

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – January 13, 2015
Monadnock Regional High School Auditorium
560 Old Homestead Highway, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

Present were Selectmen W. William Hutwelker III, Deborah J. Davis, and Kenneth P. Colby, Jr. The meeting was called to order by Chair Colby at 6:14 p.m. at the Monadnock Regional High School (MRHS). Also present were Town Administrator Shane O’Keefe and Recording Secretary Beverly Bernard.

MINUTES

- Regular meeting of January 6, 2015 – **motion** was made by Hutwelker to accept the regular meeting minutes of January 6, 2015. The motion was seconded by Davis and all were in favor. ***Motion passed.***
- Non-Public #1, #2, and #3 meeting minutes of January 6, 2015 were deferred.

NEW BUSINESS

Home Occupation – Margaret E. Lynott, 12 Sandy Road (Map 88, Lot 3)

An application for Home Occupancy was considered for the subject property to establish a real estate brokerage business in a residence. It was noted that at 112 square feet of space, the total area of Home Occupancy is no greater than 300 square feet according to the application. In response to questions asked by Hutwelker, Carbonneau said the application says there will be only one employee and that is Lynott herself. She also noted that the Town’s Zoning Ordinance says a total of three employees are allowed for a Home Occupation and that there is adequate parking at the location.

Davis **moved** to qualify as a Home Occupation the proposed use of a portion of an existing single-family residence at 12 Sandy Road (Map 88, Lot 3) as a real estate brokerage business, subject to Planning Board review, all limitations specified in the application, and continued compliance with all applicable provisions of the Town Zoning ordinance, and furthermore to authorize the Chairperson to execute any necessary documentation on behalf of the Board related to this decision. There was a second to the motion by Hutwelker and no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Payment arrangement – Heidi Rumrill, 27 North Winchester Street (Map 57, Lot(s) 43)

The Board considered a payment plan of \$400 per month for this property owner for delinquent taxes, interest and/or sewer fees (tax deed amount is approximately **\$3,385**). There was a discussion about how long it will take to get the homeowner out of debt to the Town and whether or not sewer and water payments were up to date. O’Keefe estimated that Rumrill will be out of tax lien after about 8 months. Hutwelker said he is comfortable with the \$400 monthly payment and Davis agreed.

Hutwelker **moved** to authorize the Town Administrator to enter into a payment arrangement with the property owner of 27 North Winchester Street requiring no less than \$ 400 per month be paid to the Town beginning February 1, 2015, and continuing until such time as all taxes due are paid in full. There was a second to the motion by Davis and no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Accept unanticipated funds per RSA 31:95-b

The Board was asked to accept funds as follows, totaling \$200.00, as donations to Whitcomb Hall:

- \$200.00 from calendar sales

Davis **moved** to accept the funds as listed and to remit them to the custody of the Trustees of Trust Funds to be held in the Whitcomb Hall Non-Restricted Fund trust account. There was a second to the motion by Hutwelker and no further discussion. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

6:30 PM Budget hearing per RSA 32:5

In preparation for the February 3, 2015 Town Meeting Deliberative Session and the March 10, 2015 Town Meeting Official Ballot Voting Day, the Board conducted its Budget Public Hearing.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public Hearing for the Budget per RSA 32:5 opened at 6:30 PM by Moderator Bruce Tatro.

Present: *Emergency Management Manager Bruce Bohannon, Treasurer Linda Faulkner, Director of Public Works Lee Dunham, Solid Waste Manager Bob Osterhout, Chief of Police Tom DeAngelis, Fire Chief Norm Skantze, Director of Planning and Community Development Sara Carbonneau, Interim Carpenter Home Administrator Judy Bohannon, Sewer Commissioner Glenn Page, Bookkeeper Theresa Lounder, Chair of the Economic Development Advisory Committee Steve Bittel, Trustee of Trust Funds Richard Scaramelli, Keene Sentinel reporter Meghan Foley, and many residents of the Town.*

Copies of the proposed 2015 budget and default budget were provided to those in attendance.

Town of Swanzey Budget 2015 Purpose of Appropriation:

Tatro read to the gathering that the Proposed Operating Budget of \$6,016,693 is a 1.1% increase over 2014 and then asked for questions and/or comments.

Questions and/or comments from the floor:

General Government – Resident Patricia Bauries asked for the pool of wage increases for this year. Colby said that it is a 3% proposed increase for employees: up to 1.3% for merit and 1.7% for cost-of-living adjustment (COLA).

