

**DRAFT MINUTES
TOWN OF SWANTON
SELECTBOARD MEETING
Town Office Building
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488
In-Person & By Zoom
TUESDAY
January 7, 2025 – 6:00 pm**

Present: Joel Clark-Chair, Earl Fournier, Steve Bourgeois, Nicole Draper, Brendan Long-Members, Brian Savage Town Administrator, Cathy Fournier-Town Clerk, Christina Candels-Assistant Town Administrator, Bob Nielson, Suzie Kelleher, Chief Matthew Sullivan, Carter Kutzec

Zoom: Hoague

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

Ms. Candels requested to add discussion on Welcome to Swanton Signs & Joint Meeting with Planning Commission, Selectboard & Village Trustee's.

Mr. Fournier requested an update on LVRT trailhead.

Mr. Savage requested to add update under MVUSD about land swap with Brian Rowell and School District.

D. Meeting Topics

1. Minutes

a) Regular Selectboard of December 17, 2024

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve December 17, 2024, Regular Selectboard meeting minutes as written, seconded by Mr. Fournier. Motion carried.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if the Selectboard needs to approve the hiring of an employee for the Recreation Department as this is adding employees to the Town. Ms. Draper asked if this would apply to seasonal employees as well? The Recreation board has always approved the hiring of staff with the recommendation of the Director, as listed in her contract. Mr. Bourgeois suggested the adding of employees be approved by the Selectboard.

Mr. Bourgeois stated he had also asked at the previous meeting about the purchase contract of the lawn tractor recently purchased. Ms. Draper provided documents to Mr. Savage.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if the Recreation's reserve fund had been added to the Towns account to earn a higher interest. Ms. Cathy Fournier said it is in the process of being done now.

Mr. Clark asked Ms. Cathy Fournier for an update on the interest rate they are receiving? Ms. Cathy Fournier said the rate paid on CD's right now is 4%, the other accounts fluctuated between 2%-3%.

Mr. Bourgeois is trying to figure out what they are using for an index on earnings with fees. Ms. Cathy Fournier said they are not charged any fees. This conversation will be continued later.

2. Public Comments

None.

3. Law Enforcement

a) Swanton Police Department

Chief Sullivan came before the board to share December 2024 incident analysis. In December the Swanton Village Police responded to 53 incidents. The top 10 incident types were:

12- directed patrol, 6 traffic stops, 5 motor vehicle complaints, 3 thefts, 2 welfare/suicide checks, 2 agencies assist, 2 alarms, 2 driving/license suspended, 1 juvenile problem and 1 custodial dispute. Of the 6 traffic stops 4 tickets were issued and 5 warnings. The 3 tickets were associated with traffic stops. In December there were 5 arrests of 5 individuals resulting in 9 charges, 2 of those arrests were associated with traffic stops. Chief Sullivan said in additional services 2 incidents were a result of directed patrol.

In December, 27.5 hours of surveillance were part of a drug case in the Town resulting in 29 hours of additional services. Chief Sullivan said they have provided 96.75 hours of additional services April-December 2024 outside of contract hours.

Chief Sullivan said the cases are complex and require many hours. The case mentioned above involved 9 officers and multiple agencies. This resulted in 27.5 hours of overtime for Swanton Village Officers.

Chief Sullivan shared info on drug activity in Swanton as well as the recent arrest of an individual they have had contact with that the case was dropped. Chief Sullivan said he felt that was an iron solid case and will follow up why that happened. Chief Sullivan shared how these gang members from other cities infiltrate into Swanton, social media plays a role in this.

Mr. Clark asked if the thefts listed in the report are issues with retail theft of people just walking out with products. Chief Sullivan was unsure of the store but shared related thefts in the area.

b) Swanton Town Health Officer

Ms. Kelleher came before the board to share December 2024 report. Ms. Kelleher said the skunk initially thought to be found in Swanton was actually found in Highgate.

Ms. Kelleher shared a recent visit to a Farrar Street residence to release freon into the air and was told by DEC that it is something they take care of going forward.

Ms. Kelleher shared she received an email from VDOH in regard to lead paint, they were requesting photos of the outside of a property.

Ms. Kelleher shared she received an email from NMC regarding a dog bite. As of today, the individual has not come in to register the dog, Mr. Savage has notified AOC.

4. Highway Department

Mr. Clark said he will provide a report at the next meeting.

5. Old Town Business

a) Swanton Recreation 2025 Proposed Budget

Mr. Clark said Swanton Recreation had provided an updated proposed 2025 budget with the requested updates from the last meeting.

Mr. Bourgeois said it states the 2024 budget was \$240,520 and they ended at \$253,707.44. Ms. Draper said that is the estimate yes, they had taken money out of their special funds for some things and received small grant/reserve funds. Ms.

Cathy Fournier said they took \$10,000 out of the reserve funds. (Swanton Recreation Special Funds).

