

**MINUTES
TOWN/VILLAGE OF SWANTON
JOINT INFORMATIONAL MEETING
PUBLIC HEARING
Village Municipal Complex
120 First Street, Swanton, VT 05488
Tuesday, February 22, 2022 @ 7:00 p.m.**

Present: Reg Beliveau, Village Manager; Lynn Paradis, Assistant Village Manager; Dianne Day, Village Clerk; Neal Speer, Board of Village Trustees President; Adam Paxman, Eugene LaBombard, Christopher Leach, Village Trustee Members; Jason Butler, Fire Chief; Matt Sullivan, Police Chief; James Guilmette, Selectboard Chairman; Earl Fournier, Nicole Draper, Ed White, Selectboard Members; Brian Savage, Town Administrator; Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk; Joseph Cava, Administrative Assistant; David Jescavage; Patrick Parah; Darci Benoit; Linda; Abigael; CL; iPhone; Chris Sweeny; Nicholas Brosseau; Alvin; Kimberley Ledoux; Emily Parker; jbsugar; Rebecca Rupp; Chris Washburn; Suzanne Washburn; Allen Letourneau; Jack Nichol; Jenn Yandow; Richard Thompson; SR; SMM; TheSpeers; Betty Cheney; Rich Kelley; Al Kinzinger

*All motions carried unanimously unless otherwise specified.

A. Call to Order

Mr. Speer called the Board of Village Trustees Joint Informational Meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Mr. Guilmette consecutively called the Selectboard Joint Informational Meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

B. Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence – Mr. Speer led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Agenda Review

1. Reading of Town of Swanton’s Annual Warning – Town Administrator Brian Savage

Mr. Savage opened by reading the Town of Swanton Annual Warning as follows:

The legal voters of the Town of Swanton, who are legal voters in Town Meeting, are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Swanton Municipal Complex, First and Elm Streets, Swanton on Tuesday, March 1, 2022 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 for a 1 year term
- One Selectperson for a 3 year term
- One Selectperson for a 2 year term
- One Lister for a 3 year term
- One Auditor for a 3 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 1 year unexpired term
- One Cemetery Commissioner for a 5 year term
- Collector of Delinquent Taxes

Article 2: Shall the Town appropriate \$1,044,303.75 for the operation and maintenance of the Town Highway Department?

- Article 3: Shall the Town appropriate \$263,875.00 for fire protection?
- Article 4: Shall the Town appropriate \$157,239.94 to provide police protection to the residents of the Town of Swanton?
- Article 5: Shall the Town appropriate \$333,925.92 for the Town General expenses?
- Article 6: Shall the Town appropriate \$194,097.00 towards the Operating and Maintenance Budget of the Swanton Public Library?
- Article 7: Shall the Town appropriate an additional \$53,500.00 towards the Operating Budget of the Swanton Public Library?
- 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, 2022, 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 an eight percent (8%) penalty and one percent (1%) interest per month (or portion thereof) due thereon for the first three months, and one and a half (1.5%) per month (or portion thereof) thereafter, to be charged for late payment of any installment?
- Article 9: Shall the Town appropriate \$196,628.00 to provide rescue services to the residents of the Town of Swanton?
- Article 10: Shall the Town appropriate \$123,247.24 towards the Operating and Maintenance Budget of the Recreation Department?

2. Reading of Village of Swanton’s Annual Warning – Village President Neal Speer

Mr. Speer opened by reading the Village of Swanton Annual Warning as follows:

The legal voters of the Village of Swanton are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Swanton Village Complex, 120 First Street, Swanton, Vermont on Tuesday, March 1, 2022 at 7:00 a.m. to vote on the articles set forth. All articles are to be voted by Australian Ballot. 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 Village the following officers:
 President for a 1 year term
 Trustee for a 3 year term
 Clerk for a 1 year term
 Collector of Delinquent Taxes for a 1 year term
- Article 2: Shall the voters of the Village of Swanton appropriate \$148,264 for the operation and maintenance of the General Fund for 2022?
- Article 3: Shall the voters of the Village of Swanton appropriate \$565,587 for the operation and maintenance of the Highway Department for 2022?
- Article 4: Shall the voters of the Village of Swanton appropriate \$83,329 for the operation and maintenance of the Fire Department for 2022?
- Article 5: Shall the voters of the Village of Swanton appropriate \$768,370 for the operation and maintenance of the Police Department for 2022?

- Article 6: Shall the voters of the Village of Swanton authorize the Board of Trustees to place surplus funds in the Highway Department anticipated to be \$30,988 into a capital fund for future equipment purchases and paving projects?
- Article 7: Shall the voters of the Village of Swanton authorize the Board of Trustees to place surplus funds in the General Department anticipated to be \$49,146 into a capital fund for future Municipal Complex and Park upgrades?
- Article 8: Shall the voters of the Village of Swanton authorize the Board of Trustees to place surplus funds in the Fire Department anticipated to be \$2,139 into a capital fund for future purchases?
- Article 9: Shall the voters of the Village of Swanton approve a bond or note, not to exceed 15 years, issued for the purpose of financing the cost of new water meters as part of the Automated Meter Infrastructure Program, not to exceed \$630,000?
- Article 10: Shall the voters of the Village of Swanton authorize the Board of Trustees to allow the Retail Sale of Cannabis within the Village of Swanton?
3. PowerPoint Presentation and Discussion of Town of Swanton’s Proposed 2022 Budget

Mr. Guilmette opened by expressing his gratitude towards David Jescavage for his faithful years of service to the Town. He then introduced Brian Savage as Swanton’s new Town Administrator. Mr. Guilmette also announced Elizabeth Nance’s resignation with continued involvement with the Town through Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation (FCIDC). In addition, Jim Hubbard on the Planning Commission also announced his resignation after many years of faithful service.

