
• Agency Assists:	52
• Property/Home Watch:	60
• Suspicious Person/Circumstances:	62
• Directed Patrols:	172

Contract costs

- *The current contract the Town has with the Village for Police Coverage as mentioned previously is for 8 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days a year.*
- *The cost for this service for 2023 has been \$196,784.00*
- *The proposed contract for 2024 will be for 10 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days a year. This Village is not going to provide less than 10 hours per day for contracted services due to shift management of the police department.*
- *The Village conducted an analysis of the overall operating budget of the PD and have determined that between town and village there are 30 hours per day of coverage, 20 for the Village and 10 for the Town. The net operating estimated expense of the Police Department for 2024 is \$1,404,456.00. As the Town portion is 33% of the hours of coverage the amount requested for coverage in 2024 is \$475,057.00*

Contract costs vs. tax rates

TAX YEAR: 2023

CONTRACT COST: \$196,784.00

GRAND LIST: \$5,519,736.00

TAX RATE: \$.0356

ASSESSED VALUE

\$150,000.00

\$250,000.00

\$350,000.00

\$450,000.00

\$500,000.00

\$750,000.00

TAX

\$ 53.40

\$ 89.00

\$124.60

\$160.20

\$178.00

\$267.00

TAX YEAR: 2024

CONTRACT COST: \$475,057.00

GRAND LIST: \$5,519,736.00*

TAX RATE: \$.0861

TAX

\$129.15

\$215.25

\$301.35

\$387.45

\$645.75

\$861.00

*2023 Grand list – 2024 not available

Police Coverage Proposal.

The Selectboard over the years, have heard from many residents that they want more of a police presence in the community. Last fall the Selectboard was presented with an opportunity to have police coverage from the Village for the same numbers of hours that the Village has coverage. This would be an officer on duty 20 hours per day, seven days per week. There would be officers on call for the 4 hour gap to handle emergency calls for service.

This would only be possible if the bond vote for the new public safety facility was approved by Village voters and would not be in place until at least 2026 as additional personnel would have to be hired. The coverage would, of course be at a substantial increase in contract price, the exact cost is difficult to estimate at this time.

Police Coverage Proposal (Cont'd.)

Residents in the Village have been enjoying the 20 hour per day coverage for years, at a substantial tax amount.

Tax Year: 2024

Grand List: \$1,664,546

To Be Raised by Taxes: \$998,967.00

Tax Rate: \$.6001

<u>Assessed Value</u>	<u>Tax</u>
\$150,000.00	\$ 900.15
\$250,000.00	\$1500.25
\$350,000.00	\$2100.35
\$450,000.00	\$2700.45
\$750,000.00	\$4500.75

Police Coverage Proposal (Cont'd)

Beginning in 2025 if the Town would enter into a contract with the Village of Swanton for police coverage that would mirror the coverage that the Village presently has, 20 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year. There would be officers on call for the remaining 4 hours per day in the event of an emergency. The size of the force would have to increase and due to hiring procedures the full effect of the change would likely not be seen until 2026.

An estimated budget for the operations of the “new” police department would be \$2,524,753.37 total for the town and village taxpayers.

Police Coverage Proposal (Cont'd.)

TAX RATE CALCULATIONS:

AMOUNT TO BE RAISED FOR OPERATIONS OF PD: \$2,524,753.57

GRAND LIST: \$7,184,282.

TOWN: \$ 5,519,736. (77%)

VILLAGE: \$ 1,664,546. (23%)

AMOUNT TO BE RAISED FOR OPERATIONS OF PD: \$2,524,753.57

TOWN PORTION: \$2,524,753.57 X 77% = \$1,944,060.00

VILLAGE PORTION: \$2,524,753.57 X 23% = \$ 580,693.00

TAX RATES:

TOWN: \$.3522

VILLAGE: \$.3488

Police Coverage Proposal – Tax Rates

Tax Rates:

Town: \$.3522

Village: \$.3488

Estimated Actual Tax:

