

**MINUTES  
TOWN OF SWANTON  
SELECTBOARD BUDGET MEETING  
Swanton Town Office Building  
1 Academy Street, Swanton, VT 05488**

***Tuesday, December 20, 2016 @ 6:00 p.m.***

*Present: Joel Clark, Swanton Selectboard Chair; Dan Billado, John Lavoie, James Guilmette, and Jeff Raleigh, Swanton Selectmen; David Jescavage, Swanton Town Administrator; Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk; Yaasha Wheeler, Secretary; Leonard “Joey” Stell, Swanton Village Police Chief; Adam Paxman; Lynn Billado and Josh Ransdell, Missisquoi Valley Rescue; Jason Cross, SVFD; Keith Ploof; Marianna Gamache, Representative; Tim Girard, Swanton Village Fire Department; Harold Garrett, Road Foreman; Ed Daniel, Planning Commission member.*

**A. Call to Order**

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

**B. Agenda Review**

Mr. Clark added the pledge of allegiance to the agenda.

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

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

**C. Review Missisquoi Valley Rescue (MVR) 2017 Budget**

Mrs. Billado came forward to represent Missisquoi Valley Rescue. She explained that they had to “make a lot of cuts” to present a budget acceptable to the voters. Some of the cuts included going from 3 to 2-person crews, starting January 1<sup>st</sup> and cutting out overtime. They had considered other dispatching options and decided to go with Shelburne, which would save over \$20,000 in dispatching fees. They had been trying to negotiate with St. Albans Central, but St. Albans was unwilling to do so, which is when Swanton decided to go with Shelburne dispatching.

MVR was asking for \$15,000 above last year, which is a 6.4% increase. The total requested was \$249,000. Last year, MVR had asked for \$234,000. They hoped that they could get Highgate back, so they had included that possibility in one of the options.

Mr. Billado said that Highgate and Swanton had formerly split 65 percent and 35 percent, with Swanton’s portion including dispatching fees. If Highgate came back to MVR instead of Amcare, Swanton could end up having a rollover in the budget to save money. Mr. Billado said that he had served with MVR previously, and he knew that it was in “survival mode”: “My hat’s off to them.”

Mr. Clark asked how the budget would be affected if the new subscription initiative was unsuccessful; Chief Stell anticipated that there was potential for more revenue with lower call volume, but did not feel that the budget would be hurt too badly if the subscription was less than expected. Mrs. Billado added that, while two people per rig was not ideal, it did work. Also, MVR staff needed new jackets.

Mr. Paxman clarified that if Highgate rejoined MVR, the total community support cost would still be \$249,000, but Swanton would only pay a portion of it.

Mr. Daniel asked whether ambulance replacement would be included. Mrs. Billado said that that line item had not been included in the budget since the last purchase of an

ambulance, which was a few years ago. Prior to losing Highgate, the hope had been to lease an ambulance, but they had reneged on that because of the loss of Highgate. Mr. Daniel asked if there was a contract between MVR and the Town; the board said there was not. Mr. Daniel considered that, at some point, an audit might be done, and cited examples from other communities of misappropriation of town money. "I'm not accusing anybody of anything, but if it's public money, what's good for the town clerk is good for others." Mr. Clark agreed that his statement was valid and a contract with MVR should be discussed at a later time.

It was noted that the website for MVR should be updated with more current information. Mr. Daniel had other concerns about the number of board members on the MVR board; Mr. Clark recommended that Mr. Daniel speak with the MVR board about it, but the Selectboard had to focus on the budget right now.

Mr. Garrett thanked MVR for all they do.

#### **D. Review Swanton Fire Department (SWFD) 2017 Budget**

Chief Girard and Adam Paxman came forward. Mr. Paxman presented a budget that showed a 0.297% decrease. Chief Girard said that the biggest problem this year was dispatching, knowing that MVR would move to a different dispatcher, leaving SWFD with the entirety of the cost. However, this year the dispatch fees would not change for 2017, so it resulted in zero increase.

Mr. Billado asked about the \$12,500 allocated for Equipment for 2016 that had not yet been spent. Chief Girard said that the equipment was on order currently, so the SVFD would spend that \$12,500 before the end of the year. The equipment money could not be used until the tax money came in.

Mr. Billado thanked the SWFD for being "spot on this year." Chief Girard added that it was helpful to have an in-house mechanic. Mr. Cross said that they had bought five airpicks and all would be replaced by 2020. Mr. Guilmette asked about Equipment (it was to be used for any important equipment purchases) and about the rent (the Fire Department space was rented from the Village).

The Selectboard thanked SVFD for their hard work. Chief Girard said that they would need to replace a truck in the near future, so next year could include a line item for that.

Mr. Clark thanked the Village for helping to pay for the new electronic sign in the village green.

#### **E. Review Swanton Highway Department 2017 Budget**

Mr. Clark explained that the budget would have an overall increase of just over 2 percent. The salaries assumed at 2% increase, and paving was dropped down to \$275,000 from \$300,000, due to the need to allocate money to other pressing needs. Anticipated carryover could be as high as \$40,000, of which \$20,000 would come from the Volvo savings. The increase in labor was due to going back to four full-time employees. The brine line item decreased because chloride would be replaced by sand and salt again, as the state was doing. Roads for paving (not definitive yet): Janes Road, a portion of Middle Road, a portion of Beebe Road, and possibly Brooklyn Street. Mr. Clark observed: "Our roads are getting beaten faster than we can fix them, but they're still in great shape compared to a lot of towns."

They did not have enough money to finish the Robin Hood Extension in 2017. He explained a number of the costs involved. They might have to talk to the state about getting an extension for the project, but Mr. Clark anticipated that this would be fine.

The majority of the work on Pond Road would be done in 2018, with tree-cutting in spring 2017. The highway would also repair the salt shed wall (\$25,000) and lean-to, possibly adding foundations for columns for the lean-to. Mr. Garrett suggested adding the salt shed repair as an article, but the board preferred keeping it as a line item.

The budget showed only a 0.25% increase, which reflected the 2% employee wage increase. Mr. Clark suggested that with the increase in medical insurance, this 2% raise would not even cover the increase in the crew member's costs. He suggested a greater raise to payroll to offset those costs, resulting in a 2.5% overall budget increase.

Mr. Garrett recommended adding more salt money into the budget, because the highway crew had already used a lot of salt in the last few storms. Mr. Clark calculated that they would "still be in pretty darn good shape" if the salt was added.

#### **F. Review Swanton 2017 General Budget**

Mrs. Fournier said that computer software had gone up a little bit, because of the new emails and the new server. 2017 would not be an election year, so election costs had reduced, but legal fees had increased up to \$10,000. The depot maintenance had increased because of the need for more repairs on it. There had been some requests for increases in appropriations; the various representatives would be invited to the January meetings to make their requests. The library had not yet submitted a revised budget; the library would present their budget in January. Employee salaries had increased only slightly; there were now three part-time listers, instead of two.

The overall increase on the general budget was 3.77 percent.

#### **G. Any Other Business**

None.

#### **H. Executive Session**

None.

#### **I. Adjournment**

Mr. Lavoie made a motion, seconded by Mr. Guilmette, to adjourn at 6:55 p.m. Motion carried.

Received and filed by:

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Cathy Fournier, Swanton Town Clerk

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Date