

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

Tuesday, January 6, 2015 @ 7:00 p.m.

Present: Dan Billado, Selectboard Chair; Joel Clark, Selectboard Vice Chair; James Guilmette, John Lavoie, and William "Turk" Thompson, Selectmen; David Jescavage, Town Administrator; Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk; Yaasha Wheeler, Secretary; Heather Buczkowski, Channel 16; Mark & Jennifer Bailey; Ann Sargent; Hank Lambert; Allen Karnatz, Vermont Land Trust; Earl Fournier, MVU; Leonard Stell, Swanton Village Police Chief.

A. Call to Order

Mr. Billado called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

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

C. Meeting Topics

1. Minutes

- a) December 16, 2014 Selectboard Finance Meeting*
- b) December 16, 2014 Selectboard Regular Meeting*

Mr. Lavoie made a motion, seconded by Mr. Clark, to approve the minutes as presented, all requested changes being made. Motion carried. Mr. Guilmette abstained, having not been present. Mr. Clark informed Mr. Guilmette that a board member could approve minutes of a meeting at which he had been absent, provided he had looked over the minutes.

2. Public Comments – None.

3. Economic Development

a) Park D Closing Update

Mr. Billado noted that the closing date was January 9, 2015. Mr. Thompson asked if the issue with the neighboring driveway had been fully resolved, and Mr. Billado replied that the paperwork would be signed and the check given on the date of the closing. Mr. Thompson urged that the driveway documents should be signed prior to the closing; Mr. Jescavage would arrange for that.

4. Community Development

a) Letter of Support for Fournier Land to Vermont Land Trust

Mr. Allen Karnatz and Mr. Earl Fournier came forward. Mr. Karnatz explained that, when someone applied to Vermont Land Trust, it was customary for the Vermont Land Trust to check with the Town in a formal process, and to receive a letter of recognition from the Town Selectboard. Mr. Guilmette made a motion, seconded by Mr. Clark, to approve the recommendation letter from the Selectboard. Motion carried. The Selectboard signed the letter, and Mr. Karnatz received a copy.

b) Discussion of MVU with Earl Fournier

Mr. Fournier stated that the MVU board requested the Selectboard's permission to include in the town report a brief report from the school, comprised of a letter and a basic budget. The budget had increased for 2015 by \$59,000, which included some reduction in staff. The school was a large part of the community, and the school board wished for the town report to reflect that. Mr. Thompson asked if the staff reduction was total number, or departmental, and Mr. Fournier replied that it was total. The Selectboard agreed that the school report was a great idea, and Mrs. Cathy Fournier reminded Mr. Earl Fournier to have the report to her by or before January 15, 2015.

c) Discussion of Franklin County Home Health Agency with Hank Lambert

Mr. Lambert thanked the Selectboard for including the FCHHA requested amount in the budget, as the agency was essential to the health and wellbeing of the community. Over 200 Swanton citizens had been served in 2014. Mr. Billado and Mr. Clark thanked Home Health for their services, especially since their families had received those services in the past.

Mr. Lambert also thanked the Town Selectboard and Village board for their support of the Swanton Enhancement Project, which was gaining members and community interest. The Community Visit, facilitated by the Vermont Count on Rural Development, would be held on January 28, 2015, with a free dinner and a total of 9 sessions altogether, including discussions on economic development, transportation, education, drug abuse, and other topics. Community input and involvement was strongly encouraged.

d) Highgate Arena Request

Mr. Billado read into the record the following letter from Jeff Towle, Highgate Selectboard Chair:

Dear Dan,

Thanks to the successful bond vote in November, the Highgate Arena Renovation Team (HART) and the Highgate Selectboard will be moving forward with an upgrade to the ice system at the arena. We will begin construction when the ice is out in April and aim to have the work substantially completed by September 2015 to meet the HUD grant deadline. As you know, this project has been a long time in the planning stages and we are thrilled to finally be moving forward with construction. Even with this on our mind, we realize that upcoming expenses will be a heavy burden for Highgate Residents to manage alone and we are seeking support from our neighbors who also benefit from this facility.

We are working hard to secure funding from all available sources and we are happy to announce that we were recently awarded a \$25,000 Recreation Grant from the State of Vermont toward the electrical system upgrade required to support the new ice system. We will continue to aggressively seek grant funding but we also need the support of our neighbors to maintain this resource.

