

SELECTMEN'S REPORT

Cover

The annual report cover again displays a variety of photographs that reflect the picture postcard beauty of Swanton that makes it such a wonderful place to live, work, and visit. New programs are continuously being implemented to enhance the community's appearance and vitality. As a result, Town & Village officials & boards, citizen groups, and private developers are creating new development and public improvement projects that are enhancing the tax base of Swanton. Additional photos of our picturesque town and information on government operations, school projects, recreational activities, and community events can also be found on the town's website by searching www.townofswantonvermont.weebly.com. The photos remind us of how fortunate we are to reside in such a visually attractive community.

Highlights of the Year

The Selectboard continued to work with great dedication on behalf of Swanton residents. In 2018, members included Chair James Guilmette, Vice Chair Daniel E. Billado, L. John Lavoie, Joel Clark, and Gary Centabar. For the 2018 Town Meeting election, there were no candidates for an open Selectman seat on the ballot at the March 2018 Town Meeting. The Selectboard has the power to appoint someone to fill a vacant seat. From a small group of interested persons, the Board chose Gary Centabar to fill the vacant seat. Later in the year in November, Selectman L. John Lavoie submitted his resignation from the Board due to distant out of state work commitments. His seat is vacant and will be filled by ballot vote at the March 5th Town Meeting. His wealth of knowledge of Town operations and finances will be missed by all.

Please contact us with any questions, concerns, or suggestions you may have about Town business. A TOWN & VILLAGE DIRECTORY is accessible on the Town's website mentioned above. The directory lists names and contact information for Town and Village officials. A copy of the Town's *Winter Road Maintenance Policy* and the state statute prohibiting plowing snow across roads is on the Town of Swanton website at the HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT page. Information on zoning, tax maps, meeting agendas and minutes, dog licenses, and other government operations is also available there. Please take the time to visit our website and keep informed. Also, please watch the electronic sign in the Village Park for local government and private, non-profit informative announcements.

The year 2018 will go down in history as the year of the "Ice Jam Flood" on the Missisquoi River that was caused by a warm spell, thick ice on the river, and heavy rain. The inundation of rain caused the rising floodwaters to break up the ice into large chunks that flowed downstream until they jammed up against the ice on Lake Champlain. The dam that was formed by this jam backed up floodwaters all the way to the Village Dam. Over a dozen homes were flooded in the flat area of North River Street prompting a heroic rescue in the middle of the night by Swanton Police and Fire crews as well as Missisquoi Valley Rescue personnel. In the weeks following the flood, Town and Village staff worked with state and federal officials and private volunteer groups to assist the flood victims in finding shelter, getting their properties repaired, having their

well water tested, handling insurance claims, and putting their lives back in order. It was a disaster that brought many people together to help those in need.

Our military veterans were honored in three specific ways during 2018. First, the Board supported a state sponsored memorial ceremony honoring Swanton Corporal Leonard A. Lord who was the first Vermonter killed in World War I. He was killed in action 100 years ago on April 6, 2018. The ceremony was held in Flat Iron Park and attended by Governor Scott, various military officials, relatives of Corporal Lord, Swanton Town and Village officials, and members of the public. Second, the annual Memorial Day Parade was held again in honor of those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country. It concluded with a special tribute to three Swanton Vietnam veteran residents who were killed in action in South Vietnam. They are SP4 Reginald Peter Begnoche, SSG Sanford Rene Gaboriault, and SFC George Edward Walker, Jr. The ceremony was held at the Rt. 78 bridge over the Missisquoi River which was officially named the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge* as part of this tribute and in recognition of all Vietnam veterans who patriotically served their country in that war. The project was initiated by a small group of Swanton Vietnam veterans and approved by both the Village Trustees and Town Selectboard. Governor Scott, various military officials, Swanton Town and Village officials, and a large number of members of the public attended this tribute ceremony. Third, in September, the Selectboard approved a resolution stating our support for the Guard and Reserve. The full text of this "*Statement Of Support For The Guard And Reserve*" can be seen on the inside back cover of this report. Photos of Corporal Lord and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge can be seen on the outside back cover.

The old stone culvert on South River Street was replaced with a new, larger, concrete culvert during the summer. The stone culvert was starting to collapse inward. The new concrete culvert can accommodate large volumes of water and should last for many decades to come. The Town received a \$175,000.00 highway structure grant from VTrans to help defray the construction costs. The road was closed for several weeks during the construction phase of the project. We appreciate the patience of the residents who regularly use the road and thank them for their cooperation throughout the project.

Two vacancies in the Highway Department were filled by Patrick Loyer and Gary Ploof who are both performing well and make a good compliment to the Highway Team. A vacancy for the Road Foreman position was filled by the promotion of Kevin Lapan and Arnold "Mike" Bockus to Co-Road Foremen.

The Vermont E-911 Board adopted new E-911 regulations in 2018. In accordance with these new regulations, the Town has been actively correcting existing E-911 problems and issuing new E-911 numbers. The Town has also been making efforts to improve the GIS mapping that appears on the Town's website. We took advantage of a free state program to have our mapping consultant make our GIS maps more accurate. The GIS property and tax maps can be accessed on the Town website by clicking on the STREET & PROPERTY TAX MAPS button. Information on each property in Town is available there.

A spectacular fireworks display was enjoyed by many Swanton residents as a culmination of the Swanton Arts Festival during the summer. The display was put on by Northstar Fireworks from

a location on the west side of the Missisquoi River just a short distance downstream from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge. We plan to make this display an annual occurrence in conjunction with an all day community event. Please watch for an announcement of the date, time, and place and have your cameras ready.