Resident Barbara Skuly asked the Board to speak to highlights of the budget categories and suggested that O’Keefe to do so for the Board.

Elections & Registrations – O’Keefe noted that some of the proposed reduction in funding is accounted for by the difference in the number of weeks in the year: 53 weeks in 2014 versus 52 weeks in 2015.

Financial Administration – O’Keefe noted that the amount listed for Financial Administration would likely be reduced by approximately \$4,300 as salaries for the Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer were double counted in error.

Legal & Professional Services – O’Keefe noted a reduction in proposed legal expenses by \$5,000 from the prior year.

Social Security & Retirement – O’Keefe noted a 5.2% increase, most of which is due to an increase in the New Hampshire Retirement System rate, over which the Town has no control.

Land Use Boards – 15.5% increase – O’Keefe said the Code Enforcement Officer position is proposed to go from part-time to full-time. A resident asked about why the need for full-time. Carbonneau said that in the past there was a full-time officer but that employee left suddenly and when Chet Greenwood took over he could only work part-time for the Town. She also noted that while building has been less than robust, there has been more code enforcement activities necessary. In addition, she said the job now has additional responsibilities which include monitoring work on Town facilities.

Resident Mike Gomarlo asked about Francis Faulkner having been monitoring Town facilities in the past and Colby noted the position was restructured during 2014 after Faulkner’s resignation from Town employment.

Insurance- O’Keefe noted that this budget segment is down considerably due primarily to returns to the Town from HealthTrust, the Town’s insurer due to a state-wide settlement. In balance, it was noted that Worker’s Compensation insurance has increased significantly due to experience rating changes.

Police Department – for the most part the bulk of the 2.5% increase is most salary related, per O’Keefe. Chief DeAngelis was available for specific questions. When asked about the number of employees, DeAngelis said there are twelve full-time officers.

Fire Department – Chief Skantze spoke about call firefighter salaries being implemented in a three-year program. A question by Resident Mike Goldschmidt about how many full-time employees was answered by the Fire Chief: one full-time employee, three part-time employees and approximately 40 call firefighters.

Other Public Safety – Resident Bauries asked why Prosecution Services went up by 40.3%. DeAngelis said that in 2014 there was a credit provided to the Town because a Prosecutor was not hired. For 2015 there is no credit being applied. He explained that the rate will be the same as for 2013.

Emergency Management – Bohannon spoke to the largest change – Vermont Yankee drills get reimbursed at a later date. Overall there is a reduction in expense by 6.7%

Department of Public Works – Dunham addressed the audience and said that to try to keep to level funding, they removed some minor expenses. He mentioned the Main Street improvement project that may be underway next year. The condition of Homestead Avenue will be addressed. Resident Skuly asked about the river park in west Swanzey. Dunham said that most of the money expended on the park did not come out of the budget. He noted that the Sidewalk Committee funded the sidewalk. The fence was funded through the Recreation Trust account. Dunham spoke to repairs that needed to be done once they got onto the land and learned what was beneath the ground. Colby said there will be more work done in the spring including installing landscaping that has been donated.

Health and Welfare – O’Keefe spoke about Health agencies – adding some funds of about \$2,600.

General Assistance - O’Keefe noted the need for an additional \$40,000 for housing assistance. He said this need has increased substantially. He spoke to the amount spent in 2014 being more than had been

budgeted and therefore more has been budgeted for 2015. Resident Goldschmidt asked about the number of people on general assistance. O’Keefe said it changes routinely. Goldschmidt also asked how long one has to be a resident of the town to obtain assistance and Davis said there isn’t a time requirement.

Recreation/Cultural Services and Conservation – Colby noted the libraries have a slight increase. He also mentioned the line items for Open Space Committee. Resident Bauries asked for clarification on spending nearly \$9,000 for both Conservation Commission and Open Space Committees (OSC). Resident and Conservation Commission member Wally Smith mentioned that the Conservation Commission had to pay for past dues to State of New Hampshire Conservation Association for the past three years, which won’t happen this year. Bookkeeper Theresa Louder said that the Conservation Commission actually has a zero budget and their bills get paid from a Trust account. Jeanne Thieme, Chair of the OSC, noted that the OSC spent less than the \$5,000 as budgeted. Bauries suggested that the amounts for Conservation Commission and OSC be separated since the total is shown as just under \$9,000. Stephen Stepenuck spoke to the expenditures of the Conservation Commission. He mentioned the Riley Conservation property – there was money spent for removing invasive species of about \$1,500. He said that in total about \$4,000 won’t be repeated.