Mr. Clark said as previously mentioned at the last meeting the majority of the increase is healthcare. In 2024 they did not budget for both full-time employees to take health insurance and they need to do that for 2025. (\$40,000 increase)

Mr. Fournier said the increase in payroll is the new part-time employee. The increase in the Town appropriation is 42.90% and this is due to not having a roll over from 2024.

2024 appropriation was \$149,562.97, 2025 ask is \$239,602.00.

Mr. Long asked if there are any other budgets, do they have a risk of not budgeting enough for health insurance if someone needs to pick up the insurance? Highway, General Budget. Mr. Long wanted to ensure the board is ok with the risk. Mr. Long wants to ensure they are covered and not over budget if someone, for example, gets married and needs to be added.

Ms. Cathy Fournier said no other budget covers those employees already.

Mr. Clark said of the \$90,000 budget increase \$40,000 of it is insurance. Ms.

Draper said the rest is the cost increase of goods and screen printing for uniforms. These prices are shopped around.

Mr. Bourgeois asked if the amount being asked is after income? Ms. Draper said yes, and that they have made adjustments to programing costs to help balance but affordable to the community.

Mr. Bourgeois asked how much the payment is on the new tractor? \$160.12 for 36 months. Ms. Draper said this payment is in the budget under equipment

repair/replacement fund. Mr. Bourgeois suggested having a separate line item for the payment. Ms. Draper asked that be shared with Ms. Betsy Fournier.

b) Discussion of bid for weatherization work on Library building

Mr. Clark shared they received one bid from the RFP from Menard Handyman and Property Maintenance Services LLC.

Mr. Fournier said they were going to do work above the elevator? Mr. Savage said yes, but Mr. Scangus wanted to be present when that happens. They were listed as separate line items on the RFP. Mr. Scangus had estimated \$7,500 for both projects. Mr. Menard did not bid on the work above the elevator. Mr. Menard's quote was to repair the lower sash and weather strip 16 windows.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to accept Menard Handyman's bid to weatherize the windows at the Swanton Public Library in the amount of \$5,310.00, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

Mr. Clark would like to have Mr. Menard do one window and be checked that the board is comfortable with it before proceeding. Mr. Savage will also get a timeline of completion. Mr. Clark said if he gives him notice he can be there, and they can also discuss the project above the elevator.

Mr. Fournier asked if Laz has put out a bid for the larger job. Mr. Clark said they have approved the cost of the spray in insulation and paying Mr. Scangus to manage/facilitate the project. This work needs to be done in the spring between heating and cooling seasons. Mr. Savage will contact Mr. Scangus to get this moving.

c) LVRT Trailhead Update

Mr. Clark said they have spent \$60,000 and the Town will get 80% of that back. Mr. Clark said a letter needs to be drafted and he has sent that to Mr. Savage and Ms. Cathy Fournier.

Mr. Clark said the balance allocated from the Town portion is almost \$100,000 this will go towards the construction contract match. Mr. Clark has been in contact with Chris Hunt and they are going to make a schedule to get this back out to bid by the end of the month in plans for construction in the spring.

d) MVSD Land Swap Update

Mr. Savage has received an email from the school district and their question is whose attorney is going to draft the deed. Mr. Savage said typically it's the selling party who drafts the deed.

Mr. Clark & Mr. Fournier agreed the Town attorney should. Mr. Savage said they also need to contact Mr. Rowell for guidance.

Mr. Fournier said the school district is not selling any land and they should not need a lawyer.

6. New Town Business

a) Letter of Reference for Missisquoi Valley Rescue

Mr. Clark said he was contacted last week for a letter of reference from MVR with a deadline and he agreed the whole board should approve. The letter is because Highgate is putting rescue on the ballot and their RFP requested letters of reference. Mr. Fournier clarified this is a letter of reference not a letter of support.

Mr. Bourgeois made a motion to approve and sign the letter of reference for Missisquoi Valley Rescue as requested, seconded by Ms. Draper. Motion carried.

b) Review of 2022 Audit

Mr. Clark said they should develop some standard operating procedures and how they want to proceed with audits. For example, do they come in before the audit?

Mr. Bourgeois said that it should include balance sheets, open accounts, and reserve funds.

Mr. Clark said the 2022 audit has been sent a couple of times for them to review. Mr. Clark noted that the findings say this is how things will operate in a small town. Mr. Fournier asked Mr. Bourgeois, from his years in banking did auditors present to the board? Yes. Mr. Fournier said it may cost a little money but more understanding for the board.

Mr. Bourgeois said it's customary to have a meeting with the auditors before they begin to share what both parties are looking for.

Mr. Bourgeois said if they had a meeting with the auditors he would like to send his ideas for an agenda.

This report is as of year end 2022 and the recommendations have been completed. Mr. Clark said previously they have come to the board after.

