

**TOWN OF SWANTON  
SELECTBOARD  
ANNUAL MEETING  
INFORMATIONAL SESSION  
MINUTES**

**Swanton Village Complex Meeting Room  
120 First Street, Swanton, Vermont 05488**

***Monday, February 23, 2015 @ 7:00 p.m.***

Present: Dan Billado, Selectboard Chair; Joel Clark, Selectboard Vice Chair; William “Turk” Thompson, James Guilmette, and L. John Lavoie, Selectmen; Representative Brian Savage; Representative Marianna Gamache; Jay Cummings, School Board Chair; Tobias Maguire, School Board Vice Chair; John Creelman, School Board; Brent Coon, School Principal; Becky Hart, School Business Manager; Laura McAllister, School Assistant Business Manager; Winton Goodrich (by Skype); Reginald Beliveau, Village Manager; David Jescavage, Town Administrator; Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk; Yaasha Wheeler, Secretary; Harold Garrett, Road Foreman; Chris Leach, Eugene Labombard, and Neal Speer, Village Trustees; Chief Leonard “Joey” Stell, Swanton Village Police Department; Chief Tim Girard, Swanton Fire Department; Assistant Chief Jason Cross, Swanton Fire Department; Lynn Billado, Missisquoi Valley Rescue; Betty Cheney, Delinquent Tax Collector; Suzanne Walsh; Earl Fournier; Eugene Lavoie; Ross Lavoie; Bob Nielson; Ron Greeno; Channel 16.

**A. Call to Order**

Mr. Billado called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He held a moment of silence for those in the community who had been lost, and those who had lost their lives in the service of the nation. On behalf of the Swanton Selectboard, he also recognized and thanked the Town employees, and the appointed and elected officials, for their dedication to Swanton, and their hard work.

**B. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mr. Billado led those present in the pledge of allegiance.

**C. Public Notice**

Mr. Billado turned the meeting over to Mr. Brian Savage, who read the public notice as follows:

*The legal voters of the Town of Swanton, and the Town of Swanton School District, who are legal voters in Town Meeting, are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Swanton Village Municipal Complex, First and Elm Streets, Swanton on Tuesday, March 3, 2015 at 7:00 a.m. to vote on the articles herein set forth. All articles are to be voted by the Australian Ballot system. The polls open at 7:00 a.m. and close at 7:00 p.m.*

Article 1: To elect from the legal voters of said Town the following officers:

*Moderator, Town and Town School District  
One Selectman for a 3 year term  
One Selectman for a 2 year term  
One Lister for a 1 year term  
One Auditor for a 3 year term  
One School Director for a 3 year term  
One School Director for a 2 year term  
One Trustee of Public Money for a 3 year term  
One Library Trustee for a 5 year term  
One Library Trustee for a 1 year unexpired term  
One Cemetery Commissioner for a 5 year term*

*Town Grand Juror*

*Town Agent*

*Collector of Delinquent Taxes*

Article 2: *Will the Town appropriate \$742,396.95 for the operation and maintenance of the Town Highway Department?*

Article 3: *Will the Town appropriate \$176,985.00 for fire protection, \$42,968.00 of which is for a fire truck replacement fund?*

Article 4: *Will the Town appropriate an amount not to exceed \$22,500.00 to the fire department for a one time purchase of Extrication Tools used for heavy rescue?*

Article 5: *Will the Town appropriate \$118,139.00 to provide police protection to the residents of the Town of Swanton?*

Article 6: *Will the voters of the Swanton School District appropriate \$8,318,735.00 necessary for the support of the Swanton Schools for the school year July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016?*

Article 7: *Will the voters of the Swanton School District authorize the School Directors to borrow money in anticipation of taxes?*

Article 8: *Will the voters of the Swanton School District appropriate \$90,000 to the existing Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of addressing future buildings and grounds improvements?*

Article 9: *Will the Town appropriate \$300,600.66 for the Town General expenses?*

Article 10: *Shall the Town collect its real and personal property taxes to defray the expenses of the Town for the fiscal year commencing January 1, 2015, and annually thereafter, by its actual receipt of payment (postmarks will not be accepted) at the Town Offices by 5 p.m. on October 15th, or if the 15th shall fall on a weekend or holiday, the following business day by 5 p.m., with an eight percent (8%) penalty and one percent (1%) interest per month (or portion thereof) due thereon for the first three months, and one and one half percent (1.5%) per month (or portion thereof) thereafter, to be charged for late payment of any installment?*

Article 11: *Will the Town appropriate \$234,000.00 to provide rescue services to the residents of the Town of Swanton?*

