

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – July 9, 2013
Swanzey Town Hall, 620 Old Homestead Highway, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

Present were Selectmen Nancy L. Carlson, Deborah J. Davis, and Kenneth P. Colby, Jr. The meeting was called to order by Chair Nancy L. Carlson at 8:30 a.m. at Swanzey Town Hall. Also present were Town Administrator Shane O’Keefe and Recording Secretary Beverly Bernard.

OTHERS PRESENT

Town Hall Staff: Town Clerk Donna Munson, Deputy Town Clerk Karen Elliot, Tax Collector Lori Belletete, Assessing Coordinator Amy Bush, Bookkeeper Theresa Lounder, Finance Office Assistant Charlie Troccia, Town Planner Sara Carbonneau, Code Enforcement Officer Chet Greenwood, Administrative Aide Sandi Page, and Deputy tax Collector Warren Lock.

Carlson began the meeting with comments about the culture in Town Hall among the employees and which in some cases affects the public. She confirmed for the employees present that their primary focus is to serve the residents of the Town. She said that the employees are obligated to serve the public in a courteous, respectful, and pleasant manner. And behave similarly amongst each other. Discontent is unhealthy for employees and for the public. Carlson went on to say that she has served as a Selectman for many years and the attitude of the employees at Town Hall has always been pleasant both to each other and to the public but it appears that recently that has changed. She cited an instance when she came into Town Hall to conduct some business as a resident and was not treated with respect and courtesy. She told the gathering that if someone is not treating others in a polite and respectful manner then that should be first reported to one’s supervisor and if the situation doesn’t improve to report the behavior to the Town Administrator, and if that does not work then the Selectmen. Carlson also said that employees should be celebrating the achievements of one another, getting back to an “I care” culture.

Colby said that while he has recently returned to the Board of Selectmen, he was a Selectman for twelve years in the past. He noted that lack of space in the building is a problem; staff is larger than it was in the past. He said that the Board of Selectmen is working on changes in staffing. With Bush and Page leaving, job description changes will be made and those changes are in the works. He said that Town Hall employees need to work as a cohesive unit.

Davis said she agrees with Colby and Carlson. She noted that there have been issues with people getting along for a long while and said that staff “can get a lot more with sugar than with vinegar”. Davis continued by saying that sometimes when you work with the public, even if you don’t feel up to it, you have to be pleasant; we all need to be pleasant to our tax payers. They are not a bother when they come in, and need to be treated with kindness, even when they are being difficult as sometimes happens, she said, and having an attitude that residents don’t know what they are talking about makes the residents uncomfortable.

Colby added that the meeting this morning is because the Selectmen care. Davis said the employees are all good people and the Board hopes that this meeting will help to create a better atmosphere at Town Hall.

Carlson asked if there were any questions: Bush said she was surprised to hear that the public is uncomfortable with their treatment, as she sees quality customer service at Town hall. Bush also asked about improving the facility space, addressing the space issues.

Carlson responded that the Selectmen have reconvened the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) committee to investigate obtaining additional space for Town Hall functions, but it will be evolutionary. She also repeated that the Board is concerned about job descriptions and will be looking at them to more accurately describe the work involved. Carlson said that adding \$1,000,000 to the budget might get a response from residents at the Deliberative Session but it would give the Board money to address the space issues.

ADJOURNMENT – Motion at 8:46 p.m. by Davis to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Colby. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Beverly Bernard".

Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary

Approved on July 16, 2013.