Mr. Guilmette then led into a summary of infrastructure improvements. Some of these projects included replacing the windows on the first floor of the Town Hall and repointing the fieldstone foundation. Recent appointments include Jim Benson for the Animal Control Officer position and Rosita Smith for the Health Officer position.

Under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the Town has taken on the Public Library’s operation and maintenance. Other new developments include the completion of the scoping study for a sidewalk to connect MVU to the Village. A major project is underway to replace the Beebe Road culvert as well.

Mr. Guilmette then expanded upon the Articles discussed by Mr. Savage by explaining the proposed 2022 tax rates and what types of increases to expect based upon medium household values. The proposed budget requests and tax rate projects can be found below:

2022 Budget Requests Summary

Total General Budget	\$1,109,117.13
To Be Raised By Taxes	\$ 653,800.53
2022 Projected Tax Rate	\$.0941
2021 Tax Rate	\$.1078
2022 Tax Rate Decrease	\$.0137
Total Highway Budget	\$1,611,918.69
To Be Raised By Taxes	\$1,465,418.69
2022 Projected Tax Rate	\$.2756
2021 Tax Rate	\$.2361
2022 Tax Rate Increase	\$.0395
Library Budget	\$ 194,097.00
Library Appropriation	\$ 53,500.00
If Both Articles Are Approved	\$ 247,597.00
To Be Raised By Taxes	\$ 247,597.00
2022 Projected Tax Rate	\$.0356
2021 Tax Rate	\$.0240
2022 Tax Rate Increase	\$.0116

2022 Tax Projections

Tax Rate

<u>Tax Fund</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Village</u>
General	\$.0941	\$.0941
Highway	\$.2756	N/A
Library	\$.0356	\$.0356
Total	\$.4053	\$.1297

Estimated Municipal Tax

<u>Assessed Value</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Village</u>
\$150,000.00	\$ 607.95	\$194.55
\$200,000.00	\$ 810.60	\$259.40
\$250,000.00	\$1,013.25	\$324.25

Another community resident expressed that the Town's slideshow was helpful in understanding the proposed increases and recommended making the slideshow available on the Town's website.

4. PowerPoint Presentation and Discussion of Village of Swanton's Proposed 2022 Budget

Mr. Beliveau opened with a dedication renaming Flat Iron Park in the Village to Veteran's Memorial Parking in honor of our veterans, families and friends who have served.

Ms. Paradis then led the discussion with a summary of the proposed 2022 taxes based upon medium household value. This summary also included a breakdown of the general budget, fire budget, police budget and highway budget and how the medium household value affects the tax rate. Ms. Paradis added that Swanton has received grant funding of 90% to make necessary repairs on the bridge crossing the Missiquoi River. Mr. LaBombard reiterated that the bridge repairs are very important, discussing another project of mention is the water line crossing the bridge and an engineering study that is being done to run the line under the river.

Ms. Paradis mentioned that the fire department budget costs the same whether you are a Town resident or a Village resident. She said the costs are split on the grand list. She also mentioned the police department budget on the Village ballot is for Village coverage. She said the Town has a contract for 8 hours of police

coverage per day whereas the Village has coverage for 20 hours per day and the remaining 4 hours being covered by on call officers. Ms. Paradis also said that until projects have been identified the ARPA funds are in the general fund as a deferred revenue. They are also working with VLCT guidelines on how to use the money. Ms. Paradis also talked about having two police officers hired with the COPS grant which pays for approximately 40% of their salaries for 36 months. She said one of those officers is the SRO at MVU and the school picks up the remainder of the costs for that officer.

Following Ms. Paradis' presentation, Mr. Beliveau led a discussion in 2021, a year in review. The wastewater treatment plant and water treatment plant had scrub brush removed and the State approved the continued operation of both facilities. The hydro plant is in the next stages of its 5-year relicensing process. The hydro facility is essential for producing up to 91% of Swanton Village's electricity needs. The water level was low this past year supporting only about 45% of electrical needs which not only hurts the Village but hurts local businesses and areas of Highgate which also receives hydro benefits.

The Village has been maneuvering the Vermont COVID relief funding to pay their utility bills. The current Village Complex was built in 1978 with future plans for expansion to better accommodate the services provided by the Village including the police department, Missisquoi Valley Rescue, and the fire department. Mr. Speer reminded the meeting participants of the obstacles created by the COVID-19 pandemic and what Swanton has had to overcome the last couple of years. He congratulated the community on their resilience and determination to move forward.

5. Public Comment

Mr. Kinzinger asked why the Public Library was requesting an additional \$50,000.00 to support operating expenses? Mr. Fournier explained that Swanton was one of a few towns remaining in Vermont that do not directly fund their public libraries, which is why there was an increase. Ms. Fournier also added that by taking over payroll, healthcare, and retirement this drives up the cost in addition to building maintenance.

Ms. Washburn asked for an update on the Riveria Hotel Property on South River Street. Mr. Speer stated that things have been going slower than he would like and said they are still working on Brownfield issues. He said they have removed some trees and debris around the property and hopes more progress will be made soon.

6. Any Other Necessary Business (None)

7. Executive Session (Not Needed)

D. Adjournment

Mr. Paxman made a motion to adjourn the Board of Village Joint Trustees Informational Meeting at 8:23 p.m., seconded by Mr. LaBombard. Motion carried.

Ms. Draper made a motion to adjourn the Selectboard Joint Informational Meeting at 8:24 p.m., seconded by Mr. White. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph Cava
Administrative Assistant

Respectfully Submitted,

Dianne Day
Village Clerk

Received and filed by:

Cathy Fournier, Town Clerk

Date