

VILLAGE OF SWANTON

Council Meeting Minutes

February 24th, 2025

6:00 p.m.

Prayer

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call: Samantha Disbrow
Derek Kania
John Schmidt

Noah Kreuz
Patrick Messenger
Dianne Westhoven

Councilman Kania moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Councilman Schmidt. No Discussion. Roll Call. ALL YES. Motion Passed 6-0.

Councilman Messenger moved to approve the minutes from the February 8th, 2025 Special Council Meeting. Seconded by Councilman Kania. No Discussion. Roll Call. ALL YES. Motion Passed 6-0.

Councilman Kania moved to approve the minutes from the February 10th, 2025 Council Meeting. Seconded by Councilwoman Westhoven. No Discussion. Roll Call. ALL YES. Motion Passed 6-0.

Finance Report

Due to a multitude of individual factors the 2/15/2025 Payroll had several issues resulting in some delays and errors. They should all be cleared as of the date of the council meeting but we're continuing to iron out issues as they arise. As of 02/20/2025 the Fiscal Year 2024 has been closed in UAN and the Hinkle-Filing has been submitted electronically to the Auditor of State. Within the next couple of weeks we will need to issue a statement on our website and social media letting the residents know the Village's financial report is prepared and available to comply with ORC requirements. Permanent Budget for 2025 was anticipated to be brought forward at this meeting but at the request of the Fire Department and the Village Administrator I will be bringing that forward at the first meeting in March to give the Fire Department more time to adjust what they need to expected annual expenditures. Had several meetings with Deputy Fire Chief Barrett Dorner to give him some instruction on how we process payroll and accounts payable items as the payroll setup for the fire department can be fairly complex compared to the other departments. A duplicated check was discovered in the amount of \$3,300.00 with numbers #30653 & #30693. They were mailed out about 2 weeks apart, so we imagine the invoice had been somehow duplicated and then missed during controls. However, when the company attempted to cash them they were flagged by the Positive Pay system and I was able to reject the duplicate before the money was authorized to move. I am continuing work on putting together a proposal for the Water and Sewer department to establish a pay structure similar to what has been done in the other departments.

Public Service

The Public Service Department worked in conjunction with Water Treatment to locate and repair three separate watermain leaks that were discovered in late January. These leaks were small, but the water loss added up quickly given the fact that there was more than one leak. The Public Service Department was able to fix the leaks with relative ease once we located them, and water usage went down after all the leaks had been repaired. February brought the most snow and ice that we have seen so far this winter, and Public Service has been hard at work keeping the roadways clear and open for village residents. With snow and ice removal comes snowplow repairs, and we have been staying on top of damaged equipment ensuring proper repairs are made so that we are in the best position possible when the next snowfall comes. As a result of the amount of ice we have seen in February, we are rapidly depleting our stockpile of salt. We are not alone in this situation, as most local municipalities are in a similar position. We purchased 50 tons of salt through Fulton County, and we have subsequently used those 50 tons. The county no longer has salt to spare, and the local townships we have reached out to are no different. I have reached out to ODOT to inquire about purchasing more salt for this season, but ultimately that decision is made by Morton Salt and we have yet to hear anything back from them. I have also contacted the Ohio Turnpike about purchasing salt, but again, we haven't heard anything back. We will continue to ensure that roadways are clear to the best of our abilities. On the topic of salt, the fabric building upgrade to village salt storage is slated to arrive in late April. Public Service will be installing the fabric cover ourselves, as this drastically lowered the price of the project. Greystone Construction will still be providing us with a project manager that we can reach out to if we have any questions or troubles when the time comes for installation. As I mentioned at my in-person report in January, this fabric building will allow for us to store hundreds of tons of salt moving forward, so we can hopefully avoid the shortages we are experiencing this winter season. We are all very excited about this salt storage upgrade. I have been in contact with Lammon Brothers about working out an agreement for village residents to have unlimited brush drop off for the year at no cost to the residents. This would mean that Public Service wouldn't need to construct a publicly available brush bin, as any residents in town who would have taken advantage of the bin would be able to take their brush directly to Lammon Brothers for free. The savings created by an agreement like this would be greater than just monetary savings, as this would eliminate the need for the Public Service Department to "babysit" the bin throughout the year. I strongly feel that this would be a time saver for the Police Department as well, because the chances of non-permitted materials being left at a 24/7 publicly accessible bin seems high, if not completely inevitable. I have proposed details of this agreement to Administrator Shulters.