A resident asked about the increase in funding for Recreation. Recreation Director Judy Bohannon said the increase comes from expanding the new soccer program and beginning a softball program. She said she had 160 kids want to play soccer in the fall of 2014. She also noted that the Town has hired a part-time person for 12 hours per week to oversee some of the programs. She explained that some of the funding will be for softball equipment in the spring of 2015.

Recycling Center – Recycling Center Manager Osterhout spoke to a reduction in costs, down 2.9%. Colby thanked Osterhout for making the center more appealing for residents use.

Economic Development – Steve Bittel, the Chair of the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC), was asked about the \$2,500 budgeted for 2015. He said it is a placeholder for expenses related to the opening Safford Drive. He noted there was a ground-breaking last year, and in 2015 there will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The \$8,000 charge because of hiring consultant Stuart Arnett was supposed to be charged against revenues from the TIF District and not a charge against the general fund. O’Keefe said he would check on that. Bittel also spoke about the new signs for the District; the installation of the Safford Drive sign at the intersection with State Route 12 will be charged in 2015.

Debt Service – O’Keefe noted a reduction since the Town paid off some leases. There was a brief discussion regarding how any deficit in revenue from the TIF District would be covered to pay off the Safford Drive improvements bond for that District. Bittel responded that if there is a deficit then the general fund would pay for that deficit, but Bittel also said that a deficit is not anticipated due to the structuring methodology of the bond.

Carpenter Home – Judy Bohannon – Interim Administrator for the Carpenter Home - said changes have occurred at the Home. She said there is a full house of 16 residents. A resident asked for the level of hiring at the Home and Bohannon said that she has primarily hired LPNs and LNAs which are part-time. A resident asked about recreational staff and Bohannon said there is a girl who works three days a week to do activities with the residents.

Sewer Commission – West Swanzey Wastewater Treatment – Resident Bauries asked about \$104,000 expenditure and Sewer Commissioner Glenn Page said that the plant needed removal of phosphorus. The lagoons have a shortened life without dredging. \$104,000 came out of Capital Reserve.

Colby spoke about the Default Budget in regard to contract obligations. He noted that the reduction in funding is primarily related to wages due to there being 53 pay periods in year 2014 versus 52 in year 2015.

Tatro introduced the Warrant Articles and Capital Reserve and Expendable Trust accounts to open the discussion. Resident Bauries said she has had to ask for balances in the accounts in the past and she thanked the Board for including these in the resident packet this year. She also said she would love to have the information ahead of time if at all possible.

Resident Dave Osgood asked about Municipal Transportation line item and what is covered by that line. Trustee of Trust Funds Richard Scaramelli said it is a special trust fund that was approved by the voters in 2012 Town Meeting and is funded through a surcharge on vehicle registrations each year. The use of those funds has been for the improvement of roads.

Resident Bauries asked about the Capital Reserve and Expendable Trust Accounts – do they require voter approval to withdraw funds from them. O’Keefe said there are none at this time that requires the public vote. O’Keefe noted that there have been past Warrant Articles that have been approved by the voters to allow for the Selectmen to act as agents to approve the withdrawal of funds. Bauries said that she has a hard time finding authorization for expenditures by the Board of Selectmen. She said that she believes that Capital Reserves should require voter approval and she said she might take it to court. O’Keefe said that the voters can designate the Board of Selectmen as agents to spend from the account. O’Keefe said that he would be happy to meet with and show Bauries the Town meeting votes on each of the articles authorizing the Board of Selectmen to expend the funds.

Tatro closed the Budget Public Hearing at 7:35 p.m.

Bond hearing per RSA 33:8-a

Immediately following the Budget Hearing, Tatro opened the Bond Public Hearing at 7:36 p.m.

The hearing was being held to accept public testimony on a proposal to issue bonds or notes in an amount preliminarily estimated to be \$4.5 million for the purpose of preparing plans and specifications, and constructing, equipping and furnishing a new Public Safety Facility for the Fire Department and associated emergency management operations. Such facility is proposed to be located on property to be acquired by the Town on Safford Drive.

