

TOWN OF SWANTON
MINUTES
ANNUAL INFORMATIONAL MEETING
Swanton Village Municipal Office
221 First Street, Swanton, VT 05488

Monday, February 22, 2016 @ 7:00 p.m.

Present: Daniel Billado, Selectboard Chair; Joel Clark, Selectboard Vice Chair; James Guilmette, John Lavoie, William "Turk" Thompson, Selectmen; David Jescavage, Town Administrator; Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk; Reginald Beliveau, Village Manager; Eugene LaBombard; Neal Speer; Yaasha Wheeler, Secretary; Brian Savage; Lynn Billado, MVR; Leonard "Joey" Stell; Richard Thompson; Glenn Gurwitt; Heather Buczkowski, Ch. 16; Harold Garrett; Adam Paxman; Christine Lang; Betty Fournier; Tim Girard; Jason Cross; Dena St. Amour; Justina Jeannett; Jeff Raleigh.

A. Call to Order

Mr. Billado called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He asked for a moment of silence for those whom the community had lost in the past year.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

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

C. Reading of Warning – Town Moderator

Mr. Brian Savage read the following warning:

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 1, 2016, 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 3 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 Trustee of Public Money for a 2 year unexpired term
One Library Trustee for a 5 year term
One Library Trustee for a 5 year term
One Cemetery Commissioner for a 5 year term
Town Grand Juror
Town Agent
Collector of Delinquent Taxes*

Article 2: Will the Town appropriate \$830,675.84 for the operating and maintenance of the Town Highway Department?

Article 3: Will the Town appropriate \$151,578.00 for fire protection, \$58,065.00 of which is for a fire truck replacement fund?

Article 4: Will the Town appropriate \$121,766.02 to provide police protection to the residents of the Town of Swanton.

Article 5: Will the voters of the Swanton School District approve the School Directors to expend \$8,681,252, which is the amount the School Directors have determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$12,140 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 2.73% higher than spending for the current year.

Article 6: Will the voters of the Swanton School District authorize the School Directors to borrow money in anticipation of taxes?

Article 7: Will the Town appropriate \$453,346.88 for the Town General expenses?

Article 8: Shall the Town collect its real and personal property taxes to defray the expenses of the Town for the fiscal year commencing January 1, 2016, 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 and 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 9: Will the Town appropriate \$234,000.00 to provide rescue services to the residents of the Town of Swanton?

Article 10: Will the Town appropriate \$104,925.00 towards the Operating and Maintenance Budget of the Recreation Department?

Article 11: Will the Town appropriate \$134,869.58 towards the Operating and Maintenance Budget of the Swanton Public Library?

Article 12: Will the Town appropriate \$1,000.00 in support of Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity, to support the food shelf, NorthWest Family Foods?

The legal voters of the Town of Swanton are further notified than an Informational Meeting will be held at the Swanton Village Municipal Complex on Monday, February 22, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. for the purpose of explaining all budget items to the voters.

Dated at Swanton, Vermont, this 19th day of January, 2016.

*Daniel Billado, Chair
Joel A. Clark, Vice Chair
John Lavoie
William Thompson, Jr.
James Guilmette*

*Jay Cummings, Chair
Tobias Maguire, Vice Chair
Mary Wood
Patti Jo Walker
John Creelman*

SELECTMEN

SCHOOL BOARD DIRECTORS

Dated and filed this 19th day of January, 2016

Attest: Cathy L. Fournier, Town Clerk

1. Swanton School District FY2016-17 Budget Presentation

Mr. Savage introduced Jay Cummings, Patti Jo Walker, and Martha Wood, as well as Winton Goodrich (superintendent). Mr. Jay Cummings said he felt that the board was very

dedicated and mindful of the needs. He especially thanked the business managers for doing a difficult but important job.

