

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire  
**Board of Selectmen**  
Meeting – August 4, 2015  
Swanzey Town Hall, 620 Old Homestead Highway, Swanzey, NH

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Deborah J. Davis at 6:00 p.m. at the Swanzey Town Hall. Present were Deborah J. Davis, Kenneth P. Colby, Jr. and W. William Hutwelker III. Also present was Town Administrator Michael Branley and Recording Secretary Beverly Bernard.

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Carpenter Home Employee Donna Allen, Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Lee Dunham, State Representative Jim McConnell, Bookkeeper Theresa Lounder, Human Services and Resources Coordinator Edna Coates, Finance Office Assistant Jason Taylor, Resident Michael Goldschmidt, Interim Carpenter Home Administrator Judy Bohannon, Resident Gail Duplissie, and visitor Michelle Milton.

**MINUTES**

- The regular meeting Minutes of July 28, 2015 were considered. There was a **motion** by Colby to accept the regular meeting Minutes of July 28, 2015. The motion was seconded by Hutwelker with no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***
- The Non-Public meeting Minutes #1 and #2 of July 28, 2015 were considered. There was a **motion** by Colby to approve the Non-Public meeting Minutes #1 and #2 of July 28, 2015. The motion was seconded by Hutwelker with no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

**FINANCIAL MATTERS**

The Board of Selectmen reviewed and approved accounts payable and payroll manifests.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Carlton Road Trees**

Resident Gail Duplissie and DPW Director Lee Dunham met with the Board to discuss the presence of large trees which shade Carlton road and create icy conditions in the winter for vehicular traffic according to Duplissie. Duplissie has asked the Town to remove the trees. Dunham said there are a couple of pines and one hickory tree but he also said removal of the trees won't entirely eliminate the icing issues on the road because of their location. Dunham said it could cost \$2,500 to take the trees down according to Phil's Tree Service. He spoke about funding for the effort. He said he has \$12,000 in an account that could be used for removal of the trees. Davis asked about timing for the project. Dunham said the earliest it could be done would be at the end of August. Branley asked for agreement from the Board for him to manage the documentation for the project. The Board agreed.

**Street-Lighting for Safford Drive**

Dunham raised safety issues regarding Safford Drive at the intersection with State Route 12. He said streetlights at the location would increase safety at the location. He spoke about existing poles and the possibility to put streetlights on two poles, south and north of Safford Drive. He referred to old poles that the Town is paying for lighting that may now be on private roads. He said that given some research to determine which private road poles could cease to be the responsibility of the Town, there would be a cost to move the lights, but no extra cost to the Town for utility bills.

There was a **motion** by Hutwelker to approve Dunham to move ahead with determining which lights can

be moved to be installed at poles on the north and south sides of Safford Drive where it meets State Route 12 and to install the lights as appropriate. There was a second to the motion by Colby and no further discussion. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

A brief discussion occurred regarding striping the crosswalk and Dunham agreed it would be completed in time for the beginning of school. Dunham left the meeting at 6:12 p.m.

### **Medicaid Reimbursement**

McConnell met with the Board regarding the possibility for him to sponsor legislation to correct State of New Hampshire Medicaid payment issues with the Carpenter Home. The State has not been making Medicaid reimbursement payments in a timely fashion. A discussion was held regarding the wait for nurses to arrive at evaluations of Medicaid patients during which time no payments are made to the Town. He suggested that he could possibly write a bill to require a minimum of 30 days for nurse response. He also spoke about the possibility of a veto from the governor. He said a great deal is left to her discretion. He referred the Office of Legislative Services (OLS) and said he is happy to sponsor a bill or co-sponsor a bill. He said he wanted to have time to better understand the issues so he would be knowledgeable about them and would get some verbiage to Branley via email this week. He asked Branley to respond by Monday at the latest with his comments. Louder suggested writing a letter to the Cheshire County Commissioners to suggest that if the Carpenter Home has to close, then the County will be responsible for the clients. McConnell said that he would speak to the Commissioners about the situation. He also suggested contacting Health and Human Services at the State level.

### **Carpenter Home Staffing**

Bohannon, Coates, Allen, Taylor, and Louder met with the Board to discuss staffing at the Carpenter Home. The group referred to spreadsheets provided to the Board with budget and staffing payroll information. There were also staffing recommendations from both Coates and Bohannon and Hutwelker asked Coates and Bohannon to explain their recommended numbers of FT and PT personnel. Louder spoke about the fact that the Affordable Care Act requires that employees working 30 hours per week be considered as fulltime, and the employer must offer health insurance to those employees. Bohannon had classified fulltime as 40 hours where Coates had classified fulltime as 30 hours or over. Bohannon recommended hiring a full-time RN for Tuesday through Saturday coverage at the Home. She spoke about a surprise visit from State of New Hampshire officials and the post visit letter had no criticism for the nursing effort. She spoke about the difficulty in getting good nursing care.

Louder spoke about benefits and who would be eligible for health benefits and the costs associated with same. Discussion continued regarding the inability to hold onto part-timers. A part-timer often will continue to look for more hours with benefits. Bohannon said it would be easier to keep personnel if the Town would offer health insurance. Taylor mentioned that workers get a penalty if they don't get insurance. There was a discussion about the costs of providing insurance to workers. Allen mentioned that it is difficult to schedule staff coverage because workers with 29 hours have other jobs. Colby thanked the folks for the time and effort put into the spreadsheets.

Louder reported that the City of Keene uses the following scenario to comply with the Affordable Care Act: Qualified part-time employees pay 9% on their earnings up to 40% of single plan premiums and the worker is responsible for spouses and dependents.