Article 12: *Will the Town appropriate \$104,925.00 towards the Operating and Maintenance Budget of the Recreation Department?*

Article 13: *Will the Town appropriate \$126,875.14 towards the Operating and Maintenance Budget of the Swanton Public Library?*

*The legal voters of the Town of Swanton are further notified that an Informational Meeting will be held at the Swanton Village Municipal Complex on Monday, February 23, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. for the purpose of explaining all budget items to the voters.*

*Dated at Swanton, Vermont this 20th day of January, 2015.*

*SELECTMEN*

*Daniel Billado, Chair*

*Joel A. Clark, Vice Chair*

*L. John Lavoie*

*William Thompson, Jr.*

*James Guilmette*

*SCHOOL BOARD DIRECTORS*

*Jay Cummings, Chair*

*Tobias Maguire, V. Chair*

Mary Wood  
Patti Jo Walker  
John Creelman

Dated and filed this 20th day of January, 2015.  
Attest: Cathy L. Fournier, Town Clerk

#### **D. Swanton School District Informational Slideshow**

Mr. Savage turned the meeting over to Jay Cummings, who explained that the 2015 budget was designed to balance cost versus quality, and, at \$8,318,735 proposed, represented a zero percent (0%) increase.

Toby Maguire added that the Swanton school had been one of two schools in Vermont to receive the Healthier US Schools Challenge Award, and had also been recognized for the third year in a row for the Verizon App Awards. Three professionals had accepted an Early Departure Agreement, and the workdays of all paraprofessionals had been reduced by 30 minutes per day. The school was committed to keeping all students and staff up-to-date for twenty-first century learning, which required professional development, maintenance of information technology, and funds to expand the 1:1 computer initiative (especially in grades 4 through 6). The special education professional staff and benefits had been consolidated with the expenses, and was not presented as a separate line item. The state had been experiencing an overall decline in the student population, and Swanton had followed that statewide trend, with 488 students enrolled currently.

John Creelman reported that the total current staff was 120.8, with 64.8 professional staff, 23 support staff, and 33 paraprofessional staff, representing a reduction from 2014. All contracts were negotiated through the Union Master Agreement through the Northwest Supervisory Union. The cost of health insurance benefits were up by 4.5 percent, and dental benefits were down by 7 percent. Several capital reserve projects had been completed in 2014, and the proposed capital reserve article for 2015 would go toward funds for large building projects.

Mr. Cummings stated that the Swanton education per equalized pupil was comparatively modest (compared to Norwich and Middlebury). Seven variables contributed to the homestead tax rate, only one of which was influenced by the school, with a tax rate of 0.617 for 2014, and a projected tax rate of 0.616 for 2015.

#### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS**

Mr. Bob Nielson stated that he felt anyone over 70 years old should not pay tax to the school, since seniors were not sending kids to school anymore. Mr. Cummings informed Mr. Nielson that the school had no control over that; he would have to discuss the matter at the state level, adding that Mr. Nielson himself was supported by the tax money of seniors when he was in school.

Mr. Harold Garrett asked if the 488 enrolled students included pre-K; the board responded that it did not.

Ms. Suzanne Walsh asked to know the percentage contributed by the employees for health care and dental care. Ms. McAllister replied that the professional staff contributed 18 percent, while the paraprofessional staff contributed 14 percent.

The board thanked Mr. Winton Goodrich for being available via Skype, as he was at a conference in San Diego.

#### **E. Swanton Town Slideshow**

Mr. Billado presented the informational slideshow, as follows:

##### **2014 SWANTON HIGHLIGHTS**

- *First full year of use for new highway garage.*
- *Old garage demolished by highway crew and open land put up for sale asking \$250,000.*
- *David Fosgate purchased Robin Hood Site from Town for \$150,000.*

- *Energtek North Country, Inc. agreed to purchase Park D industrial land for \$175,000.*
- *Revision of Zoning By-laws adopted effective January 8, 2014.*
- *Received new grant to update Municipal Plan.*

**2014 SWANTON ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- *Level Funded Wherever Possible & Practical*
- *General Budget came in \$19,835.64 below proposed budget for year.*
- *Town received approximately \$9,000 in FEMA funds to offset ice storm clean-up \$\$.*
- *Town & Village awarded \$30,000 grant for a feasibility study for 2 new sidewalk routes.*
- *Vermont Air National Guard named one of its F16-C jet planes in honor of Swanton.*
- *Upgraded computer hardware & software.*