The Elementary School won the Gold Medal Award for the Healthier US Schools Challenge for their nutritional efforts. The administration had worked to present a budget that represented Swanton's needs at a reasonable cost to the taxpayers.

Dena St. Amor showed that the school priorities focused on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, using Professional Learning Communities, Instructional Framework, Configuration/Master Schedule, Behavior, and School Culture. They were working with Dr. Anthony Muhammed, who was internationally known as an education consultant. This work was driven by the direction of the supervisory union.

Mr. Cummings added that professional development, with social and emotional skill training, was a big focus for 21st century learning and teaching. The initiative to fund a 1:1 computer initiative for grades 4, 5, and 6 had been launched a few years ago, and they were continuing in that direction. The Head Start classroom was being replaced by two sections of Early Education. The Supervisory Union had introduced more regulations about the administrative responsibilities than ever before. Special Education had been moved over to the Supervisory Union, as well as the transportation.

Student enrollment had decreased about 20% over the last decade, with Swanton declining about 14% over the last 5 years. The Supervisory Union has been dropping as well. Swanton's numbers had dropped in the last few years from about 560 to 490.

The current staff was 121.26, with 63.6 professional staff, 12.8 support staff, and 44.86 education support/paraprofessionals. The current Professional Staff Master Agreement will be in effect until June 2017. They had purposefully negotiated shorter term contracts, because of the state health care changes and other changes. The Supervisory Union negotiated a contract that involved a 7.9% increase in health insurance, but a 5.6 decrease in the dental insurance. Budget priorities involved student/staff ratio, social and emotional needs for the students, maintenance of the physical plant, and the 1:1 computer initiative. They were in Year 2 of Teacher Early Departure Agreement by 3 professional staff and they were reducing 2 interventionists and transition to become classroom teachers.

In 2014, the Central School Parking Lot had been upgraded, and the Babcock School HVAC Phase 2 had been completed. There had also been a security camera upgrade for both buildings. The proposed budget was \$8,681,252. Swanton was the 87th least expensive out of the 103 Vermont school districts. The equalized pupil spending of that would be \$13,140.

The projected education spending was \$6,908,208. The equalized student spending per pupil was \$12,790. The homestead tax rate variables were controlled by the taxpayers, but the legislature controlled the equalized pupil rate, the yield amount, and the base tax rate. Other variables included the local, state, and federal revenue, and the ratio of elementary to secondary students. He explained how the funding worked.

The Swanton School budget had very little impact on the business and non-homestead tax rate, which was estimated to be \$0.707. The homestead tax rate in 2015 was 0.6102, and the projected rate for 2016 was 0.6116, which was only 0.0014 higher than 2015.

Mr. Cummings directed people where to find more information.

QUESTIONS

Mr. Garrett asked if any staff had been reduced prior to putting together this budget. Mr. Cummings said that the staff had been reduced by 6 to 8. Some paraprofessionals had not been replaced, some staff members were on Early Buyout, etc. Mr. Garrett asked how much was saved through that reduction. Mr. Cummings was not certain of the number; previous staff reduction had resulted in \$130,000 in savings. Mr. Garrett projected that the amount of savings reduced the amount needed for the budget.

Mr. Garrett added that it would be useful to know how many children were on each class. Mr. Cummings replied that most classes had 60+ students, which about 80 students in kindergarten. Mr. Garrett asked if the requested budget number of \$8 million included the Supervisory Union, and added that there was \$1.7 million coming; where did that money go?

Mrs. ? explained that the state was using that number to offset the taxes, and was using the net end spending instead of a flat rate. The \$8.7 million was therefore not the actual number to be raised by taxes, because, once the budget was offset by the money from the state, it would only be about \$6.9 million. Mrs. ? explained education spending and how it worked per equalized pupil.

Mr. Goodrich added that there could still be the same budget, but the tax rate could still shoot up, so that was why schools were shifting to per equalized pupil. It was pointed out that the movement of certain factors to the Supervisory Union (Special Education and transportation) did not result in actual reduction in cost. Martha Wood added that the state was constantly changing things, and perhaps in the future, the school vote could be done after the numbers were actual, not just projected.

