

**DRAFT MINUTES
TOWN OF SWANTON
SELECTBOARD MEETING
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
In-Person & By Zoom
Tuesday September 3, 2024, 6pm**

Present: Joel Clark-Chair, Steve Bourgeois, Nicole Draper, Earl Fournier, Brian Savage-Town Administrator, Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant, Laz Scangas, Suzanne Washburn, Marc Rocheleau, Heather Lavoie, Chief Matthew Sullivan, Sargent Tyler Badeau, Bob Neilson, Shawn Cheney

Zoom: Lynn

Absent:

A. Call to Order

Mr. Clark called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

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

C. Agenda Review

Mr. Clark reviewed the agenda

Ms. Draper asked for an update on 4th street property, the last time they discussed it was July 16th. Mr. Savage said the request has been sent to the State of Vermont and has not received a reply yet.

Mr. Fournier requested to add Route 78 discussion under New Town Business.

Mr. Clark requested to add under Old Town Business Library update.

Mr. Savage requested to add Real Estate to executive session.

D. Meeting Topics

1. Minutes

a) Regular Selectboard Meeting of August 20, 2024

Ms. Draper made a motion to approve August 20, 2024, Regular Selectboard Meeting minutes as written, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

2. Public Comments

None

3. Law Enforcement

a) Swanton Police Department

Chief Sullivan came before the board to share August 2024 Police data.

In August 2024 Swanton Village Police responded to 93 incidents. The top ten incidents were as follows:

28 directed patrols, 11 traffic stops, 5 agencies assist, 5 suspicious person/circumstances, 4 animal problems, 4 property watch, 4 accident/incidents, 4 thefts, 3 threatening and 3 motor vehicle complaints.

Of the 11 traffic stops 3 tickets and 8 warnings were issued. 1 arrest of 1 individual. The Swanton Village Police provided 12.25 hours of additional services. Mr. Clark asked if these additional services were during the day? Chief Sullivan said yes and the data was included in the packet. Mr. Bourgeois asked about the ATV incidents? Chief Sullivan said he would have to get the details on those. Mr. Bourgeois said the ATVs he is seeing are people being respectful and obeying the laws. Chief Sullivan said some of the issues is people not knowing the Town/Village lines, they are not allowed in the Village. Mr. Fournier said some of these people are just looking to get fuel or pass through.

Mr. Clark asked how they are doing with staffing? Chief Sullivan said they have hired a Administrative Assistant, but not another police officer yet. The Administrative Assistant is doing well. They thought they had a officer to offer to but the timing did not fit. They are currently waiting for a officer to apply for part time with roughly 7 years' experience. It has been difficult statewide to hire officers. Chief Sullivan said years ago there were 1100 officer's states wide a couple years ago they were at 800, officers are getting out of the profession. Chief Sullivan has spoken with Chief Burke in South Burlington, and they are down about 20%. St. Albans has also just given 20% raise of 4 years; this may have been renegotiated. Chief Sullivan will find out more. Chief Sullivan said when he took this job, he was looking at what officers in Swanton are paid vs. St. Albans City that is the closest department. It is important to be competitive with pay. Mr. Bourgeois asked what an officer is paid, for example with 5 years' experience? Chief Sullivan said it varies not based on years of service as they have different level officers full / part time. Chief Sullivan also said a large portion of salaries is benefits, health care costs have increased dramatically. They just recently reviewed the SRO information from the school district and the cost is roughly 60% salary/40% benefits. Mr. Fournier said taxpayers can only pay so much but these officers need to be paid well for services.

Chief Sullivan introduced Sargent Badeau to the board. Sargent Badeau joined SVPD in 2022 from Burlington with 14 years' experience. Mr. Fournier asked what attracted him to Swanton? He said Chief Sullivan, and being close to home. Sargent Badeau is one of the best firearms instructors in the State, an asset to the department. Sargent Badeau has been to SWAT school since coming to SVPD. Chief Sullivan said they have worked hard to push back on the drug activity in Swanton, and they are told people out of State have noticed.

b) Swanton Town Health Officer

Mr. Savage shared the August Health Officer report. There were two complaints in August.