Mr. Bourgeois said typically every 3-5 years you should put it out to bid for a new set of eyes. Ms. Cathy Fournier said they have and had no response, but they can again. Mr. Long asked if there is law for this they should follow? Mr. Savage said not that he had found. Mr. Clark asked as a board member for 2024, do they want to put it out to bid?

Mr. Fournier made a motion to put the 2024 Town Audit out to bid, seconded by Mr. Long. Motion carried.

Mr. Bourgeois said he did not understand the legalities of Town Clerk & Treasurer and has reviewed the statutes sent to him and it is very clear to him now and would be good for everyone to review.

Mr. Bourgeois would like to have the elected auditors come when the audit is completed. Ms. Cathy Fournier said the elected auditors are currently working on the 2024 internal audit. They will invite them. Ms. Cathy Fournier shared what the internal audit process is. Mr. Bourgeois asked if they should have the elected auditors come before and after they complete their audit as well.

c) Request for Animal Control regarding use of an Animal Shelter

Mr. Clark said this request is in their packet from ACO. Mr. Fournier asked in regard to the \$50 fee if there was a length of time for that?

Ms. Candels said it is a flat rate of \$50 per day a dog is boarded with them. Ms. Candels has spoken with Mr. Benson, and he said he will still keep a dog at the Town garage if he knows it's a dog that won't be there long, i.e. well fed, tags. Other wise Mr. Benson would like to bring dogs to Whiskers N Tails Pet Daycare in Grand Isle. It is a lot for Mr. Benson to come back and forth to the Town garage if they are keeping a dog there to let out and feed 3 times a day from where he lives. Mr. Benson also said if they are at Whiskers N Tails when their owner picks up the animal, they will have to pay the \$50 a day fee. Currently the Town is paying Mr. Benson mileage to go back and forth as well. Mr. Benson has 24-hour access to the facility. Mr. Benson said he has contracts with them for other towns he covers St. Albans City & Town and Isle Lamotte. Ms. Candels did speak with the owner Christina LaCount and has contact information.

Ms. Draper shared a recent incident with this facility to help raise significant money for a locally found dog.

Mr. Fournier made a motion to go with the contract to use Whiskers N Tails boarding facility, also included in the event and animal needs medical care at a veterinarian clinic be received only after consultation with the Town Administrator or Assistant Town Administrator, and authorized the Town Administrator to sign the contract, seconded by Mr. Bourgeois. Motion carried.

Mr. Bourgeois would like to add to the contract: In the event an animal needs medical care at a veterinarian clinic only after consultation with the Town Administrator or Assistant Town Administrator on the cost. This can incur a large cost sometimes. Mr. Fournier amended his motion to include this.

Mr. Bourgeois also suggested the renewal of the contract come with time for them to review.

Ms. Candels said Mr. Benson did contact another location, but they would not take unregistered dogs and this facility will.

d) Welcome to Swanton Signs

Mr. Clark said they have drafted an RFP for the graphic design portion of the Welcome to Swanton signs.

This RFP will be shared on the website and Facebook and shared locally before advertising in the newspaper.

e) Joint Meeting with Planning Commission. January 22, 2025

The Planning Commission is requesting a joint meeting to review the updates they have been working on with the Selectboard and the Village Trustees.

Ms. Candels will see if the Village auditorium is available 1/22/25 at 5:30 p.m. as well as notify Northwest Access TV to record.

Mr. Fournier also asked for maps to be brought to view.

7. Community and Economic Development

None

8. Any Other Necessary Business

a) Discussion about setting up a Special Selectboard Budget Meeting

The Special Selectboard Meeting will be on Thursday, January 16, 2025, at 5:30 pm for budgets.

The board would like the budget to be reviewed prior to the meeting.

9. Correspondence

a) Status of 2nd leg of Maple Grove Estate Roadway

Mr. Clark shared email communications in regard to the Town taking over the 2nd portion of the road. None of the Town's requirements have been completed so nothing will be done at this time.

Mr. Fournier asked if the new Town Road Takeover Policy has been reviewed legally? Mr. Savage will send it to the Town Attorney to review, he is currently working on another road with a stormwater permit included.

10. Public Comment (Reprise)

None

11. Upcoming Events

- a) Thursday--Jan. 16, 2025 – Special Selectboard Meeting--5:30 pm Town Office & Zoom
- b) Monday – Jan. 20, 2025 – Martin Luther King Holiday – Town Office and Operations – Closed
- c) Tuesday – Jan. 21, 2025 – Regular Selectboard Meeting – 6:00 pm Town Office and Zoom
- d) Wednesday—Jan. 22, 2025- Joint Planning Commission, Selectboard & Village Trustee’s Meeting—5:30 pm Village Complex and Teams
- d) Thursday – Jan. 23, 2025- DRB Meeting – 6:00 pm – Town Offices and Zoom

12. Executive Session (if needed)

Not Needed.

13. Adjourn

**Ms. Draper made a motion to adjourn at 7:28 pm, seconded by Mr. Fournier.
Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted by
Christina Candels-Assistant Town Administrator