

Town of Swanzey Selectman's Meeting – July 24, 2012

Present were Selectmen Deborah J. Davis, Nancy L. Carlson and Kenneth P. Colby, Jr. Also present were Town Administrator Shane O'Keefe and recording secretary Victoria Reck Barlow. Chairman Davis called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

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

Homestead Woolen Mill. Property owners Duncan Brown, Sally Brown, Doug Brown and property manager Bruce Treat appeared before the Board to discuss the future of the Homestead Woolen Mill complex. Treat outlined challenges to economic viability of the property, including loss of two major tenants, on-going litigation related to collection of back rent, damage to the building caused by removal of equipment in November 2011 by the company that acquired Trikeenan Tileworks in a hostile takeover, as well as prospective tenants' needs for natural gas service, a 10" water main, industrial sewer service, access to the Interstate Highway System, tax incentives, 3-phase electrical power, a favorable building code environment, and trained labor. Treat described the mill complex as huge, functionally and economically obsolete, under legal duress and running out of options. Treat said that the situation puts the taxpayers of Swanzey at risk.

Doug Brown concurred, stating that the space becomes less attractive to manufacturing businesses with the passage of time. Brown said that the goal is to keep the property alive, to prevent it from becoming a burden to the Town. Brown said that options under consideration include putting part of the complex into "cold storage" (posing risks for fire protection and accelerated deterioration), subdividing small parts of the property (for example, the former gas station and office areas), and potential municipal uses. Brown said that the group is open to discussions of any and all ways to "keep a heartbeat" in the property, and said that he would like Selectmen (as well as the entire community) to be aware of the situation and involved in all discussions of potential solutions. Brown said that, barring a miracle, the main building will be shut down and unheated this winter.

Those present discussed coordination with Swanzey's Economic Development Advisory Committee, which intends to produce a brochure featuring certain Swanzey properties. Other topics of discussion included the difficulty of competing with subsidized, modern warehouse space in other parts of the region, the physical and financial challenges of segregating utilities in the main building, the effect of the economic downturn on niche businesses that might otherwise find the mill complex appealing, and difficulties caused by limited access to large volumes of water.

Carlson reported that the charrette recently awarded the Town by PlanNH will consider adaptive reuse of the mill complex. Speaking for the owners, Doug Brown said that the family would support a solution that involves an entirely new life for the property, even under different ownership. Duncan Brown asked Selectmen for support, advising that the success of creative proposals may hinge on authorizing exceptions to Town rules and regulations.

Wheeler Lane firearm shooting disturbance. Margaret Kupiec and Wayne Miller (Map 20, Lot 10) appeared before the Board in support of a complaint filed by Greg and Lilly Curry (Map 35, Lot 74) related to excessive discharge of firearms in a residential neighborhood. The complaint states that the shooting takes place at 9 Wheeler Lane (Map 20, Lot 13-1; property owned by James Duesenberry). In response to questions, Kupiec said shooting is on-going on weekday evenings, and all day long on Saturdays and Sundays. Kupiec said Swanzey Police have told the neighbors the police can do nothing. Selectmen discussed the problem within the context of the

recently adopted noise ordinance, and asked O'Keefe to forward the complaint to Police Chief DeAngelis.

Ashuelot Recreational Rail Trail MOA. O'Keefe requested authorization to sign the Memorandum of Agreement between the Town of Swanzey and NH Department of Resources and Economic Development related to the next phase of Ashuelot Recreational Rail Trail improvements. *Motion* by Carlson to authorize O'Keefe to sign the MOA on behalf of the Board. Second by Colby. All in favor.

Ashuelot Rail Trail repairs. In response to a July 10, 2012 letter received from Pat Rawson Construction, Inc. regarding repeated washouts, Selectmen requested that rail trail project manager Bruce Bohannon report back to the Board following discussion of solutions with the project engineer and the City of Keene.

Carpenter Home forestry plan. O'Keefe reported that he waits for a return call from Bay State Forestry Services regarding Carpenter Home forest management and a potential timber harvest (as suggested by Gerry Bell, now in process of logging his abutting property).

Declining State highway block grant funds. O'Keefe reported receipt of a letter from NH-DOT advising that State payments budgeted for roads is to decrease from \$48,170 to \$32,113. O'Keefe said he will contact NH-DOT for more information.

Recruitment of new solid waste processing facility assistant manager. Selectmen approved facility manager Steve Stewart's request to begin advertising to fill the position.