The first complaint was about a child testing high for lead in their system from a blood test. This has been going through the State Health Department.

The second was for a complaint of cat urine in an apartment. Mr. Savage and Ms. Candels did do a inspection. The health law does not address odors, but the rental

housing law does. Mr. Savage referred that information to the complainant they can contact the division of Fire Safety. Mr. Savage and Ms. Candels agreed the odor could have been treated by airing out the apartment more of a must smell. The apartment did have a dog as well.

4. Highway Department

Mr. Clark said he has been up to Swanton Hill with Kevin Lapan the road foreman and they agree dropping the road to 15%. They will proceed with this.

5. Old Town Business

a) Library Update-Las Scangas

Mr. Scangas shared a new updated estimate for insulation since the last meeting. Mr. Scangas has added some cost for electrical to move a fan in the attic. They discussed law repairs and dumpsters for debris removal and the Town can take care of that at a lower cost.

Mr. Scangas would like to meet with Alliance Mechanical to get a hard cost from them to move the duct work. Mr. Scangas would like to coordinate with whom the Town would like to use for electrical and the little bit of construction needed.

This work would be done in the spring. They discussed the things that can be done this fall to save efficiency and preparing for the project. Mr. Scangas will do the coordination of this project for the town at an hourly rate.

Mr. Fournier said they should meet with the librarian and trustees to explain to them what is going on, they will need to empty the attic as well. Mr. Scangas would like to walk with each contractor. They will set this up.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to accept Chey Insulation proposal for insulating the library attic, agree to have Las Scangas as project manager at an hourly rate, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

Mr. Clark asked Mr. Scangas if he had worked with Chey Insulation before? Yes, many projects.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to have the Town Administrator sign contracts for this project, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

This will come out of Special Funds.

b) Boundary Line Adjustment update

Mr. Clark said they have looked at these and the next steps to talk to the School District. Mr. Fournier asked if the school has received this? Mr. Savage will find out. This needs to be added to the DRB agenda for September.

This is what everyone agreed to.

Mr. Fournier asked if Mr. Rowell needs to attend the DRB? Yes.

Mr. Clark will represent the Town.

6. New Town Business

a) Selectboard vacancy – Resignation of Cody Hemenway

Mr. Clark said they received Mr. Hemenway's resignation via email after the last meeting. Mr. Clark would like to see this posted and interviews the first meeting in October. Mr. Bourgeois suggested interviews be in the executive session and decisions be delivered the next day. Mr. Clark & Mr. Fournier would like to check to see if they can be done this way. Mr. Bourgeois would like to have the applicants' names added to the website prior to the meeting.

Letters of intent will be due by September 26th for the October 1st meeting. The names can then be posted online September 26th. Mr. Fournier will be out of town October 1st but can join via Zoom.

Mr. Fournier would like to add to the digital sign the vacancy.

Mr. Savage said they need someone to be the back up to Animal Control. Ms.

Draper volunteered.

b) Request for financial assistance with Swan Pond expansion –Suzanne Washburn & Marc Rocheleau

Ms. Washburn and Mr. Rocheleau came before the board to share plans and the projected cost to upgrade the Swan Pond. Ms. Washburn said their immediate need is for a liner and filtrations system for the pond, the liner is falling apart. The current liner is over 25 years old. The liner replacement and pump and filtrations system will cost about \$15,000. Ms. Washburn is hoping they can use ARPA funds (Special Funds) for this. Ms. Washburn has been to the Village Trustee's as well. They are looking for \$7,500 each. Ms. Washburn does not want any of this renovation to affect taxpayers. They have someone who has committed a \$10,000 donation as well. The total projected cost for pump, liner, stone cement pad, fence, landscaping and site work is \$36,400. Ms. Washburn said they have a QR code for people to donate and learn the history of the swans. Mr. Rocheleau said they have kind offers from people for the work and some materials. Mr. Fournier asked if this would all be done at the same time. Mr. Clark asked if the pond size will be the same? No it will be larger. It is currently 17'x37'. The new pond will be 23'x37'. They will not begin until they have all the money.