Please accept this letter as a formal request for funding in the amount of \$20,000 to support this vital asset to our region. We know that many Swanton residents benefit from the arena and this amount equates to a \$3.1 per capita request. Your support is important to ensure the valuable programs that serve our communities can continue.

Your support is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely, Jeff Towle, Selectboard Chair

Mr. Thompson and Mr. Lavoie were of the opinion that, because Swanton voters had twice voted against an article that would financially support the Highgate arena renovations, that decision should be honored. Mr. Clark preferred to put the request on the ballot as a line item for a one-time financial aid, and let the voters decide. Mr. Clark made a motion to that effect, with Mr. Guilmette seconding. Discussion: Mr. Thompson felt that the arena was "mismanaged" and he was not interested in "bailing them out now." Discussion concluded. Mr. Clark and Mr. Guilmette voted in favor of the motion; Mr. Billado, Mr. Thompson, and

Mr. Lavoie voted against. Mr. Jescavage was asked to contact Mr. Jeff Towle with the Selectboard's vote not to add the \$20,000 request to the ballot.

5. Law Enforcement

a) *Swanton Village Police Chief Report*

Chief Leonard Stell presented the report, which reflected 42 calls in the town for the month of December 2014, with a total of 7 traffic citations for roughly \$1438 in fees. Vandalism was slowing down in the winter months, but domestic violence calls were increasing. The requested policing for speed violations on Bushey Street had been started, and more would be done.

6. Old Business

a) *Discuss Whether to Set Public Hearing for Cedar Estates Petition*

Mr. Jescavage recalled that, at a previous meeting, Mr. Harold Garrett was instructed to inspect the road and return to the Selectboard with a report. Mr. Clark recalled that a list of all private roads should be considered (Miss Wheeler had provided such a list) and that the hearing issue would be considered in the second meeting in January, after Mr. Clark and Mr. Garrett had driven to each of the private roads.

b) *Tractor Supply*

Mr. Thompson stated that Tractor Supply was still charging a tax on Swanton residents. Mrs. Fournier reported that she had called Tractor Supply and the Vermont Department of Taxes and had been told that the issue would be resolved, but it had not yet been resolved, and citizens were complaining. Tractor Supply had told her that St. Albans Town had instructed the store to charge a tax on Swanton residents, which the Swanton Selectboard now knew to be illegal. Mr. Thompson said he wished to know who from St. Albans town had instructed Tractor Supply to charge the tax, when the practice began, and where the money went. Mr. Jescavage was in charge of that investigation.

7. Highway Department

a) *Discuss & Sign Vermont Agency of Transportation Maintenance Agreement for Lakewood Drive*

Mr. Jescavage explained that the state had improved the apron onto Lakewood Drive from the intersection with the Alburgh bridge, and wished for Swanton Town to maintain the apron in the Town right-of-way. Mr. Clark considered the request a "low threat" issue, and made a motion to sign the maintenance agreement with the Agency of Transportation for the Lakewood Drive apron in the town road right-of-way. Mr. Guilmette seconded the motion. Motion carried. Mrs. Fournier notarized the signed agreement.

b) *Discuss Christmas Tree Disposal*

Mr. Jescavage reported that Mr. Harold Garrett, Road Foreman, had said that there was no space at the new garage to receive old Christmas trees, and was directing people to put them on the Park D property. Given that the property was for sale, that practice would stop in the future. Hudak's was accepting trees. Should the town continue helping with disposal of Christmas trees, or turn that matter over to the private sector (like Hudak's)? The Selectboard was in favor of directing citizens to the private sector.

c) *New Truck Update*

Mr. Clark reported that, as of December 26, 2014, Viking had the new town truck in the queue, but the truck would not be available until at least early February.

d) *General Updates*

Mr. Billado read an email from Harold Garret, Road Foreman, in which Mr. Garrett asked Selectboard approval to be covered by insurance when he had to use his own vehicle to

check out the roads. The bus drivers wished for the roads to be cleared earlier. He was not punching in for that time, so he needed a way to verify that he was working for the town on that time. Also, he asked the Selectboard to consider reimbursing Terry for mileage. Mr. Billado had responded to that email, reminding Mr. Garrett that all work down for the town should be punched in.

