

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes – August 21, 2012

Present were Selectmen Deborah J. Davis, Nancy L. Carlson and Kenneth P. Colby, Jr. Also present was Town Administrator Shane O’Keefe, Town Planner Sara Carbonneau and Bookkeeper Theresa Louder. Chairman Davis called the meeting to order at 6:11 PM.

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

MINUTES.

Consideration of minutes of August 14, 2012 regular meeting. *Motion* by Colby to approve the minutes of the August 14, 2012 regular meeting. Second by Carlson. All in favor.

NEW BUSINESS.

Marcy Hill Road complaints. Marcy Hill Road residents Ridgely Brown, Lisa Bell and Theresa Louder came before the Board to discuss the condition of the road. Also in attendance was DPW Director Lee Dunham. The residents stated that the road surface was in poor and unsafe condition, causing great inconvenience and safety concerns. They asked for the road to be resurfaced as soon as possible. Dunham explained the limits of the road maintenance budget and the prioritization process for road resurfacing, noting that the road classification (connector, etc.) and not just roadway surface condition is considered in determining which roads are addressed each year. The residents asked that Marcy Hill Road be placed at the top of the list of roads to be repaved. There was discussion about drainage issues along the road. Dunham indicated that there would be some patching work done on the road this year and there may be unspent repaving funds available this year. Board members stated that they shared the resident’s concerns, would take their request under advisement, and would discuss this road at budget time. Bell, Brown, Carboneau and Louder left the meeting at 6:42 PM.

OLD BUSINESS.

Reconsider Board decision on abatement request: Michael & Jennifer Gomarlo (Map 68, Lot 10, 100 Cram Hill RD). Michael Gomarlo, having entered the meeting at 6:6:20 PM, stated that he has reviewed assessment data for area homes that he claims are comparable to his and believes there are inconsistencies and that the Board should reconsider the 6/26/2012 decision to deny his assessment appeal. Mr. Gomarlo discussed in detail the information he had assembled and the Board shared a staff memo that reviewed information he had previously submitted. He also shared his data with the Board and stated that the Board should reduce the property value by \$25,000 to \$30,000. Board members were amenable to reconsidering Gomarlo’s abatement request but wished to have Assessing Coordinator Victoria Barlow in attendance when they did so. The Board agreed to discuss this matter at the next meeting, scheduled for August 28, 2012. Mr. Gomarlo left the meeting at 7:10 PM.

Town Clerk’s Office hours. Following up on discussions at the past few meetings, wherein Town Clerk Donna Munson has proposed reducing hours and days of operation to four days per week, O’Keefe reported that he had discussed with her the Board’s proposal to close Town Hall entirely to visitors on Wednesday afternoons to address the issues caused by only the “back offices” being closed that day. He indicated that Munson had respectfully declined this option and that she wished to proceed toward the four-day work week. Board member Carlson stated that she had contacted the NH Local Government Center and it is clear that the Board has responsibility and control of Town properties, and therefore sets their hours of operation.

At 7:18 PM, Carbonneau and Louder reentered the meeting, and Town Clerk Donna Munson entered the meeting.

Board member Carlson stated that there were several concerns that she had with the idea of the Town Clerk's Office opening at 8:00 AM: lack of safety for Town employees between 8:00 AM and the regular 9:00 AM opening time; reduction in customer service hours; and possible confusion for townspeople with two sets of operating hours at Town Hall. Munson stated that she is considering the possibility of opening at 7:30 AM, similar to the Town of Hinsdale. She indicated that she could give the community notice of this change in hours of operation in next month's renewal letter. Carlson stated that lack of availability of the Town Clerk on Fridays would put a burden on other employees, and also that citizens could go to Keene to register vehicles which would represent a loss of revenue to Swanzezy.

Board member Colby also voiced his concern for employee safety in the early morning. Regarding the existing 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM hours of operation, he stated that many people work close by and can easily make it to Town Hall during regular business hours. Louder expressed concern about building security, and particularly access to unattended public areas, as the rear building entrance would have to be open as would access to restrooms. Carbonneau echoed this concern and discussed the difficulties of offices when others are closed. Colby stated that we should keep all Town Hall offices open to the public from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM five-days per week and close the entire building to the public on Wednesday after Noon, not just the "back offices".

Louder raised the issue of the surveys of Town Hall employees taken to consider the Wednesday "quiet time" hours. Board members noted that they had not seen the survey responses. It was mentioned that the issue of the Wednesday "quiet time" closing was to be reviewed in October.

Louder also mentioned additional Town Hall staffing needs, particularly for human resources efforts. Carbonneau mentioned the possible need for an altogether new Town Hall to address customer, staffing and circulation needs.

Gus Lerandeau and Bruce Bohannan entered the meeting at 7:35 PM.