Tatro turned the Hearing over to Chair Colby regarding background information for the Bond Hearing. Colby informed the public present that in May of 2013, the Selectmen had an engineering study report from DuBois & King regarding Town Hall. It was found that Town Hall needed many life/safety corrections. The Capital Improvements Program Committee (CIP) was reappointed and over the past year they researched a number of possible locations for a fire station which would alleviate some of the life/safety issues. Colby said that in each case in the Swanzey Center area a roadblock sprung up. Colby said land owner John Burk has been willing to donate some land for a fire station that has sewer and water at the proposed Safford Drive location. Colby mentioned the land has access to both NH Route 12

and NH Route 32 and is not in a residential setting. Colby mentioned a study by the Southwest Region Planning Commission that showed high call volume in the north area of town and he emphasized the life span of the proposed facility that would be 30 or 40 years. He said a lot of thought went into the proposal. Colby mentioned the names of the CIP Committee and thanked them for their service to the Town.

Chief Skantze spoke to the handout that was provided to residents which include color renderings and call volume charts. He also provided cost estimates, and a sheet with answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ) for residents to consider.

Skantze showed a PowerPoint presentation to the audience covering many aspects of the Fire Department and its history. It also contained information about the proposed fire station plan. He referred to ISO ratings and how the cost of fire insurance can be reduced by improvements to a fire station. He noted that there is no plan to eliminate or reduce the number of fire stations in town, and that both West Swanzey and East Swanzey stations have recently had capital improvements and will continue to do so. He noted that the Master Plan includes a reference to a new fire station as an objective for the Town and spoke to the hiring of architects and consultants to assist in programming and design for a fire station. He spoke to the problems with having a fire station in the same building as Town Hall, including life/safety issues. The presentation also included a history of fire truck sizes and how those sizes have grown, making clearances at the present station inadequate. He noted other problems with the present station such as there is no place to decontaminate protective garments and equipment. He said some of the products of combustion are carcinogenic; there is inadequate cleansing of the air from diesel exhaust and floor drains do not go into a sewer system to properly dispose of wastewater.

Skantze mentioned that the community could use some of the proposed space for public meetings. And he spoke about the energy efficiency of the proposed building. Skantze mentioned that the property will be donated by John Burk for use as a fire station and that he and the Selectboard believed that Safford Drive is the right location with access to major roadways in the town.

Questions and Answers:

- A resident raised a question about the building square footage – Skantze said the proposed facility is approximately 17,000 square feet in size. Regarding meeting and training room and conference room, Skantze said there are only two such rooms: a 50-person meeting space for both meeting and training room, and a 12-15 person conference room. Skantze said they would also be used for an Emergency Operations Center during a Town emergency.
- A resident asked about bedrooms – Skantze said the original design had four bedrooms, and now there are two bedrooms that can be used for student interns who pay to work 20 hours a week to live at the fire station, or for future accommodations for full-time staff. A resident also asked if North Swanzey was covered by Keene Fire Department – Skantze said it is not.
- A resident asked about the equipment – about nine pieces of apparatus. Skantze said that it doesn't make sense to have only one central station – we have 14 pieces of equipment. The proposed plan is to put an engine, ladder, and a tanker, brush truck, and a heavy rescue vehicle into the Safford Drive station.