Water & Sewer

Water Treatment Plant

Jones and Henry Engineers completed the Water Distribution System Modeling update. Overall the distribution system is in good shape. They made some recommendations on possible improvements to the system. Woolace Electric has finished installing the new variable speed drives on 40HP and 60HP high service pumps. We are currently waiting for Schneider Electric to come out and perform the startup on the drivers. With the cold weather plant staff has been busy performing routine maintenance and painting upstairs chem feed room. The reservoir is currently at a depth of 13.6 feet. The accounted for water for

January was at 79%. If there are any questions or comments for me, please contact me by phone and/or email and I will be happy to assist you.

Water Resource Recovery Facility

WRRF staff remodeled the lab and control room. Work included painting the walls, new floor installation, and adding a workstation for new computer controls. Construction of the new Headworks building is 85 percent complete. The new pumps, screen, and grit system were brought online the week of February 13th. Most of the new systems are working as designed. With the help of Peterson Construction company, we are working out most of the issues. The new SCADA system (computer controls for the plant) went online on the first of February. This will give staff the ability to control and monitor the plant more efficiently. Future work includes demolition of old influent and raw water pump stations, punch list items, and land scaping. In early March Buckeye pumps will be on site to install new control panels for the trickling filters.

Mayor Report

Regular and informal meetings and discussions with the administrative team including the Police and Fire Chiefs, Administrator and Fiscal Officer. Reviewed compensation for Police Chief, Fire Chief and Administrator. Addressed several residents' concerns. Re: Water, streets, annexation issues, etc. Several communications with the Village solicitor regarding legal matters. Met with parties regarding potential economic development project. Attended the staff meeting. Attended the Fulton County Fire Association Dinner.

I would like to take a moment to honor and celebrate the incredible life of Billy R. Chinnis, a man of service, dedication, and unwavering love for his country, his family, and his community. Born on September 19, 1922, in Holland, Ohio, Billy graduated from Holland High School in 1940 and soon after answered the call to serve, joining the U.S. Navy in 1942. His career was spent largely at sea, where he served with honor during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. His service took him across the world, from India to China to Italy. His final assignments brought him aboard the USS Toledo and ultimately the USS Oklahoma City. Fate had a special plan for Billy in 1952 when, in San Diego, he met the love of his life, Theresa—a proud U.S. Marine. It was love at first sight. They married soon after and built a beautiful life together, raising three children—two sons and a daughter. Their love stood the test of time, lasting an incredible 69 years. After retiring from the Navy as a Boatswain's Mate 1st Class in 1973, Billy continued to embrace life with energy and joy. Even after turning 100, he could still be found dancing once a week. And true to his disciplined nature, he made a daily visit to the Swanton American Legion, where he enjoyed just one beer. Billy and his family made Swanton their home in 1986, where he remained a beloved resident until his passing. Today, we remember Billy not just for his service, but for the kindness, dedication, and spirit he shared with everyone around him. His legacy lives on through his family, his community, and the many lives he touched. Thank you, Billy, for your service, your love, and the incredible example you have set for us all. You will be deeply missed but never forgotten.

General Interest

128 Woodside Shawn McCaughey regarding Codified Ordinance

§ 90.06 FARM ANIMALS PROHIBITED.

No person shall keep or harbor any horses, cows, steer, fowl or swine within the village.

Minutes 02.24.2025

Mr. McCaughey asked the Village Council to consider amending the Codified Ordinance regarding Farm Animals Prohibited within the Village of Swanton Corp. Limits. He would like to see chickens be permissible for egg laying. Mayor Toeppe stated that he would take his recommendation to the Village of Swanton Planning Commission, the Commission would review the request after the Village Administrator does further research, and then make a recommendation back to Council.

Administrator Report

Personnel Matters

Several meetings were held with the Village Solicitor and Deputy Chief Dorner to discuss personnel matters.

Fulton County Economic Development Corporation Meeting

Attended the Fulton County Economic Development Corporation meeting at the Community Center.

Department heads who were available, participated and provided a brief overview of their daily responsibilities for the Village of Swanton.

Heart Radiothon at 96.1 WMTR

Had the opportunity to guest DJ for the Heart Radiothon, which was a great success. During the hour I was on air, over \$2,000 was raised. All funds collected are used to purchase AED machines, which are then distributed to businesses and organizations throughout Fulton County upon request.

Fulton County EMA Hazard Mitigation Plan

Attended the Fulton County EMA Hazard Mitigation Plan meeting. At the next staff meeting, we will review the current 2020 plan to determine if any updates are needed. Any necessary revisions must be submitted before the end of March.