Mr. ? asked how the Swanton school fares on the K-6 range; is there a higher teacher-student ratio? Mr. Goodrich explained that the state did a report that compared Swanton to similar schools (K-6). Kindergarten this year was 21:1, which was one reason that the interventionists were being transitioned into staff positions. Swanton was “kind of in the middle” of the student-teacher ratio, when considering similar schools around the state.

Mr. Garrett asked to know how the equalized pupil factor was calculated. Mr. Goodrich explained that the average student was 0.87, which boosts offered for students in poverty or students with English as a second language. That is why there could be a higher equalization factor than the actual body count of the students.

Mr. Goodrich introduced Justina Jeannett as the new assistant principal.

Mr. Savage said that the school funding mechanism was “broken beyond repair” and agreed that something needed to change to make more sense. He suggested considering voting on the school budget later, when the actual numbers were known. Over 20 school districts had their annual meeting in May.

2. PowerPoint Presentation & Discussion of Town Swanton’s 2016 Budget by Selectboard

Mr. Billado presented the following information:

2015 SWANTON HIGHLIGHTS

- *Vermont Council on Rural Development held a Community Visit in Swanton for residents.*
- *MUMC & Library parking lots combined.*
- *2015 International plow truck purchased.*
- *Purchase of new dump truck body for 2005 Mac, which would now be good for another 10 years.*
- *Robin Hood Drive west end work started.*
- *Bushey Street completely resurfaced with new sidewalks and curbing.*
- *Paving of Fit & Healthy Path increased its usage by foot traffic and by non-motorized wheeled vehicles. It is now handicapped accessible and usable by wheelchairs.*
- *Congratulations to Maurice “Moe” Jette who left our highway crew to take a job as the Town of Fairfield Highway Foreman.*

2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- *Level funded accounts wherever possible and practical.*
- *Paid down new highway garage debt.*
- *Energtek North Country, Inc. purchased Park D industrial land for \$175,000.*

- *Sponsored and participated in events for the Swanton Enhancement Project.*
- *Awarded Municipal Planning Grant for Town & Village Municipal Plan revisions.*

Highway Department:

- *Paved the following roads:*
 - *Bushey Road: 1.8 miles*
 - *Donaldson Road: 0.6 miles*
 - *Bushey Street to Leduc Drive: 0.2 miles*
 - *Kellogg Road: 0.2 miles*
 - *Robin Hood Drive: 0.3 miles*
- *Stone lined ditches on Bachand & Comstock Roads with \$18,000 state grant funds*
- *New culverts installed on 6 Town roads: Sholan, Monument, Church, French Hill, Middle, & Campbell Bay Roads.*
- *Ditching work done on Monument, Church, Middle, Kellogg, & Campbell Bay Roads.*
- *Hired Cross Consulting Engineers to design the west end junction of Robin Hood Drive & Route 7.*

FUTURE PROJECTS IN 2016

- *Apply for grant to repave Pond Road.*
- *Continue the permit process for last part of Robin Hood Drive.*
- *Paving in the Industrial Park and West Swanton area.*
- *Construct a lean-to on the sand shed.*
- *Cross Consulting Engineers to complete sidewalk scoping study.*
- *Apply for grant funds.*

2016 Budget Requests Summary

(If all voted articles are approved)