Mr. Clark said that he had called the bus garage and was told that, overall, there were no complaints from the bus drivers. He would follow up with the garage with a personal visit as well. He said he wished to have more discussion on the need to punch in, since Mr. Garrett would have to make the extra trip to punch in for his time and then respond to a call. He requested Mr. Jescavage to check with the insurance company. Mr. Billado felt that, if the town already paid per hour, should the town also pay for mileage?

Mr. Clark said that the employee handbook should be edited for clarity in the future. The Selectboard agreed that it was fine if Mr. Garrett took the town pick-up home for the winter, so that he used a town vehicle to do his work, rather than his own.

e) Other Updates

Mr. Guilmette asked if the town planned to discontinue the Decker Trail. Mr. Jescavage presented documentation indicating that, when the town reclassified Decker Road as a trail in 1992, the town had no legal responsibility to maintain the discontinued road. It was, however, the only access to a landlocked parcel of land. Mr. Guilmette noted that the trail would have to be privately maintained, yet it was accessible by the public, which did not seem fair. Mr. Clark suggested turning over the trail to the landowner, and having a meeting in which the owner of the landlocked parcel could come to an agreement to ensure his right-of-way via the Decker Trail.

8. Correspondence

a) Request from Channel 15

The Selectboard agreed to the request from Channel 15 to schedule the next Swanton Today Show for Wednesday, February 11, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.

b) Other Correspondence

Mr. Jescavage presented an invitation to an event sponsored by the Vermont Association of Police Chiefs, on January 13, 2015 in Montpelier, for \$20 per person.

9. Any Other Necessary Business

a) Sign VT DOL Layoff Notice Forms

Mr. Billado explained that the Selectboard had decided to temporarily lay off the part-time employee, Brian Thompson, from January 1 to April 1. Mr. Lavoie and Mr. Jescavage said that Mr. Brian Thompson had requested to be laid off from January 21st to March 30th, because that worked better for unemployment benefits. During the week in which Mr. Thompson substituted for a vacationing crew member, Mr. Thompson would not report to unemployment, would receive pay from the town, and would continue to get unemployment the next week. Mr. William Thompson expressed his disapproval of the alleged complaints by the full-time road crew members that Mr. Brian Thompson received preferential treatment from the Selectboard.

Mr. Clark felt that the agreed-upon dates of January 1 to April 1 should stand, and Mr. Lavoie agreed. Mr. William Thompson felt that the board should enter executive session to continue the discussion, since further comment would put certain people at a disadvantage.

b) Approve Town Report Cover and Consider Dedication

The Selectboard approved the cover presented by Mr. Jescavage, which depicted the F-16 named for Swanton. They also agreed to dedicate the town report to the Vermont Air National Guard.

10. Public Comment (Reprise) – None.

11. Upcoming Events

- a) Monday, January 19, 2015 M. L. King Holiday, Town Office Closed*
- b) Tuesday, January 20, 2015 Next Selectboard Meeting at 7 p.m.*
- c) Thursday, January 22, 2015 Development Review Board Meeting at 7 p.m.*
- d) Wednesday, January 28, 2015 Vermont Council on Rural Development Community Visit (www.vtrural.org)*

12. Executive Session

Mr. Clark made a motion, seconded by Mr. Lavoie and Mr. Guilmette, to enter executive session at 8:04 p.m. for the purpose of legal and personnel, citing that discussion on the matters in open session would put someone at a disadvantage. Motion carried.

Mr. Clark made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thompson, to exit executive session at 8:54 p.m. Motion carried.

Mr. Clark made a motion, seconded by Mr. Lavoie, to authorize a 2.5% pay increase across the board for all town employees. Motion carried.

Mr. Clark made a motion, seconded by Mr. Guilmette, to lay off Mr. Brian Thompson from January 12, 2015 to March 29, 2015. Motion carried.

Mr. Lavoie made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thompson, to authorize Daniel Billado, Selectboard Chair, to sign the form to guarantee Brian Thompson's return to his part-time employment for the town after March 29, 2015. Motion carried.

13. Adjournment

Mr. Lavoie made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thompson, to adjourn at 8:56 p.m. Motion carried.

Typed on January 7, 2015

Minutes by Yaasha Wheeler

Received and filed by:

Cathy Fournier, Swanton Town Clerk

Date