

## **TOWN OF SWANTON SELECTMEN'S REPORT**

### **Covers**

The *2014 Annual Report's* front and back covers display photographs of the Vermont National Guard. The Vermont National Guard is made up of the Vermont Army National Guard and the Vermont Air National Guard. Swanton has approximately 25 members serving in the Vermont Air National Guard and approximately 55 members serving in the Vermont Army National Guard. Because we are grateful for their valiant service to our town, state, and nation, we chose to dedicate the *2014 Annual Report* to them. Please see the inside of the front cover and the first page for the dedication and additional photos.

### **Highlights of the Year**

2014 was a year of several significant events in the Town. It marked the first full year of use for the new highway garage at 221 First Street. Equipment and vehicles were transferred from the old garage on 23 Fourth Street to the new one and the highway crew demolished the old garage building. We have placed the now empty garage lot on Fourth Street for sale with an asking price of \$250,000. The lease agreement with David Fosgate for the Town's Robin Hood property concluded, thus, triggering the purchase of the property for \$150,000 by Mr. Fosgate who is running a successful business there. We renewed the varied state permits that had been issued for the Park D Industrial Park on Lafar Street near I-89's Exit 21. The Town entered into a purchase and sale agreement with Energtek North Country, Inc. of Jericho, Vermont to purchase the entire Park D development for \$175,000. More information on these property sales can be found below in the Economic Development section of this report.

The Town received the balance of its VT AOT grant monies (\$17,500 remaining from the original \$175,000 2013 grant) for the Woods Hill Project after the top layer of asphalt was placed on the road in the spring of 2014. The Town also received approximately \$9,000 in FEMA grant funds to help pay for ice storm damage that occurred in late 2013 but was cleaned up in early 2014 by the highway crew. In 2014, the Town applied for and was awarded a not to exceed \$33,000 VT AOT structure grant for the replacement of the concrete wing walls on a concrete culvert under Maquam Shore Road. A Bike and Pedestrian Feasibility Grant for \$30,000 was awarded to the Town and Village to have an engineer study the potential for constructing new sidewalks in two places. One place would be along South River Street from Rt. 78 to south to the Swanton Historical Museum. The second place would be from Hannaford's Plaza easterly to MVU. These studies will be implemented in the spring of 2015. The Town and Village will each provide \$1,500 in matching funds for the feasibility study project. The goal of each study is to determine whether it is physically and financially feasible to construct sidewalks in each of the study locations.

The Municipal Planning Grant zoning revision project was completed in 2014 by the Swanton Planning Commission and the Northwest Regional Planning Commission. The Town was

awarded \$11,553 in state funds for that project. The revised *Zoning By-Laws* became effective on January 8, 2014. In 2014, the Town applied for and was awarded another Municipal Planning Grant for \$7,870 to undertake a revision of the Town and Village Municipal Plan by the Swanton Planning Commission and the Northwest Regional Planning Commission. It will be implemented in early 2015. Municipal Planning Grants are awarded by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development.

After a year of service as Animal Control Officer (ACO), Shawn Dashno resigned his position. Former ACO Allan Laroche filled in temporarily while the Town advertised for a permanent replacement. In August, the Selectboard hired Derrick Billado as the new ACO. He can be reached by calling 802-318-3714 or by emailing him at [swantonaco@gmail.com](mailto:swantonaco@gmail.com). The ACO only deals with dog issues. All issues dealing with wild animals should be directed to a state conservation officer. To view a copy of the Town's dog ordinance, please visit the Town's website: ( [www.townofswantonvermont.weebly.com](http://www.townofswantonvermont.weebly.com) ).

### **Economic Development**

The Town's old highway garage property at 23 Fourth Street has been cleared of all structures and the concrete pad. It is now for sale as an open 1.2+/- acre developable lot with an asking price of \$250,000. It has access to municipal water and sewer services as well as Vermont Gas service. It is also serviced by Swanton Village Electric. It is located adjacent to the Swanton Recreational Rail Trail and across the street from the Swanton Elementary School. The lot is zoned R5 Residential making it suitable for a possible multifamily development.

For several years, David Fosgate was leasing the Town's Robin Hood Complex with an option to purchase that came due in 2014. The closing took place in September and he purchased the property for \$150,000. Mr. Fosgate is running a successful business there as well as providing jobs and increasing the tax base for the Town.

We renewed the various state permits for the Park D Industrial Park on Lafar Street. After getting an engineer's estimate of the high cost for developing the 5-lot park, we decided to sell the entire park as a unit instead of developing and selling off individual lots. We entered into a purchase and sale agreement with Energtek North Country, Inc. of Jericho, Vermont to buy the entire Park D development for \$175,000. The closing will take place in January 2015. Energtek plans to construct a natural gas compression facility that will compress natural gas into small tanks suitable for home delivery in places where VT Gas lines don't exist. They also plan a small compressed gas station on site to service vehicles that operate on compressed natural gas. The facility will provide new jobs for Franklin County and improve Swanton's tax base.