<u>Assessed Value</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Village</u>
\$150,000.00	\$ 528.30	\$ 523.20
\$250,000.00	\$ 880.50	\$ 872.00
\$350,000.00	\$ 1232.70	\$ 1220.80
\$450,000.00	\$ 1585.90	\$ 1569.60
\$500,000.00	\$ 1761.00	\$ 1744.00
\$750,000.00	\$ 2641.50	\$ 2616.00

Area Per-capita Police Spending

Your Selectboard had compiled a chart showing per-capita police spending in several communities around the state. Understanding of course, the per-capita rate does not equate to tax rates or the amount to be raised by taxes.

<u>MUNICIPALITY</u>	<u>POPULATION</u>	<u>BUDGET</u> 1,000,000	<u>PER CAPITA</u>
St. Albans City and Town	14,094	\$5.40	\$383.14
Milton	10,689	\$2.48	\$232.01
Morristown	5,676	\$2.01	\$354.12
Winooski	8,328	\$2.98	\$357.82
Newport City	4,403	\$2.06	\$467.86
Middlebury	8,496	\$2.09	\$246.39
Vergennes	2,553	\$0.81	\$316.09
SWANTON PROPOSALS - 2024			
Village	2,381	\$1.19	\$499.92
Town	<u>4,456</u>	\$0.48	\$106.60
Total	6,837		

Police Coverage – Building Plans

Several months ago, the Village of Swanton announced plans to build a new public safety facility on land it had purchased next to the present Village Complex that was formerly the property of Carroll Concrete. The proposed building would house the police and fire departments and the space freed up in the existing complex would be renovated to house other departments of the village.

The purpose of this meeting this evening, is not to discuss the particulars on this project. It is a Village project and no one here is qualified to provide information.

We do know that existing police station is inadequate and if the town and village has mirrored coverage, the “new” department will simply not function in the existing facility. If the bond vote on the new facility is approved, the annual debt service on the facility will be added to the budgets of both the police and fire departments and will affect the annual budget amounts paid by the town for both departments.

Building Plans – Other tax considerations

As was previously mentioned, the expanded police coverage will only be implemented if the proposed public safety facility is passed by the village voters. If passed the debt service on the bond will be added to the yearly contract for BOTH the police and fire departments.

From the information we have received the proposed debt service would be a fixed principal payment of \$494,454.00 per year plus interest. The first several years will have the highest payments as the interest portion will be the highest.

Building Plans – Other tax considerations

Annual Debt Service

Bond Amount: \$14,833,614.00

Term: 30 Years

Interest Rate: 4.75%

Fixed Principal Payment: \$494,454.00

Payment – Year 1: \$1,198,992.00

Amount of Bond Payment Allocated to PD: \$457,120.63

Amount of Bond Payment Allocated to FD: \$571,171.65

Total Police Budget with Bond Payment: \$2,981,874.20

Total Fire Budget with Bond Payment: \$1,145,096.87

Building Plans – Other tax consideration

Town Share of Police Budget with Bond Debt Service:

$\$2,981,874.20 \times 77\% = \$2,296,043.13 / \$5,519,736. = \$.4160$ Tax Rate

Town Share of Fire Budget with Bond Debt Service:

$\$1,145,096.87 \times 77\% = \$881,724.59 / \$5,519,736. = \$.1597$ Tax Rate

<u>Assessed Value</u>	<u>Police Tax</u>	<u>Fire Tax</u>
\$250,000.00	\$1025.00	\$399.25
\$350,000.00	\$1456.00	\$558.95
\$450,000.00	\$1872.00	\$718.65
\$550,000.00	\$2288.00	\$878.35
\$650,000.00	\$2704.00	\$1038.31
\$750,000.00	\$3120.00	\$1197.75

Police Coverage – Building Plans (Cont'd.)

If the Village bond vote fails, the plans for the mirrored coverage are off the table for an unspecified time.

*Thank you for your attention.
Now open to questions and comments.*