

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire  
**Board of Selectmen**  
Meeting – November 17, 2014  
Swanzey Police Department, 34 Eaton Road

**CALL TO ORDER**

Present were Selectmen W. William Hutwelker III, Debra J. Davis, and Kenneth P. Colby, Jr. The meeting was called to order by Chair Kenneth P. Colby, Jr. at 1:03 p.m. at the Swanzey Police Department. Also present was Town Administrator Shane O'Keefe and Recording Secretary Beverly Bernard.

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Fire Chief Norm Skantze, Police Chief Tom DeAngelis, Capital Improvements Program Committee member Steven Bittel, Chairman of the Planning Board Glenn Page, and Emergency Management Director Bruce Bohannon.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Review of the Municipal Facilities Study**

The discussion began with a discussion of the accuracy of the cost figures provided by Daniel Scully Architects. Davis agreed there was some question about the numbers referring to the approximated figures for moving facilities to the Homestead Woolen Mills, which was part of the proposal recommended by the architects. She pointed out that the Board has subsequently learned that the owners of the property are not willing to sell just the portion of the property needed by the Town at the same price as for the entire complex. Acquiring that portion alone would be a higher cost than acquiring the entire property. She went on to say that if the Town were to acquire the entire property for a possible Town Hall/Police Hall there are demolition costs to be considered.

Discussion was held about the \$13.9 million stated by the study report to address facility needs for multiple departments of the Town, and how the numbers work. Bittel said there is about \$1.2 million in Capital Reserves available, which would mean a bond of about \$12.7 million. Bittel said that at that amount \$750,000 per year would be debt service (assuming everything were to be built at one time.) Bittel said the increase to the tax rate would be a 24.5% increase, and estimated that on a home valued at \$200,000, additional tax would be about \$260.00 per year. Bittel assumed a bond for 39 years at 4.25%.

A discussion was held regarding how to take a phased- in approach to bond expenditures. Bittel said that bond counsel can direct the Board as to the appropriate verbiage in a bond resolution such that a phased-in approach is determined. Bittel also noted that if the voters were to authorize a \$4,000,000 bond, debt service would go down to \$250,000, which means a house valued at \$200,000 would see a raise in taxes by about \$80.00 per year. Bittel said that crafting the bond resolution is an art and typically they are written broadly.

Discussion continued regarding the time needed to complete a facilities project and a five year program was discussed as a possible timeline. Discussion occurred regarding the need to relocate the Center Fire Station and address Town Hall needs as priority projects because of safety issues.

Bittel suggested that the Board request of the architects a workup on Town Hall which would include re-trussing the roof in order to keep Town Hall where it is, and include costs. Bittel suggested the possibility of moving some of the Town Hall functions to the Police Department building.

Discussion occurred about use of the Police Department building. O'Keefe noted that if the owners of the Homestead Woolen Mill stop paying taxes, the Town will end up owning the building anyway. Davis agreed, but said that would be a lot cheaper than acquiring it at this point. Colby said there is a misconception of the public that the decision has already been made regarding facilities. Colby mentioned that the public would need to be made aware that \$4,000,000 would take care of only one portion of the projected (the Fire Station) needs of the Town and the Board would need to be able to address the other needs and in particular Town Hall. DeAngelis said that the public has a perception that the Police Department is already taken care of since the building is the newest. Colby reminded the meeting that there is about \$500,000 worth of safety issues that must be addressed at Town Hall. Davis asked if Whitcomb Hall can be used as a Town Hall, but Colby said that Whitcomb Hall has been used in the past primarily for social functions. O'Keefe noted that there would be no gain in square footage either. Fire Chief Skantze suggested that Whitcomb Hall might be used as a temporary solution for Town Hall. He said once the Fire Department has moved out, Town Hall could be expanded using the former Fire Station space. There was further discussion about the original architect plan that called for a proposed large meeting room which could accommodate a variety of functions and used for voting. Davis said that perhaps the large room could be removed from the plan (to lower costs) by using the high school for voting, should the high school be made available to the Town for the purpose of voting. Discussion continued regarding use of a large room and whether or not such space is needed.

Discussion occurred about learning of the boundary lines with School District property and of the infrastructure in place, and parking availability. Page asked about using John Burk's land on Safford Drive for both Police and Fire stations, but it was noted that there isn't enough land on this 2 acre parcel.

Hutwelker said he would like to see a schedule for planning if the project is delayed and would like to see the Fire Station addressed this year if it can be done. Hutwelker said that we have the right location for the Fire Department – why not move forward with it. Colby said Town Hall also needs to be addressed. But Hutwelker said that once Town Hall is just a Town Hall it becomes a straight-forward argument in support of the facility as an independent entity.

Colby asked if it is palatable to the public to continue to ask for bonds for facilities, proposing the bonds one at a time. Hutwelker said it is easier for a voter to understand one facility at a time. Hutwelker said that he is comfortable going with the Fire Station first, and it is readily presentable. Colby asked Chief Skantze if the Board could have the specific plans by Bob Mitchell, of Robert Mitchell Associates, LLC quickly and Skantze said that Mitchell reported that he could have them in a matter of weeks. Colby said that the drawings would have to be ready for January 2015. Skantze said that he thought Mitchell could do that.

Bittel said that a case could be made that the Town is ready with respect to the Fire Department, and at the same time acknowledge the need for Town Hall informing the voters that the Board will be back next year with more specifics, especially costs. One project, one phase is ready to roll now, and the other phase needs more research to come up with minimum costs. Discussion occurred regarding support for the Fire Department from the Town's citizens.

Before leaving, Bittel said Capital Reserves are not good deals for Towns. Earning today is a quarter of one percent on all the money the Town has set aside. If the public says "save up" for a new facility, the answer is that given inflation the Town is going backward in that regard, not gaining. Bittel said that this is a good time to utilize bonds, technically paying zero interest when you take into account inflation. O'Keefe said we have money for design of the Fire Station in Capital Reserves and we should use it. Bittel left the meeting at 2:20 p.m.

Colby said the Board needs to bring in Mitchell to fine tune the numbers, and also get in touch with bond counsel Dave Barnes for wording a bond. O'Keefe noted that the Board would need to waive the solicitation process in its procurement policy to hire Mitchell as a sole source prime contractor. The Board agreed because time is of the essence that this should be considered. A date of November 24, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. was tentatively set to discuss the proposed plan for a Fire Station with Mitchell.

The Board then examined a detailed proposed plan for a Fire Station on Safford Drive that is 17,761 square feet, which is smaller than that originally developed. Skantze mentioned a meeting room in the design with its own entrance that could be used by Town of Swanzey Committees. He showed the apparatus bays, and noted they are not double-deep bays, but there is space for ambulances if needed in the future. Skantze said Mitchell could make the building an energy-neutral building, and that Mitchell has a lot of experience building Fire Stations. His plan would be turn-key, the office equipment being built in. Skantze also showed a rendering of a proposed exterior of the building. Skantze said that by putting unique pieces of apparatus at the Central Station the apparatus would be more readily available than they are now housed in either West or East Stations. Skantze noted the location on Safford Drive for the proposed Fire Stations was determined as a good one by a study of call-response numbers.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion** to adjourn was made by Hutwelker, second by Davis. No further discussion. All were in favor.

**Motion passed.** Adjournment occurred at 2:43 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary

Approved on December 2, 2014