Town General Budget: \$1,126,822.59

Town Highway Budget: \$1,306,076.40

Town Residents' Budget: \$2,432,898.99

Village Residents' Budget: \$1,227,298.00

Swanton School Budget: \$8,681,252.00

MVU High School Budget: \$15,477,560.00

2016 GENERAL BUDGET

If all articles approved: \$1,126,822.59

To be raised by taxes: \$453,346.88

2016 projected tax rate: \$0.1425

2015 tax rate: \$0.1163

2016 tax rate increase: \$0.0262

2016 HIGHWAY BUDGET

If all articles approved: \$1,306,076.40

To be raised by taxes: \$830,675.84

2016 projected tax rate: \$0.2365

2015 tax rate: \$0.2314

2016 tax rate increase: \$0.0051

PROJECTED 2016 - RESIDENTIAL TAX RATES

<i>Town Residential</i>	<i>2015 ACTUAL</i>	<i>2016 PROJECTED</i>
<i>Town General Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$0.1163</i>	<i>\$0.1425</i>
<i>Town Highway Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$0.2314</i>	<i>\$0.2365</i>
<i>Education Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$1.2467</i>	<i>\$1.2480</i>
<i>Total Town Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$1.5944</i>	<i>\$1.6270</i>

<i>Village Residential</i>	<i>2015 ACTUAL</i>	<i>2016 PROJECTED</i>
<i>Town General Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$0.1163</i>	<i>\$0.1425</i>
<i>Village Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$0.7407</i>	<i>\$0.7737</i>
<i>Education Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$1.2467</i>	<i>\$1.2480</i>
<i>Total Village Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$2.1037</i>	<i>\$2.1642</i>

PROJECTED 2016 – NON-RESIDENTIAL TAX RATES

<i>Town Residential</i>	<i>2015 ACTUAL</i>	<i>2016 PROJECTED</i>
<i>Town General Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$0.1163</i>	<i>\$0.1425</i>
<i>Town Highway Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$0.2314</i>	<i>\$0.2365</i>
<i>Education Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$1.3988</i>	<i>\$1.4160</i>
<i>Total Town Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$1.7465</i>	<i>\$1.7950</i>

<i>Village Non-Residential</i>	<i>2015 ACTUAL</i>	<i>2016 PROJECTED</i>
<i>Town General Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$0.1163</i>	<i>\$0.1425</i>
<i>Village Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$0.7407</i>	<i>\$0.7737</i>
<i>Education Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$1.3988</i>	<i>\$1.4160</i>
<i>Total Village Tax Rate</i>	<i>\$2.2558</i>	<i>\$2.3322</i>

PROJECTED 2016 TAXES – RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

Town Residential:

Property Taxes on \$200,000 property assessment
Your 2015 tax bill: \$3,188.80
Your 2016 tax bill: \$3,254.00
Increase: \$65.20

Village Residential:

Property taxes on \$200,000 property assessment
Your 2015 tax bill: \$4,207.40
Your 2016 tax bill: \$4,328.40
Increase: \$121.00

PROJECTED 2016 TAXES – NON-RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

Town Non-Residential:

Property taxes on \$200,000 property assessment
Your 2015 tax bill: \$3,493.00
Your 2016 tax bill: \$3,590.00
Increase: \$97.00

Village Non-Residential:

Property taxes on \$200,000 property assessment
Your 2015 tax bill: \$4,511.60
Your 2016 tax bill: \$4,664.40
Increase: \$152.80

CANDIDATES FOR OFFICE

Auditor (3 years) – John E. Hubbard
Lister (3 years) – James Pratt
Lister (1 year) – Write-in
Collector of Delinquent Taxes (1 year) – Betty L. Cheney
Trustee of Public Money (3 years) – Brian K. Savage
Trustee of Public Money (2 years) – Write-in
School Director (2 years) – John Creelman
School Director (3 years) – Tobias Maguire
Library Trustee (5 years) – Rebecca S. Rupp
Library Trustee (1 year) – Paul Foisy
Cemetery Commissioner (5 years) – Donald G. Bell
Selectman (2 years) – Jeffrey Raleigh
Selectman (3 years) – Joel Clark
Town Agent (1 year) – Gerald Barney
Town Grand Juror (1 year) – Gerald Barney
Moderator (1 year, town & town school district) – Brian K. Savage

Mr. Goodrich thanked the Selectmen for taking “Bushey Pond” out of circulation, so that kids weren’t getting sprayed during the rain. Mr. Billado informed Mr. Goodrich that they had installed a 3-way stop sign at the intersection of Bushey Street and Robin Hood Drive;

at some point it would be a 4-way. Mr. Lavoie added that speed bumps had been considered; “we still have a little work to talk about how we were going to do that.” Mr. Billado assured the public that safety was the #1 concern. Mr. Goodrich agreed that that area was the “danger zone.”