The electronic message signboard that the Selectboard purchased in 2016 has proven to be a very popular message board throughout all of 2018. Messages for Town and Village boards and departments get preference on the sign. Local charitable organizations that serve a public purpose may also request placement of their messages on the sign. Please contact Town Administrator David Jescavage at 868-7418 for details.

General Budget

In 2018, the actual expenditures came in at \$1,159,612.86. Assuming all warned articles are approved, the proposed 2019 General Budget will be \$1,233,012.15 with \$978,379.13 to be raised by taxes. The Selectboard spends a considerable amount of time preparing the budget with Town staff and outside organizations. 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. Budget information will be posted on the Town's website. Please bring your questions and comments to the informational meeting on Monday, February 25, 2019 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. This year, the Selectboard and Village Trustees will present their respective budget information on the same date. The school will not be presenting budget information due to the delayed vote on the school district reorganization. There will also be an opportunity for voters to phone in any questions you may have about the 2019 budgets or other issues of interest. We look forward to seeing you and urge you to participate in the democratic process by voting on Town Meeting Day, Tuesday, March 5, 2019.

Highway

In 2018, the actual expenditures came in at \$1,868,949.02. Assuming all warned articles are approved, the proposed 2019 Highway Budget is \$1,366,530.44 with \$1,220,083.10 to be raised by taxes. As usual, the single largest expense in the Highway Budget is road resurfacing. During 2018, existing paved highways were resurfaced to ensure their long term viability. The following roads were resurfaced: TH 20 - Cook Road_0.20 miles; TH 21 - Middle Road_1.30 miles; TH 27 - Viens Road_0.30 miles; TH 39 - French Hill Road_1.10 miles; TH 24 - Sweet Hollow Road_1.1 miles; and TH 5 - Pond Road_1.2 miles. Pond Road had improvements made to shoulders, ditches, and embankments in addition to the paving project. The Town received a state grant of \$12,000.00 to help defray costs for the roadside improvements and a VTrans grant of \$150,179.00 to help pay for the paving work on Pond Road. The Town also was awarded \$3,021.00 to pay for half of the installation costs for a security system at the Highway Garage Complex. The system consists of surveillance cameras and trespass alarms for the interiors and

exteriors of the buildings. The grant was provided by the Town's insurer, PACIF/VLCT. In addition to the grants above, the Town was awarded a reimbursement of over \$5,900.00 by FEMA for clean up work the highway crew performed following a storm event in October 2017.

The remainder of Robin Hood Drive from Bushey Road to U.S. Rt. 7 was rebuilt as a roadway over the former railroad bed. The Town's highway crew did the work. It is currently covered with gravel and will be paved in 2019. It is now open to traffic. The Town leases the railroad right-of-way from the state for use as Robin Hood Drive. The completed extension shortens the trip from the Hannaford shopping center to Rt. 7 for travelers heading south. A new tractor and roadside mower were purchased by the highway department in 2018.

Recreation

The Swanton Recreation Commission provides a wide variety of recreational activities for Swanton residents. It also maintains the Town's recreational fields, buildings, and parking for the recreation fields. In 2018, Liza Comiskey was added to the recreation staff as the Program Director. It is noteworthy that the Recreation Commission raises much of the funding for its budget through grants and fundraising. More information on the Recreation Department's sports activities and events can be found on its website at www.swantonrec.org or by calling Recreation Director Linda Cross at 868-2493.

Law Enforcement

For the April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019 Swanton Village Police Department (SVPD) contract, the Town funded \$110,086.00 for the 1-year contract for police services and protection. The SVPD provides coverage of 8 hours per day, 7 days per week for a total of 56 hours per week for all 52 weeks in the year. For the April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 contract period, the cost to the Town will be \$115,657.64. The coverage will remain the same. 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. Several officers have also been certified to investigate and prosecute animal cruelty cases. The SVPD also assists the Vermont State Police and the Franklin County Sherriff's Office when needed. We depend on the important services being provided by the SVPD to provide protection and safety for our constituents.

Animal Control Officer

In 2018, Derick Billado continued to do exceptional work as Swanton's Animal Control Officer. He can be reached by cell phone at 802-318-3714. He can also be contacted by email at swantonaco@gmail.com. **The ACO deals only with dog issues.** Cats and wild animals are not handled by the ACO. All issues concerning wild animals should be directed to a state conservation officer. The ACO works cooperatively with the Swanton Village Police Department

and the Chittenden County Humane Society. To view a copy of the Town's *Dog Ordinance*, please visit the ACO page on the Town's website. All dogs must be registered by April 1st of each year at the Town Clerk's Office. Dogs will be impounded by the ACO if not properly registered. Proof of rabies inoculation is required. State Law also requires cats to be inoculated for rabies.

Economic Development

In 2018, the Selectboard approved an extension of the part-time Economic Development Coordinator (EDC) position. Elisabeth Nance was hired to fill the new position. She has been working with Town and Village officials and other government officials as well as community groups to advance the economic development priorities of Swanton. Her report appears in another section of this annual report.

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 any particular Town board or committee may contact Town Administrator David Jescavage at 868-7418 for more details. Also, please visit our official website at www.townofswantonvermont.weebly.com for a variety of facts, figures, photos, and other information on our beautiful Town. This year's annual report has been dedicated to two outstanding Swanton citizens who passed away in 2018. Please read their dedications on the front inside cover of the annual report.