Ms. Washburn shared pictures of a new house for the swans, they were approached by someone, and they will donate this new house to them for free. The new house will look like the train depot building. The new building will be larger and safer for volunteers and the swans. The current shed is a drawback to getting volunteers to help with the swans now. They are still deciding if the new shed will be either 6'x10' or 8'x10'. The new pond will be 6' wider with 5' of grass. They will then have a fence and sidewalk around the outside. They have added \$5,000 for concrete to the estimate, Mr. Rocheleau said they are working on having a full donation for that. Mr. Bourgeois asked about getting another swan? Ms. Washburn said when they have the new pond they will get another swan.

Ms. Washburn said Swanton Beautification will assist with the landscaping. They have a long list of people to volunteer with the project. Mr. Bourgeois asked about volunteers to help take care of the swans? Mr. Rocheleau said with the new filtration system it will be easier to get help.

Ms. Washburn said there is a lot of comfort for adults and kids to see the swans.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to approve \$7,500 from Special Funds for the Swan Pond, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

c) Vermont 250th Anniversary Resolution

Mr. Savage shared the request for the 250th anniversary of the Vermont declaration of independence in 2026. They are asking towns to adopt a resolution.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if there is any reason they should not? Mr. Savage said no they're not asking for money.

Mr. Clark said they do have an option to provide funding.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to Adopt the Vermont 250th Anniversary Resolution Declaration of Independence, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

d) Route 78

Mr. Fournier said there is concern over the road where the truck went into the river. It sounds like AOT does not plan to fix it in the near future. Mr. Fournier said the Selectboard should make a written request to AOT, Governor Scott, Chairman of the House, Senate that that section needs guardrails. Mr. Clark said to include pictures. They should also include that they have not maintained the edge of the road. Mr. Savage will draft a letter for them to sign. Mr. Fournier would like this letter ready by Friday, Mr. Clark said Tuesday.

Mr. Cheney said they are securing rights-of-way now to expand the road; maybe this is the time to push the road away from the river.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to send a letter to AOT, Governor, Chairman of the House and Senate, Local House and Senate representatives for lack of safety guardrails on VT Route 78 and lack of vegetation maintenance in the rights-of-way, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

7. Community and Economic Development

a) Promote Swanton Report

Mr. Fournier shared an update from their meeting on August 28th. They met with someone who does web design. The Chamber of Commerce is working on updating their website. The group decided they should coordinate with each other. They have a couple more consultants to speak with.

Ms. Drapper said they had a local marketing company come and give a presentation on what they could create. Creating another website like what Downtown St. Albans has for downtown business to promote economic growth in the community. They shared data of what people are looking for. They also discussed having a brochure or pamphlet for people, this is in rough draft. Could they add content to the joint website. They are going to reach out to others.

Ms. Draper said Swanton Arts Council is spearheading Downtown Bingo. They are also working on the Swan Scavenger Hunt. They are discussing getting these things on the community calendar. They have discussed the picnic area at Marble Mill.

The next meeting will be October 22, 2024. Mr. Fournier said they are working on including all business not just downtown.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if this would be another website? Ms. Draper said they feel like a board it could be a plug or add on to their existing website & Chamber. The Chamber must update their website. Mr. Fournier said they need to have this stuff on their website. What's the best way to keep it all coordinated.

Mr. Bourgeois stressed the need for a second bridge when they replace the existing, if the close down that bridge it will kill all the work they have done in the downtown.

8. Any Other Necessary Business

None

9. Correspondence

a) Speed Reduction Request for VT Route 207

Mr. Clark received a letter from the State of Vermont Operations and Safety Bureau. They do not want to lower the speed limit but will send their thoughts to Vermont Traffic Committee who makes the final decision. This will be on the agenda for the next meeting on September 11th at 1:30pm. The public will have the option to attend remotely or in person. Once they receive the invitation, they will forward it to residents who have sent letters of concern to the Town. Mr. Fournier said it should be shared with the school district too. Mr. Clark will attend remotely with Mr. Savage.