Hutwelker noted that income from Carpenter Home residents is about \$30,000 a month. Louder pointed out the Home is currently operating at a loss, and could be anticipated to be approximately \$100,000+ loss for 2015.

Discussion was held about asking the tax payers if they are willing to pay higher taxes to keep the Home open. Bohannon said that closing the Home does not mean that the Home would actually close immediately. She said

that there is a mandate that all clients be placed in other facilities before final closing of a facility.

Discussion occurred about one of the proposed budgets of \$530,000 being 50% higher than the current budget. Colby asked about the possibility of adopting the City of Keene model.

McConnell spoke about the possibility of not extending the Affordable Care Act after 2016. Taylor said that the issue is still high turnover of employees and being able to offer insurance to keep employees.

Davis pointed out that there are building issues that also need to be addressed which will cost funds that are limited. Bohannon spoke about some of the maintenance issues.

Colby suggested having a consultant determine the viability of continuing the Carpenter Home. Branley will work on that and report back to the Board next week. Branley also said that some sort of decision has to be made for this year, as to continuing to staff the Home due to the current budget situation. Bohannon noted that the more over-time she has to pay, the more it will cost the Town; a change needs to be done quickly.

According to Louder there is a \$60,000 bond for Energy Efficiency projects that was approved by the voters in the past, and that has not been taken advantage of that the Town could utilize to replace doors and windows at the Home. However, she noted that a bond means taking on additional debt.

Bohannon suggested hiring Allen to take her position as Administrator and hiring a full-time RN and a full-time LPN. She pointed out that the part-timers are working 60+ hours a week. Colby said the Board has to make a decision soon about whether to keep open or close the Carpenter Home. And he pointed out that making staffing decisions when it is possible that the facility will close its doors doesn't bode well for hiring. Coates asked for approval to hire full-time employees at 30 hours and to be offered health insurance. Allen pointed out that the employees will commit if they are guaranteed hours with health insurance.

Hutwelker asked Coates, Taylor, Bohannon, Allen, Branley and Louder to come together with one interim staffing plan that they can recommend to the Board. Louder asked whether to add the Affordable Care piece in the recommendation and Colby asked Louder to use the City of Keene model. Louder agreed to do so. Hutwelker asked them to meet this week, and be on the agenda for next Tuesday. They agreed to meet Thursday morning at 9 a.m. The Board thanked the group for their work. Bohannon, Taylor, Louder, Allen, and Coates left the meeting at 7:17 p.m.

### **Disposition of Tax Deeded Properties**

- Millwood Property at 710 Old Homestead Highway, Map 3, Lot 009  
Michelle Milton, daughter of Marshall Millwood, was present to discuss her father's tax situation. Davis said she spoke with Town Counsel Sam Bradley regarding the status of the tax deed process. Milton said she is offering to pay all backed taxes and asked the Board to waive some of the interest. She noted there would be a change of title on the house. The Board agreed to work with Milton to pay off the taxes owed on her father's property. Milton asked for ten days to make the arrangements and deliver the funds in the form of a bank check. Hutwelker suggested putting the money in escrow through her Attorney and the Board would give her longer to produce the money. Branley said he would get the account balance from the Tax Collector and provide it to Milton. Milton left the meeting at 7:30 p.m.
  
- Homestead Woolen Mills  
Branley said there was no news; he spoke to Town Counsel who was going to try to reach the attorney handling the sale. Hutwelker said they are trying to piece together the deeds and that is holding up

further action.

- Landry property

It was noted that Loretta Wright has been in support of Landry. Colby said he thought Wright was going to get back to the Board, but has not done so as yet.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Resident Hays Correspondence**

The Board discussed the letter from Rebecca Hays recommending selling the Cushing property for \$1.00. Goldschmidt pointed out that the Pine Grove Mobile Home Park knows that the Town would pay rent and Davis pointed out that the Board is working with the Directors of the Park to try to solve the problem. Goldschmidt said that there isn't any benefit to the town's taxpayers to take the property since the property is in poor condition. Colby pointed out that the situation continues to be a town problem because of unpaid back taxes, which causes a burden to the residents who do pay their taxes. He said that perhaps by taking the property, the property could be cleaned up and rented to someone who would be providing funds to the Town.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **James R. St. Jean Auctioneers Assistance with Tax Deed Properties**

Hutwelker asked Branley to research the Aylward property (27 Aylward Avenue, Map 72, Lot 108) for a status report. Branley stated the former owner has been notified regarding the Town's plan to sell the property. Branley referred to St. Jean Auctioneers with whom he has worked with in the past for tax deed properties. He said it doesn't cost the Town anything to utilize their services and that a buyer's premium is paid by the buyer to the auctioneers directly. He asked for approval from the Board to ask the St. Jean Auctioneers to investigate the properties. The Board agreed.

#### **Citizen Concerns**

Michael Goldschmidt spoke about the Carpenter Home – suggesting economies of scale might be achieved by selling it to another nursing home corporation who might be able to run it profitably.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

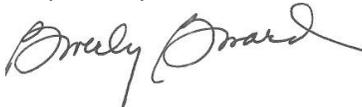
**Motion** was made by Colby approve the Consent Agenda. There was a second by Hutwelker and no further discussion. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

- Raffle Permit 2015-21 – Whitcomb Hall Committee
- Personnel Action Report(s)

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion** to adjourn was made by Colby, second by Hutwelker. No further discussion. All were in favor. **Motion passed.** Adjournment occurred at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary  
Approved on August 11, 2015