Carpenter Home Residency and Service Admission Agreement. Carpenter Home administrator Dawn Rice appeared before the Board to discuss adoption of the revised service agreement. Discussion also included nursing coverage when Rice is off duty, the growing need for care for patients with Alzheimer's disease, developing the Carpenter Home to make possible continuity of care, and the possibility for profit should the Town expand the facility to meet these needs. *Motion* by Carlson to adopt, with corrections (page 8: rate, and spelling of the word "respite"), the residency and service admission agreement. Second by Colby. All in favor.

Property tax abatement application, Map 19 Lot 26. Property owner Richard Dell'Erba, 85 Wilson Pond Road, appeared before Selectmen to discuss the Board's recent tax abatement decision regarding his property. Dell'Erba reviewed his application for the Board, stating that he believes he is due a more substantial abatement than the \$200 granted, due to conditions of his lot and comparison to comparable properties. Dell'Erba discussed comparable properties, the condition of a retaining wall on his property, his concerns regarding a Town-owned drainage ditch, and other issues of drainage with the property. Selectmen noted that Dell'Erba was granted a \$8,800 abatement in 2011. Selectmen advised Dell'Erba that they would consult with DPW Director Dunham regarding road issues, do more investigating, and get back to Dell'Erba.

Town Clerk's office staffing. Town Clerk Donna Munson appeared before the Board to discuss staffing. Munson requested that Karen Elliot remain at full time in the office, at least through the two upcoming elections. Those present discussed how best to allocate staff to accomplish the work of the Town Clerk's office and Finance office, including coverage for breaks, illness and vacation, within budgetary constraints. Selectmen requested O'Keefe to review the budget and prepare a PAF to assign Elliot to the Town Clerk's office for 25 hours/week, reserving the option of extending the workweek by an additional 15 hours. Selectmen agreed that Finance Office Assistant Charles Troccia also may assume some deputy Town Clerk duties.

Non-public session I -- RSA 91-A:3IIb, hiring.

Selectmen voted unanimously by roll call to go into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3IIb at 8:00 p.m. to discuss hiring. Present were Selectmen Deborah J. Davis, Nancy L. Carlson and Kenneth P. Colby, Jr. Also present were Town Administrator Shane O'Keefe and recording secretary Victoria Reck Barlow.

Selectmen came out of non-public session at 8:05 p.m.

Non-public session II -- RSA 91-A:3IIa, dismissal, promotion, compensation.

Selectmen voted unanimously by roll call to go into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3IIa at 8:06 p.m. to discuss employee matters. Present were Selectmen Deborah J. Davis, Nancy L. Carlson and Kenneth P. Colby, Jr. Also present were Town Administrator Shane O'Keefe and recording secretary Victoria Reck Barlow.

Selectmen came out of non-public session at 8:11 p.m.

Non-public session III -- RSA 91-A:3IIa, dismissal, promotion, compensation.

Selectmen voted unanimously by roll call to go into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3IIa at 8:12 p.m. to discuss employee matters. Present were Selectmen Deborah J. Davis, Nancy L. Carlson and Kenneth P. Colby, Jr. Also present were Town Administrator Shane O'Keefe and recording secretary Victoria Reck Barlow.

Selectmen came out of non-public session at 8:18 p.m. *Motion* by Carlson to seal the minutes until resolution of the matter. Second by Colby. All in favor.

Board matters. Selectmen and O'Keefe discussed a variety of housekeeping matters, including documentation of non-public meetings, sequence of agenda items, maintenance of a list of pending matters, department head evaluations, frequency of Board meetings, and conducting site visits. Those present agreed to conduct regular meetings every other Tuesday, with work sessions as needed for specific topics. Board members agreed to meet on August 7th and 21st, with a possible site visit on August 14.

Town administrator attendance at ICMA conference. Selectmen authorized O'Keefe to attend the national ICMA conference in Phoenix in early October, 2012 at Town expense.

Town employee credit card. Selectmen briefly discussed associated policy issues, advising O'Keefe to discuss the matter with department heads.

Consent Agenda. *Motion* by Colby to approve the consent agenda, authorizing the Chair to sign on the Board's behalf. Second by Carlson. All in favor.

1. Signature of Personnel Action Report for Solid Waste Manager position
2. Gravel Tax Levy – Cold River materials (Map 13, Lot 11)

Consideration of Minutes of Selectmen's Meetings of July 17, 2012. Selectmen corrected to August 10 the date of the retirement party planned for Dave Krisch. *Motion* by Carlson to approve the corrected minutes of the July 17 meeting. Second by Colby. All in favor.

Adjournment. Motion by Carlson at 8:53 to adjourn the meeting. Second by Colby. All in favor.

Submitted by
Victoria Reck Barlow
Recording Secretary