10. Public Comment (Reprise)

None

11. Upcoming Events

- a) Swanton Enhancement Program Annual Meeting – Thursday, Sept. 5th - 5:30 pm – Holy Trinity Church – Grand Ave.
- b) Planning Commission – Tuesday, September 10th - 5:00 pm – Town Offices and Zoom
- c) Selectboard Meeting – Tuesday, September 17th – 6:00 pm – Town Offices and Zoom
- d) DRB – Thursday, September 26th – 6:00 pm – Town Offices and Zoom

Mr. Clark asked everyone to share the Selectboard vacancy with everyone. Ms. Washburn asked if there is a job description of what's involved? They will post a brief summary.

12. Executive session (Legal, Real Estate)

Ms. Draper made a motion to enter executive session at 7:27 pm, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to exit the executive session at 8:12 pm, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

No action was taken.

13. Community and Economic Development-Reprise

a) Tim Smith – FCIDC

Mr. Fournier said he has had discussions with landowners in the Southern Growth District and everyone agrees they would like to see municipal services there. Water has been brought out there, but no sewer. Mr. Fournier asked is it realistic to have a sewer available, but they don't know what to ask for in an allocation. Mr. Smith said there is capacity in water and sewer. What they would need to do is sit with the City Manager, Dominic Cloud. The City Manager's concern he has expressed is the agreement they have with they have with St. Albans Town currently. They don't want to exceed what the Town could potentially use in the future. The current agreement they have with St. Albans Town included water and sewer, but they split the cost of Police coverage 50/50. This agreement is for 10 years. This agreement eliminated the affiliation fees. To give an allocation to Swanton, St. Albans Town would have to agree with St. Albans City they are comfortable selling the allocation.

Mr. Smith said the best thing to do would be to meet with all the parties. But to ask for an allocation they need to know what they could potentially need. Mr. Bourgeois asked if they knew they would get an allocation of water and sewer would they then sell it to a developer and they pay the Town back? Acting as a pass through? Mr. Fournier said once they know they can get an allocation then you would ask how it would get financed, it cannot get funded with taxpayer dollars. Mr. Smith said St. Albans has made this agreement before. Mr. Bourgeois asked Mr. Smith if any of the developers in the Swanton Growth District have approached St. Albans City for allocations? Not that he is aware of. Previously every allocation came through the City Council, but since the new agreement they have not had any. Mr. Smith can find out.

Mr. Clark said in previous conversations they've had there is lots available in St. Albans that FCIDC has allocation for. There are 8-9 industrial lots available in St. Albans that has water and sewer available to them.

The need for industrial would-be years away from Swanton.

Mr. Bourgeois said usually developers bring water and sewer to their project. The Town of Highgate did bring water and sewer to the airport paid for by grants, but they had an end product, Swanton would not to start.

Mr. Clark suggested creating a map of the land, zoning for it and letting people know, being supportive but letting a developer lead this role.

Mr. Fournier believes they need to find out what is available to them first. Mr. Smith said they still have to sell land to finish the infrastructure for FCIDC development. Mr. Bourgeois said the St. Albans City isn't going to just give an allotment without paying. No. But there are models out there St. Albans has done before.

Mr. Clark said they should have someone give them an estimate allocation of what would be needed for housing or hotels a number to work with. Mr. Fournier said the Armory is going to need sewer. Maybe but there are other options.

Mr. Bourgeois asked Mr. Fournier when he spoke to the landowners, did, they express interest in this? Yes, see what's available. They understand the Town can't pay for it. Mr. Smith said water is a key element for homes. Those homes would have more value with municipal water. Mr. Smith said he was told houses have run out of water in 5-10 years, municipal water you don't have that problem. Mr. Fournier said Southern Growth is the only area you can really see growth because of land in the land trust.

The next step is to get St. Albans Town, St. Albans City and Swanton together. Mr. Smith said there are good examples of development around them to look at to estimate allocation. The group agreed Milton development might be a good comparison.

Mr. Bourgeois asked Mr. Smith if anyone had ever bought back development rights from the Land Trust? Swanton is strangled by the Land Trust. Mr. Smith said not that he knows of, but he will ask. But is it even an option. Mr. Fournier said sometimes foundations pay to fund the Land Trust and you wouldn't be able to buy it back. The Land Trust has been successful for some.

14. Adjourn

Mr. Fournier made a motion to adjourn at 8:50 pm, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted by
Christina Candels-Administrative Assistant