There was unanimous agreement of Board members that Town Hall will not open before 9:00 AM.

Munson stated that she would take the Board's position into consideration, and that the change of operating hours does not need to take place on October 1st as she hoped. She stated that she wishes to be compensated for the many hours that she works to keep up with the responsibilities of the job, and suggested payment of compensatory time. O'Keefe pointed out that hers was a salaried position and therefore comp time was not permitted. Munson left the meeting at 7:48 PM.

Ashuelot Rail Trail Phase II Bid Package. Bruce Bohannan entered the meeting to discuss progress on Phase II of the Ashuelot rail trail project, and presented a revised version of the proposed bid package and contract. He mentioned that \$92,000 was committed so far and two grants of \$5,000 are pending, and he is looking to seek additional funds from area service agencies. Also mentioned was a successful grant of \$20,000 for the historic stone box culvert at one end of the trail project.

The Board reviewed the bid package and approved of their being a \$25 bid package charge, a \$10 mailing fee and a \$10,000 bid security. The Board also wishes to ensure DPW Director Lee Dunham was involved in review of the project. Bohannan mentioned that the non-mandatory

pre-bid meeting would be held on 9/18/2012, that bids would be due on 9/21/2012 and that it was expected that the project would be completed in 60 days. Bohannon was asked to make corrections as necessary to the bid package and get it to Town Hall staff for the bidding process. It was agreed to advertise in the *Keene Sentinel* and the Town Web Site and possibly in *Construction Summary*. Lerandau, Bohannon and Carbonneau left the meeting at 8:10 PM.

School Resource Officer Billing Matter. The Board reviewed a proposed letter from Town Attorney Sam Bradley to the Monadnock Regional School District regarding an unpaid bill of \$3,843.59 for expenses related to the School Resource Officer. The Board was in agreement that the School Board should not be holding back payment on this and that the District's Business Administrator should pay the bill. *Motion* by Carlson to authorize the Town Attorney to send the proposed letter to the School District seeking payment. Second by Colby. All in favor. O'Keefe was asked to inform Attorney Bradley of the Board's decision.

Louder left the meeting at 8:18 PM.

Town Hall Computer Replacement. O'Keefe mentioned that he would be meeting with the Town's technology consultants EMF, Inc. next week to further discuss replacing Town Hall computers. He shared preliminary cost figures received from the company and all agreed that the costs were excessive.

Noise Ordinance/noise complaints. O'Keefe presented some draft language prepared by the Town's Prosecutor and Town staff to amend the Town's Noise Ordinance. The Board was amendable to the proposed changes. The question of whether a public hearing is necessary or prudent was discussed. O'Keefe will get back to the Board on whether a hearing is required.

OTHER BUSINESS.

Vision Government Solutions, Inc. Board member Colby raised the idea of having Vision Government Solutions come and meet with the Board on issues with discrepancies on property assessments. O'Keefe will contact the contractor about visiting with the Board.

Bounced Checks. O'Keefe raised a concern from staff about bounced checks, specifically whether the Town should not accept checks from taxpayers after they have given a bad check. It was suggested that it should be looked at on a case-by-case basis, but that at least a charge should be levied for bouncing a check. O'Keefe was asked to look further into this.

MS-4 Form. O'Keefe mentioned that submittal of a MS-4 Form to the NH Department of Revenue Administration was due by 9/1/2012, and suggested that the Board meet on 9/28/2012 to sign this document. Board members were amenable to this but wanted to make sure the meeting was short.

Town Administrator. O'Keefe noted that he has been in office for just over a month and has felt very welcome and is becoming more familiar with Town processes, projects, facilities and residents. He stated that the demands of the job are considerable and that there are a number time-consuming tasks and responsibilities that would be more appropriately handled by others. He mentioned that he had anticipated that his position would have a dedicated administrative assistant, and understands that the budget did anticipate such a part-time position. He mentioned that he understood that space for additional staff is a concern given the configuration of Town Hall. There was a brief discussion on these matters.

Minute Taker. O'Keefe was asked to work on bringing on a person to take minutes for various boards and commissions.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Colby to approve the consent agenda, authorizing the Chair to sign where necessary. Second by Carlson. All in favor.

1. Extension of MS-1 Form.
2. Commissioner appointment of Alfred "Gus" Lerandean to Southwest Regional Planning Commission, effective 4/17/2012.
3. Letters of appreciation related to donations to the Ashuelot Rail Trail improvements project from the Swanzey Conservation Commission, the Swanzey Open Space Committee, the Kingsbury Fund, the Putnam Foundation, the East Hill Foundation, and the Greatbatch family.

ADJOURNMENT.

Motion to adjourn by Carlson at 8:45. Second by Colby. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Shane O'Keefe
Town Administrator

Minutes approved on August 28, 2012