Mr. Garrett pointed out that the Town Clerk was very “sensitive” to increases to the general budget, and added that the tax rate either goes up or down by the amount of money carried over by delinquent taxes. Unfortunately, this year, the increase this year was because that revenue was not there. On the Highway Budget, people might consider that the loss of an employee should result in a decreased budget, but the amount of money saved through wages and insurance did not offset the cost of blasting on Pond Road, the addition of sidewalks on Robin Hood Drive, and the repaving of the industrial park. Mr. Clark added that “if we don’t get after some of these roads, the long-term costs will increase.” Mr. Billado added that the recreation committee, the MVR, and the library came in level-funded. The police department had a less than 3% increase. The fire department went up by 12%.

Mr. Tim Girard said that the increase was because of the necessity of replacing air packs, a project which would be phased over several years. They had put in for grants, which weren’t guaranteed, but at least this was a start.

Mr. Goodrich was very pleased about the sidewalk study up to MVU; the kids walking to and from the school on the limited side street was “an accident waiting to happen.” The school would be supportive of that project.

Mrs. Suzanne Washburn was so glad that both the Town and Village were represented on the cover of the annual report.

Mr. Billado pointed out that the report was dedicated, in part, to Ronald Case, a former Planning Commission member whom the community lost in 2015.

3. Public Comments – None.

4. Any Other Necessary Business
a) Announce Naming of Rec Path

Mr. Brian Savage read the resolution to name the Fit & Healthy Path to honor Richard “Dick” Thompson as follows:

Resolution to Name the Fit & Healthy Recreation Path in Honor of Richard “Dick” Thompson

WHEREAS, Richard “Dick” Thompson served for over sixteen years as the Swanton Town Administrator; and

WHEREAS, Richard “Dick” Thompson was instrumental in working with Bonnie Wanniger of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission and Amy Brewer of Northwestern Lifestyle Medicine to secure grant funding for the creation of a fitness path on a length of abandoned rail line, and

WHEREAS, Richard “Dick” Thompson secured the right of the Town to create a fitness path on the abandoned rail line owned by the State of Vermont, and

WHEREAS, Richard “Dick” Thompson organized a volunteer effort to construct the fitness path in addition to the expenditure of \$35,000 in grant funds to pay for other services, and

WHEREAS, Richard “Dick” Thompson secured multiple donations of goods, funds, and services from business and individuals to help pay for the path construction thereby reducing the cost to the Town and promoting community spirit, and

WHEREAS, the Swanton Selectboard members want to extend their gratitude for the extraordinary effort and vision of Richard "Dick" Thompson in making the fitness path a reality,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Swanton Selectboard recognizes and appreciates this extraordinary effort and vision and wants to make that recognition and appreciation a matter of public record for posterity,

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Swanton Selectboard directs that this path shall henceforth be named the Richard "Dick" Thompson Fit & Healthy Recreation Path in honor of his extraordinary effort and vision in making this path a reality.

Adopted by the Town of Swanton, Vermont Selectboard on this 16th day of February 2016.

D. Executive Session (if needed)

None.

E. Adjournment

Mr. Lavoie made a motion, seconded by Mr. Guilmette, to adjourn at 8:16 p.m. Motion carried.

Mr. Billado thanked Turk Thompson for his service in the last 2 years on the Selectboard.

Received and filed by:

Cathy Fournier, Swanton Town Clerk

Date