

Selectmen's Meeting – January 11, 2011

Present were Selectmen Nancy L. Carlson, Bruce L. Tatro and Deborah J. Davis. Also present was Town Administrator Elizabeth A. Fox.

Chairman Carlson called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

Sale of Surplus Vehicle – 1962 Mack B61 Model Truck. Selectmen opened the bids received for the truck detailed in Attachment #1.

Financial Matters. Selectmen reviewed and approved accounts payable and payroll manifests.

Filing Period for Town Officers. Selectmen reviewed a list of offices available for filing beginning next Wednesday.

Proposed Budget 2011. Pending issues and potential changes related to the 2011 budget were reviewed with Selectmen including information relative to the anticipated cruiser lease cost, the SRO program, bridge projects and energy efficiency project recommendations resulting from the meeting held last Thursday with consultants. Selectmen agreed to warn during the hearing the potential for an increase in funding for the energy efficiency warrant article now set at \$80,000 to \$95,000.

Citizen Concerns. Robert Smith (MRSD Board Board) and Wayne Lechluder (MRSD Budget Committee) met with Selectmen with Smith expressing to Selectmen his desire for Selectmen to agree to fund through the town tax rate the funding gap between what district officials have indicated they are willing to pay for the SRO program (\$50,000) and the estimated program costs which have been in past years distributed based on ADM. Estimated additional costs required from town taxpayers (in excess of those contributed to support the program through the school tax rate) are approximately \$24,000. Smith expressed his willingness to pay the extra to ensure that the program continued at the school. He also felt continuation of the program provide greater benefit to Swanzey than that just that received its students since the SRO would be available and could respond if needed to calls in outside the school during the school day. Selectmen expressed their view that the district's proposal shifting more than 70% of the program's cost to Swanzey's taxpayers (through town or school taxes). They felt it was unfair expressing disappointment that district officials appeared to give little consideration to the town's proposal (revised after considering input from the district). It was noted that no instance where the SRO had actually responded to calls in the community at large v. at the school (during the school day) could be cited by Chief Busick or SRO O'Conner. Various methods of apportioning costs were discussed.

NHDOT 10 Year Plan Submissions. Selectmen reviewed a memo from Town Planner Carbonneau regarding submissions concurring with projects included advising if the submission deadline was this Friday to submit as presented, if the following Friday (1/21) they will discuss submissions further at their next meeting.

Town Meeting Warrant 2011. Drafts of proposed articles were distributed to Selectmen.

Public Informational Meeting – Warmac Road Bridge and Cobble Hill Road Bridge projects. Selectmen concurred with a proposal to schedule an informational meeting for these projects on January 25th.

Public Hearing – Proposed 2011 Town of Swanzey Budget. Town Moderator called to order at 7:30 p.m. a public hearing (pursuant to RSA 32:5) to address queries, accept testimony and comment regarding the proposed 2011 Town Budget – Attachment #2. The moderator reported on the posting of the notice provided opening the public hearing.

Fox reviewed briefly the proposed budget advising attendees that the operating portion was reduced slightly from that approved in 2010. The capital budget, which includes individual or special warrant articles, contains several large projects including bridge projects to be funded (80%) through municipal bridge aid and energy efficiency projects proposed for funding through borrowing to allow for future savings from the measures implemented offsetting their cost. Overall, impact of the operating, individual and special warrant articles after application of anticipated revenues on the town's portion of the tax rate is anticipated to increase less than 2%.

The hearing opened with a query regarding why it had not been noticed on the sign in front of Town Hall. Fox advised it had on one side and another town committee's meeting (the Old Home Day Committee) had been noticed on the other.

Moderator Lerandau advised hearing attendees that he did not plan to read all the numbers listed on the budget worksheet since everyone had a copy but would go section by section to provide an opportunity for questions.