Upcoming Construction Meetings

Next week, I will attend the Hallett Phase A construction meeting as we prepare for Ebony Construction to resume work, weather permitting, the week of March 10th. Additionally, I will be attending a project update meeting regarding the Screen Headworks project.

ODOT Roadwork Update

It has come to our attention that ODOT is planning to reconstruct and resurface Waterville-Swanton Road/State Route 64 South this year. This project has been unknown to us, and I am working to establish a point of contact to gather more details. The project includes bridge work, which will likely require road closures for a period of time. I will provide updates as more information becomes available.

Councilman Kania moved to approve the second reading of Ordinance 2025-07 to Amend Title XV: Land Use, Chapter 150: Zoning Code, Article 150.27 Business and Industrial District Regulations. Section 150.278 Accessory Buildings of the Codified Ordinances. Seconded by Councilwoman Westhoven. Roll Call. ALL YES. Motion Passed 6-0.

Councilman Kania moved to approve Resolution 2025-08 Authorizing the Village Administrator to Enter into an Agreement with Fishbeck for Engineering Services for The North Pump Station Improvements located at 710 North Main Street in the Village of Swanton. Seconded by Councilwoman Westhoven. Roll Call. ALL YES. Motion Passed 6-0.

Councilman Kania moved to enter executive session at 6:27pm for the purpose of Public Employee discussions. Seconded by Councilman Messenger. Roll Call. ALL YES. Motion Passed 6-0.

Councilman Kania moved to resume post executive session at 7:01pm for the purpose of Public Employee discussions. Seconded by Councilman Kreuz. Roll Call. ALL YES. Motion Passed 6-0.

Executive Session Action Taken

Mayor's Statement on Fire Chief Kepling Investigation and Disciplinary Actions

As Mayor, I am responsible for overseeing the operations of the Village. Directly reporting to me are the Village Administrator—who manages Public Service, Water and Wastewater Departments, Finance, and the Administrative Office—the Police Chief, and the Fire Chief, each leading their respective departments. I rely on these individuals to perform their duties with integrity and professionalism.

On Thursday, February 6th, a concerned citizen approached me with an allegation of inappropriate conduct by Fire Chief Kepling involving a female subordinate. Before taking action, I reviewed our Employee Handbook to ensure a proper course of action. On Friday morning, I met with Chief Kepling and presented him with the accusation of fraternization under Village policy. He immediately confirmed the report.

I informed Chief Kepling that I would be consulting the Village Attorney to review my options, which could include disciplinary actions up to and including termination. I conferred with legal counsel and subsequently directed the Village Administrator to schedule a Special Council Meeting for Saturday, February 8th.

Additionally, I personally contacted each Council member to inform them of the meeting. The Village Attorney attended the meeting to provide legal guidance on potential disciplinary actions.

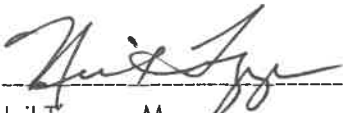
On Monday, February 10th, I conducted separate meetings with both individuals involved—the EMT and Chief Kepling. Based on these discussions, I determined that all interactions were consensual, occurred off duty, and did not take place on Village property. Both parties confirmed that the relationship had ended. As a result, I placed Chief Kepling on suspension and collected his badge, keys, phone, and other Village property. He was advised that the suspension would remain in effect until further notice.


During the regular Council meeting that evening, I briefed Council members in an Executive Session on my findings, and our attorney outlined possible disciplinary actions. The following evening, Tuesday, February 11th, the Village Administrator, Councilwoman Westhoven (Fire Advisory Board member), and I met with the Fire Department Officers to discuss the situation and gather their input. While they expressed disappointment, they also unanimously voiced their support for Chief Kepling's leadership. They highlighted the positive cultural improvements he had brought to the department and advocated for his continued service. However, they also understood that disciplinary measures, including termination, were under consideration.

To date, disciplinary actions imposed on Chief Kepling include counseling and leadership training by verifiable third-party providers. Based on my review of the situation and the input received, my recommendation is to reinstate Chief Kepling with continued counseling and training, along with a \$5,000 salary reduction as part of the disciplinary measures.

At this time, I will entertain a motion to proceed accordingly.

*Councilman Kania moved to approve Mayor Toeppe's recommendation for Fire Chief Kepling. Seconded by Councilman Messenger. Roll Call. Councilwoman Westhoven- No, Motion Passed 5-0.
Councilman Kania moved to adjourn. Seconded by Councilman Schmidt. Roll Call. ALL YES. Motion Passed 6-0.*


Neil Toeppe, Mayor

Attest: 
Shannon Shulters, Administrator