**2014 SWANTON ACCOMPLISHMENTS (HIGHWAY)**

- *Highway Department:*
- *Replaced wingwalls on concrete culvert on Maquam Shore Road.*
  - *Paved:*
    - *Top coat of Woods Hill Road Project*
    - *Comstock Road (rebuilt & paved)*
    - *Portion of Janes Road*
    - *Portion of South River Street*
    - *Missisquoi Street*
- *Purchased new single-axle dump truck.*
- *Planning Started on New Highway Salt Shed Lean-To with Completion in 2015.*
- *Several Small Culverts Replaced on Roads.*
- *Continued Emphasis on Safety & Inspections.*
- *8357 Days Without Lost Time From Accident in Highway Department.*
- *Recreation Trail Well Maintained & Used.*
- *Continued Mutual Assistance Between Town & Village Departments.*
- *Engineering Study Begun to Determine the Stability of the South River Street Riverbank.*

**FUTURE PROJECTS IN 2015**

- *Construct Lean-To for Highway Salt Shed.*
- *Start Municipal Planning Grant Town & Village Plan Project (Planning Commission & NRPC.*
- *Complete Sale of Park D Land for \$175,000.*
- *Market & Sell Old Garage Land for \$250,000.*
- *Implement Sidewalk Feasibility Grant Project.*
- *Work With State Legislators to Improve Land Use & Economic Development Statutes*
- *Pave Robin Hood Drive, Bushey Street, and Donaldson, Sweet Hollow, Kellog, & Bushey Roads. Maintenance on Pond & Tabor Roads.*
- *Continue Support of Swanton Enhancement Committee & Community Visits.*
- *Planning for Phase 2 of Robin Hood Drive Extension.*

**2015 BUDGET REQUESTS SUMMARY**

*(If All Voted Articles Are Approved)*

- *Town General Budget .....\$1,138,309.03*
- *Town Highway Budget .....\$1,294,095.54*
- ❖ *Town Residents' Budget .....\$ 2,432,404.54*
- ❖ *Village Residents' Budget ...\$ 1,175,840.00*
- ❖ *Swanton School Budget .....\$ 8,318,735.00*
- ❖ *MVU High School Budget ....\$15,289,278.00*

**2015 GENERAL BUDGET**

- *If All Articles Approved           \$1,138,309.03*

- *To Be Raised By Taxes*           \$ 300,600.66
  - *2015 Projected Tax Rate*       \$     0.1192
  - *2014 Tax Rate*                   \$     0.1260
  - *2015 Tax Rate Decrease*       \$     0.0068
- *2014 Actual Expenditures: Under Budget by \$19,835.64 Below the 2014 Proposed General Budget.*

**2015 HIGHWAY BUDGET**

- *If All Articles Approved*       \$1,294,095.51
- *To Be Raised By Taxes*         \$ 742,396.95
- *2015 Projected Tax Rate*       \$     0.2344
- *2014 Tax Rate*                  \$     0.2291
- *2015 Tax Rate Increase*       \$     0.0053

*2014 Actual Expenditures: Under Budget by \$ 11,557.98 Below the 2014 Adjusted Highway Budget.*

**PROJECTED BUDGET 2015 RESIDENTIAL TAX RATE**

<i>TOWN Residential:</i>	<i>2014 ACTUAL</i>	<i>2015 PROJECTED</i>
<i>Town General Tax Rate:</i>	\$0.1260	\$0.1192
<i>Town Highway Tax Rate:</i>	\$0.2291	\$0.2344
<i>Education Tax Rate:</i>	\$1.2084	\$1.2590
<i>Total Town Tax Rate:</i>	\$1.5635	\$1.6126

<i>VILLAGE Residential:</i>	<i>2014 ACTUAL</i>	<i>2015 PROJECTED</i>
<i>Town General Tax Rate:</i>	\$0.1260	\$0.1192
<i>Village Tax Rate:</i>	\$0.7231	\$0.7426
<i>Education Tax Rate:</i>	\$1.2084	\$1.2590
<i>Total Village Tax Rate:</i>	\$2.0575	\$2.0208

**PROJECTED 2015 NON-RESIDENTIAL TAX RATE**

<i>TOWN Non-Residential:</i>	<i>2014 ACTUAL</i>	<i>2015 PROJECTED</i>
<i>Town General Tax Rate:</i>	\$0.1260	\$0.1192
<i>Town Highway Tax Rate:</i>	\$0.2291	\$0.2344
<i>Education Tax Rate:</i>	\$1.3705	\$1.3990
<i>Total Town Tax Rate:</i>	\$1.7256	\$1.7526