Bauries queried regarding the items and functions falling within the General Government – Executive and Finance. Fox summarized the functions and some of the items included within each. Costs included in personnel administration (social security, medicare and retirement) were reviewed with Fox advising that generally personnel related costs for all departments of the town (excluding those that were set up as revenue funds – like the Sewer Commission and Carpenter Home) were in the General Government personnel administration section and insurance section.

Lerandau proceeded to the Public Safety section of the budget and testimony was received from MRSD Board member Bruce Barlow expressing appreciation for the reassurance provided by the presence of an SRO during today's bomb scare with Barlow and MRSD School Board member Eric Stanley requesting Selectmen fund thru town taxes the additional costs associated with the SRO portion which the district has indicated it will not fund (estimated at approximately \$24,000). David Osgood queried if the SRO was retiring as reported in the Sentinel. Chief Busick advised that report was incorrect. Busick went on to explain that a position within the department (resulting from the recruitment in late summer by the State Police of a town officer) had been left vacant in Budget 2011 as a budget reduction measure. EMD Bohannon provided comments on the Emergency Management budget increase attributed in large part to scheduled Vermont Yankee drills. Fox advised that a significant portion of the proposed EM budget is offset by revenue received from NH OEM pointing out to hearing attendees anticipated revenue listed on page 5 of the proposed budget.

Department of Public Works budgets were reviewed with queries regarding staffing within the Cemetery, Parks and Facilities Maintenance section and why it included a full time position when cemeteries and parks were closed in the winter. Dunham reviewed the duties and responsibilities of staff included within that portion of the budget advising that cemetery work continued despite winter with remains being accepted for placement in the tomb, records being updated and queries related to cemeteries and parks addressed. Facilities work is town wide and many of the town facilities are open and operate year round. In addition, during the winter the full time position within this department performs winter road maintenance duties (plowing) helping offset impacts on resources available to perform inclement weather duties since elimination of a full time position in the highway, streets and bridges section of the department a few years ago. Theresa DiLuizo expressed appreciation for the talents of the personnel who work full and part time in this area taking care of town properties. Marion Bedard queried about road projects included as part of the town's 2011 budget with Dunham advising that the Main Street project had not been scheduled for 2011 to provide an opportunity for assessment and resolution of the future of the east side dry hydrant system now that the dam has been removed. At this

point, sufficient water supply does not appear to be available at this system's existing suction point. Top coat paving on roads reclaimed last year (sections of Old Richmond Road and Matthews Road) is scheduled for 2011 and a section of Eaton Road (Railroad Street end) will likely be reclaimed. Mrs. Bedard queried if the Thompson Bridge might be painted and was advised that the department hoped to advance that project in 2011. Road striping was discussed with Dunham advising that cool weather precluded completion in 2010 but that following top coating of Old Richmond and Matthews Roads, it would be scheduled.

Sanitation (Sewer Commission) and Solid Waste portions of the budget were reviewed with queries regarding the functions of the sewer commission (who are in essence the "selectmen of sewers"), the oversight provided for the West Swanzey Wastewater Treatment Plant, North Swanzey Collection system, the customer group identified by the town as "pass through" and the history related to establishment of the commission being addressed by Chair of the Commission Glenn Page. The relationship between the town and the North Swanzey Water & Fire Precinct (which is a separate unit of government – like the school district or county) was reviewed in response to a query from Mr. Turomsha about NSWFP employee compensation with Fox advising that it should be directed to the Precinct commissioners. The financial arrangement with the fire department budget between the town and the North Swanzey Water and Fire Precinct – the sharing of costs related to rental of hydrants from the City of Keene – was reviewed.

Questions related to the Carpenter Home budget were entertained with Home Administrator advising that the home was currently at full census which is 15 with the current room assignments. Impacts of current economic conditions on residents of the town have resulted in a proposed increase in the general assistance (welfare) funding request. The obligations of local government under state statute to provide assistance and the guidelines and process used to determine eligibility were reviewed.

Ms. Finnamore urged the town to not increase taxes as a way to help property owners in the community struggling financially. Foreclosure statistics from 2010 and 2009 were reviewed. Joel Sainsbury repeated concern that this was not the time to raise taxes.