- A resident asked how long it takes to get from Safford Drive to her home – Skantze said it would take less than 8 minutes from a Safford Drive fire station.
- A resident asked about how the project architect was selected – Skantze said Robert Mitchell Architects was selected since the only facilities he designs are fire stations. He builds award-winning fire stations, nationally.
- A resident asked about the size of the land and could it accommodate additional staff if needed. Skantze said that there is no room to expand. This station could accommodate two bedrooms with two beds each for a total of four fire fighters.
- A resident asked about who did the construction costs – Skantze said Ingram Construction did the initial costs and Mitchell confirmed the numbers were basically good. The same resident asked about going out to bid and Skantze confirmed that the project would go out to bid.
- A resident asked why the population figures in the growth analysis did not go beyond year 2010. Skantze said he got the numbers from Southwest Regional Planning Commission from the last census, which was taken in 2010. A resident asked about the materials to be used on the proposed building and suggested metal would be cheaper. Skantze said that the building as proposed with masonry block would be good for 75 years and is low maintenance and energy efficient. The resident asked about the cost of traffic lights and related traffic studies and had that been considered. O’Keefe said there is no plan for such traffic devices; he spoke about the intersection of NH Route 12 and Safford Drive and noted that the State requires a warrant to justify the need for a traffic light, which could not be met. He noted the plan is to have a dedicated turn lanes as determined by the Department of Transportation and no requirement for a light. O’Keefe said there will be no additional charges for road work at that intersection.
- A resident asked whether the site chosen is the best site if there is no future plan for growth. Skantze said that this station is not planned as a centralized fire station and that if growth is going to happen it might happen in West Swanzey or East Swanzey.
- A resident spoke to water and sewer costs from Keene; he said use of water is costly since two bills need to be paid, one for use of the water and one for what goes back into the system. Skantze said that the Town would have to address water and sewer no matter where the location of a new fire station. He noted there are costs associated with septic system and holding tanks.
- A resident asked about ambulance service which we don’t have and appears to be in the proposed plan. She asked if it would make some sense to remove that section of the building to save some costs. Skantze said that it might cost more to ask for another bond at a later date to expand the building. The resident asked how the proposed bond would impact tax payers. O’Keefe said that the FAQ addresses the tax impact on taxpayers. He said a bond of \$4.5 million at 20 years, for a home assessed at \$200,000, the additional tax is estimated to be \$148 per year for the first year, declining each year and would be \$118 for the 10th year. For a \$4.2 million bond the difference would be \$140 per year, or a difference of \$8.00 per year. The resident asked about grants that might be available and Skantze said that there will be grants applied to for individual equipment acquisition but there are none for entire fire stations.
- A resident asked what “bond counsel” referred to and O’Keefe said that bond counsel is a requirement from the bond bank. They are required to do due diligence for the bond bank. O’Keefe noted that it is legal counsel. Contingency insurance covers anything unforeseen.

- A resident asked about staffing for maintenance, custodial, etc. costs. Skantze said that there is a janitor paid for by a training program and interns do some of the work.
- A resident said he isn't excited about a \$5,000,000 fire station. He said masonry construction is extravagant for the type of town we have and he would prefer to see an insulated metal building used. He said that general industrial costs are not close in cost to \$200 per square foot. He asked about other types of buildings that might be possible; it could be maybe \$135 per square foot. He said he would have appreciated one facility with both Fire and Police because he doesn't want to keep coming back to the taxpayers asking for money. He is interested in giving the fire fighters what they need, but he thinks that the building could be less costly. He mentioned the School District-owned Wilcox building across from Town Hall with an extension would be preferable. Skantze responded that the Wilcox building was considered and it was not available at the time and it doesn't have enough room for septic and water. Skantze said the costs are high for the proposed building per square foot due to specialized equipment that drives the cost up (soft costs) that are necessary for a fire station and not needed for other types of industrial buildings. The resident also mentioned that the Town is removing a nice piece of property that could be developed as taxable property. Skantze said that Mr. Burk wants to donate the land and that the presence of a fire station might be attractive to new business from a fire insurance point of view. O'Keefe also mentioned that the size and condition of the property might not be suitable for larger industrial size use.

There was a brief discussion about the history of the Wilcox Building.

Tatro said the proposed fire station bond would be addressed again at the Deliberative Session on February 3, 2015.

Moderator Tatro closed the bond hearing at 8:45 p.m.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion was made by Hutwelker to approve the Consent Agenda, authorizing the chair to sign where necessary. Second was made by Davis. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

- Notice of Intent to Cut Wood or Timber. Thomas, Richard & William Smith, South Road, Map 23, Lot(s) 11.
- Certification of Yield Taxes Assessed and Yield Tax Levy. Michael & Donna Paine, Cobble Hill Road, Map 87, Lot(s) 5-1.
- Abatement #2015-01 – Cynthia D'Amato (Map 24, Lot 46), \$221 of taxes. Parcel no longer exists due to merger
- Event Permit #2015-01. Fast Friends Greyhound Rescue – Road race and pet friendly walk (4.5 miles) on 3/28/2015 on Town and State roads. Note: Police requirement per staff review sheet.
- Event Permit #2015-02. Cheshire Fairgrounds/Randall Tefft – Moto Guzzi National Owner's Club National Rally on 6/18 – 6/21/2015 at the Cheshire Fairgrounds. No departmental comments/conditions.
- Other documents as necessary

In addition to items discussed as part of the agenda, the Board received the following documents:

- Copy of petitioned Town Meeting Warrant Article on voting methodology, received January 12, 2015

- Chart of leave hours lost by Town staff as of December 31, 2014

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Davis, second by Hutwelker. **Motion passed.** Adjournment occurred at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary

Approved on January 20, 2015