<i>VILLAGE Non-Residential:</i>	<i>2014 ACTUAL</i>	<i>2015 PROJECTED</i>
<i>Town General Tax Rate:</i>	\$0.1260	\$0.1192
<i>Village Tax Rate:</i>	\$0.7231	\$0.7426
<i>Education Tax Rate:</i>	\$1.3705	\$1.3990
<i>Total Village Tax Rate:</i>	\$2.2196	\$2.2608

**PROJECTED 2015 RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES**

**TOWN RESIDENTIAL:**

*PROPERTY TAXES ON \$200,000 PROPERTY ASSESSMENT*

<i>Your 2014 Tax Bill:</i>	\$3,127.00
<i>Your 2015 Tax Bill:</i>	\$3,225.20
<i>Increase:</i>	\$ 98.20

**VILLAGE RESIDENTIAL:**

*PROPERTY TAXES ON \$200,000 PROPERTY ASSESSMENT*

<i>Your 2014 Tax Bill:</i>	\$4,115.00
<i>Your 2015 Tax Bill:</i>	\$4,041.60
<i>Decrease:</i>	\$ 73.40

**PROJECTED 2015 NON-RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES**

**TOWN NON-RESIDENTIAL:**

*PROPERTY TAXES ON \$200,000 PROPERTY ASSESSMENT*

Your 2014 Tax Bill: \$3,451.20  
Your 2015 Tax Bill: \$3,505.20  
Increase: \$ 54.00

**VILLAGE NON-RESIDENTIAL:**

*PROPERTY TAXES ON \$200,000 PROPERTY ASSESSMENT*

Your 2014 Tax Bill: \$4,439.20  
Your 2015 Tax Bill: \$4,521.60  
Increase: \$ 82.40

**CANDIDATES FOR OFFICE**

- *AUDITOR (3 years)*  
-Joyce Bombardier
- *CEMETERY COMMISSIONER (5 years)*  
-Gary Centabar
- *COLLECTOR OF DELINQUENT TAXES (1 yr)*  
-Betty L. Cheney
- *TRUSTEE OF PUBLIC MONEY (3 years)*  
-Write-In
- *LISTER (1 year)*  
-Write-In
- *SCHOOL DIRECTOR (2 years)*  
-Mary Wood
- *SCHOOL DIRECTOR (3 years)*  
- Patti Jo Walker
- *LIBRARY TRUSTEE (5 years)*  
- Kathy Kneebone
- *LIBRARY TRUSTEE (1 year)*  
- Robert Mulkeen  
-Rebecca S. Rupp
- *SELECTMAN (2 years)*  
-James Guilmette
- *SELECTMAN (3 years)*  
-Daniel Billado
- *TOWN AGENT (1 year)*  
-Gerald Barney
- *TOWN GRAND JUROR (1 year)*  
-Gerald Barney
- *MODERATOR (1 year) (town & town school district)*  
-Brian K. Savage

**VISIT THE TOWN'S OFFICIAL WEBSITE**

<http://www.townofswantonvermont.weebly.com>

**F. Public Comments**

Mr. Ron Greeno stated that Robin Hood Drive has a lot of foot traffic, with no street lights, and he had talked with Mr. Reginald Beliveau recommended adding sidewalks in the area.

Mr. Cummings said that he loved the Town website and found it very useful and informative.

Mr. Earl Fournier reported that water quality was a big issue. Mr. William Thompson agreed, adding that water quality was a "pet peeve" of his, and he felt it was a situation created by the state by mandating liquid manure, so the state should fix it. Mr. Fournier said that he felt it was also an issue created by road run-off. Mr. Brian Savage provided an update to the current water-quality bill, which was still to be considered by various committees, and addressed run-off and impervious surfaces. He was concerned about the cost effect on local municipalities, due to the suggestion of fees and taxes related to water quality. Both he and Marianna Gamache agreed that no one knew how the bill would look in its final stage. Mr. Lavoie asked if New York would be part of the clean-up, and Mr. Savage replied that the EPA ran by district, and New York and

Vermont were in different districts. While Vermont was being blamed for most of the phosphorus and impervious surface run-off, he felt that New York was equally to blame. Mr. Beliveau noted that boats with bathrooms on them were dumping in mooring areas, so recreational vehicles should also be considered in the water quality issue. Mr. Jescavage added that Swanton had been awarded \$18,000 to help with lining road ditches, to contain silt in the ditch rather than sending it the river and lake. Also, the Selectboard had adopted bridge and road standards that would help with that issue as well.

**G. Adjournment**

Mr. Guilmette made a motion, seconded by Mr. Lavoie, to adjourn at 8:00 p.m. Motion carried.

Typed on February 25 & 26, 2015  
Minutes by Yaasha Wheeler  
Received and filed by:

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Cathy Fournier, Swanton Town Clerk

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Date