The Economic Development portion of the budget was reviewed with Fox and SRDD Advisory Board member Glenn Page reviewing the actions of the town creating the Tax Increment Finance District (in the late 1990's), infrastructure completed to date and planned in the future as well as the method of financing the capital cost of infrastructure development with taxes generated by new development within the district.

Individual and special warrant articles were reviewed with Chief Busick detailing the town's practice of lease 3 cruisers every three years and rotating of the department fleet the units based on condition. A query regarding whether a cruiser was assigned to the Chief for take home use was addressed with Busick advising he did take a car home and was required to respond back to town when major emergencies occurred. Bridge projects (Cobble Hill Road and Warmac Road) included within the proposed budget were reviewed with funding sources for those projects expected to include bridge aid from the state and funds set aside by the town in capital reserve as well as fund balance. The Cobble Hill Road Bridge is "red listed" and the Warmac Road was closed, upon recommendation of NHDOT who deemed critically deficient in 2009. Dunham reviewed the progress made by the town over the past 15 or so years improving its bridges by pairing town dollars with Municipal Bridge Aid (which funds 80% of project costs). A recent Energy Efficiency study completed with technical assistance through NH Office of State Planning has resulted in a proposal to fund a variety of envelope, heating system and lighting improvements at various town facilities. These improvements are proposed to be funded through borrowing (to provide an opportunity for energy savings to fund their cost) with the low interest Municipal Energy Reduction Fund a possible financing source. The project list is still in development but in an effort to reduce energy consumption in future budgets an initial package is being brought forward for voter consideration this March. A query whether the project list could be split in half reducing its impact on taxpayers was made. Fox advised that Selectmen could do

so but positive financial impacts of attributable to energy savings would also be deferred. The net result of splitting the projects could be a greater impact on taxpayers. Some projects, with longer paybacks (primarily boiler and furnace related) have been deferred already so that envelope improvements can be completed and equipment improvements proposed correctly specified.

Debt Service and lease purchase of the cardiac monitors (authorized at Town Meeting 2010) were discussed. Other capital reserve and expendable trust appropriations were reviewed with Skantze addressing questions about costs associated with purchase and outfitting of the department's command vehicle which he estimated at \$60,000. Ms. Bauries expressed concern that fire department funding requests were scattered throughout the proposed budget and much higher than the operating budget when you included reserve and capital expenditure funding. Fox advised the methodology of separating operating budgets and funding for items such as new equipment or tools or facility maintenance or improvement through capital reserve or expendable trust accounts was common to most town departments and had been a town practice for a number of years. Questions about costs incurred maintaining the ladder truck and call activity of that vehicle were raised with Chief Skantze advising he did not have that kind of detail available this evening.

Revenues anticipated to offset the budget were reviewed. It was noted that some revenues are tied more closely to economic conditions and had not met expectations in 2010. Economic conditions are anticipated to continue to dampen any increase in non-tax revenues received by the town in 2011. The town's default budget calculation was included in the hearing handouts on page 6.

Bruce Barlow repeated his request that Selectmen fund through the town tax rate costs necessary to ensure that the SRO program continues if the school district will not.

Moderator Lerandau closed the public hearing at 9:33 p.m.

Consent Agenda. Selectmen approved the following consent agenda items:

- Authorizing board chair to sign more documents required for to receive drug forfeiture funds.
- Intent to Cut, Tax Map 45 Lots 32 & 33.
- Authorizing board chair to execute audit 2010 engagement letters with Vachon, Clukay & Company.

1962 Mack B61 Model Truck Bids. Selectmen reviewed the bids received awarding to high bidder GHM Group of Bolton, United Kingdom.

Consideration of Minutes of Previous Meeting. Selectmen reviewed and approved the minutes of their meeting of January 4, 2011 as written.

Meeting adjourned at 9:49 p.m.

Submitted by,

Elizabeth A. Fox
Town Administrator