Several years ago, the Town rezoned a large area of land called the Southern Growth District near I-89's Exit 20 with the intention of encouraging new commercial growth and creating a much improved tax base for the Town. Unfortunately in 2014, we learned that the state had changed the rules last July by amending the Act 250 regulations to include a Section 9L. Section 9L is intended to prohibit whatever an Act 250 Environmental Commission determines to be "sprawl." This could potentially include all of Swanton's Southern Growth District. We have notified our state legislators of this problem and expect their help in rectifying it. As a

Selectboard, we are mindful of the need to improve the Town of Swanton's revenues by increasing the commercial/industrial tax base.

### **General Budget**

In 2014, the actual expenditures came in \$19,835.64 below the proposed General Budget for the year. Assuming all warned articles are approved, the proposed 2015 General Budget will be \$1,138,309.03 with \$300,600.66 to be raised by taxes. The Selectboard spends a considerable amount of time preparing the budget. We feel it is realistic, fair and fiscally responsible. We look for every way possible to maximize your tax dollars. All Swanton voters should make an effort to study and understand the budget and the special articles on this year's ballot. Please bring your questions and comments to the informational meeting on Monday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Swanton Village Municipal Complex at 7:00 p.m. Again this year, our annual informational meeting will be telecast live on Comcast Cable Channel 16. There will also be an opportunity for voters to phone in any questions you may have about the 2015 budget or other issues of interest. We look forward to seeing you and urge you to participate in the democratic process by exercising your right to vote on Town Meeting Day, Tuesday, March 3, 2015.

### **Highway**

The proposed 2015 Highway Budget is \$1,294,095.51 with \$742,396.95 to be raised by taxes. 2014 was a busy and productive year for the highway department. The year started out in the new highway garage at 221 First Street. This facility is a big improvement over the old garage on 4<sup>th</sup> Street which the highway demolished during the summer after transferring all of its contents to the new facility. By doing the work in house, we saved thousands of dollars. Relocating all of our operations to one location has also improved our ability to operate more efficiently and to provide better services to the Town.

During 2014, existing paved highways were resurfaced to ensure their long term viability. A large portion of Comstock Road was rebuilt and the whole road received a new paved surface. The top coat of pavement was placed on Woods Hill Road early in the year as the final phase of the road reconstruction project that began in 2013. Other roads that were paved included Mississquoi Street, part of Janes Road and part of South River Street. An engineering study is in progress on South River Street to determine the stability of the riverbank. The study will provide valuable data for future road realignment and/or repairs.

Underneath Maquam Shore Road is a concrete culvert that needed its wing walls repaired. To help defray the expenses, we applied for and were awarded a structures grant from the VTAOT for up to \$33,000. Through a team effort between the highway crew and a private concrete contractor, the concrete wing walls and the road embankments were replaced and repaired. Two rows of guardrails were added along both sides of the culvert. The guardrails were salvaged from the old garage site.

The highway department vehicles are in good shape. A new single axle plow/dump truck was

ordered. It is expected that the fully outfitted vehicle will arrive in February. Other trucks are doing well and should be good for several more years. The tractor that is used for road side mowing is the vehicle that requires the most repairs. New options for dealing with this vehicle will be considered.

In 2015, paving will be done on Bushey Road, Donaldson Road, Sweet Hollow Road, Robin Hood Drive, Bushey Street and Kellog Road. Work on sidewalks and drainage on Bushey Street will be done before paving begins. Depending on workload and dollars, work on Pond Road and Tabor Road improvements may be done also.

In the spring of 2015, a lean-to/roof structure will be added to the salt shed to allow us to keep all of our equipment under cover. We will be doing this work in-house as time and weather permit.

Your highway team is dedicated to making the Swanton roads better each year and maintaining them in a safe and drivable condition. Joel Clark serves as the Road Commissioner, Harold Garrett is the Road Foreman, and Kevin Lapan, Maurice Jette, David Barney and Brian Thompson serve on the Road Crew.

#### **Law Enforcement**

In 2014, the Town appropriated \$114,698 under contract with the Swanton Village Police Department for police protection. The 2015 cost will be \$118,139. This amount may be less if the actual billed time for the police protection is less. The costs include dispatching, police cruiser, investigations, traffic law enforcement, office work, compiling reports, mileage, and court appearances. The SVPD will provide all necessary equipment for the performance of duties and all officers will be fully certified by the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council. The Police Chief provides monthly reports to the Selectboard at each first monthly meeting. We have received complements on the services the Swanton Police Department provides to the Town. We appreciate their service.

#### **Recognition**

The Swanton Selectboard would like to express its gratitude to all of our town employees, appointed board members and elected officials for their dedicated public service. It requires a tremendous amount of coordination between our employees, elected and appointed officials and volunteers dedicating their time and talents to keep our local government functioning properly and efficiently. We also are grateful for the input received from Swanton citizens on Town operations. Any citizen who is interested in volunteering for service on a particular Town board or committee may contact the Town Administrator for more information by calling 868-7418.