

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – October 31, 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 9:01 p.m. at the Swanzey Town Hall. Present were Kenneth P. Colby, Jr., and W. William Hutwelker III. Also present was Town Administrator Michael Branley.

OTHERS PRESENT

Police Chief T. De Angelis, Recycling Center Manager B. Osterhout, Director of Public Works L. Dunham, & Fire Chief N. Skantze

2016 BUDGET REVIEW

There was a general discussion regarding the department request lines compared to the town administrator recommended lines on the budget sheets. Branley stated the administrator recommended line was based on his review of the initial requests and the result of the meeting with department heads.

2016 Police Department Budget

The Board and Chief De Angelis reviewed the 2016 police department budget. Hutwelker asked about the increase to vehicle maintenance. De Angelis stated the cost to repair cruisers is very expensive especially with newer cruisers in part because they are all wheel drive. Branley stated in part the increase to the budgeted amount was based on historical actual expenses.

Hutwelker asked about the overtime account, comparing the budgeted amount to the year-to-date amount expended. De Angelis stated he is planning to try to avoid repurposing salaried staff off day time supervisory role to cover nights as he has in the past. While this saves on overtime this reduces the time able to be spent on administrative duties so he would like to try to avoid that. This will result in more being spent on overtime. There was a discussion about the part-time personnel payroll line. De Angelis stated the increase is in part to reflect custodial services being moved from a contractor to an employee. He felt he needed \$19,000 in that line instead of the \$17,000 in the proposal. Branley and De Angelis will review.

Hutwelker asked about vehicle fuel 2015 actuals and the 2016 budgeted amount. De Angelis stated it is primarily due to lower fuel prices.

Special Duty Pay Account – Branley stated the special duty account is essentially a wash because it is offset by revenues; however the Town still cannot overspend the overall budget. He would like to propose consider using a revolving fund for police and fire department special duty pay which would remove that expense and income from the budget. The Board agreed to have Branley research this option and report back.

Davis asked about officer retention. De Angelis stated by his calculation it costs the Town at least \$35,000 every time an officer is lost. Wages are a major factor to officers leaving. He stated he is nearing completion of a wage study and thinks the Board needs to consider a larger than normal increase for the patrol officers and supervisors. Because the Town does not have a wage scale De Angelis believes officer wages have fallen compared to comparable towns.

There was a brief discussion regarding De Angelis's proposal to purchase a police cruiser out of this year's budget, to be discussed at Tuesday's meeting.

There was a brief discussion regarding the County Prosecutor's office and the Prosecution budget, which is reduced from last year. De Angelis stated he thinks it is very possible that this budget will need to be increased in the future.

De Angelis left the meeting at 9:45 a.m.

2016 Recycling Center Budget

The Board and Osterhout reviewed the Recycling Center budget. Osterhout said they have had a busy year in 2015 and he is not sure how that will translate to 2016. Usage can be difficult to predict. There was a discussion regarding operations and the recycling market generally.

There was a discussion regarding the waste hauling contract, which expires in 2017. Osterhout stated he would like to begin looking at the options.

Osterhout left the meeting at 10 a.m.

2016 Department of Public Works Budget

The Board and Dunham reviewed the Public Works budget. Davis asked about the increase to the salt and calcium budget. Dunham stated the increase is to try to keep up with current usage and increases in prices. Dunham stated in 2015 he still needs to fill the salt shed and have enough to get through December.

Hutwelker asked about overtime, which has been overspent the last two years. There was a discussion about if the past two years have been predictive or outliers. Dunham agreed he is comfortable with the current number at this time.

Davis asked if the asphalt line should be increased. Dunham stated the main project for next year is Main Street, which would likely be paid out of the road reconstruction fund. There was a discussion regarding other projects in need of attention.

Hutwelker asked about leased equipment line. Dunham stated this is for the sidewalk plow. Branley stated this is the only lease in an individual budget, while other leases are in the debt services. The Board agreed to move that expense into the debt service budget.

The Board reviewed the actual expenses for tools & supplies and agreed to increase that line to \$20,000. Branley discussed the possibility of setting up a separate account for bridges, which is on the State's chart of accounts and would increase transparency. This account could include bridge repairs, bridge alarms, and blinkers and bridges and the Board agreed to have Branley set this up in the next draft of the budget.

Branley stated there is an employee who works four days per week for Cemeteries and one day per week at the Carpenter Home. He said that Interim Carpenter Home Administrator Judy Bohannon would like to discuss either having more control over when those hours occur at the Carpenter Home, which is currently based around down time in the public works department, or employing a separate person on a part-time basis. Dunham said he is fine with whatever way the Board wants to go, the employee can still be used at the Carpenter Home as they are available either way. The Board agreed to discuss with Bohannon.

There was a discussion about street lights. Dunham said he is putting together a policy regarding the location of street lights. The question was raised if a street light was put in by a vote of town meeting does town meeting then need to vote to remove it? Branley stated he did not think so but he would check.

Dunham stated he added a line for repairs in the dam account for incidental items. The expenses for the Swanzey Lake Dam survey will likely be paid out of this account in 2015 rather than the fund.

Dunham left the meeting at 11:05.

2016 Fire Department Budget

The Board and Skantze reviewed the Fire Department budget. Davis asked about the full-time payroll line. Skantze stated this includes 6 months of full time salaries for the fire inspector and the EMS coordinator. Branley stated that benefits are accounted for in the personnel budget. Hutwelker stated he felt Skantze needs to make the case to the voters for additional full time positions. There was a discussion regarding call volume, response times, and related factors. Davis stated she knows how busy the department is and that she feels the positions are needed but costs need to be considered. Colby stated the Board needs to consider the whole budget and the percentage increase in specific budgets in any given year. He felt the current increase is too high and would likely result in neither of the positions being approved. There was a discussion regarding putting the positions in the budget versus doing them as an individual warrant article. Colby stated he wanted to see a \$30,000 reduction to the original proposal. The Board agreed they would consider other areas in the budget to decrease. Branley stated that based on his review, cutting back any of the non-payroll lines would likely leave the department underfunded in those accounts. The Board and Skantze agreed they would look further at the budget and discuss it down the road.

The Board and Skantze reviewed some of the other line items for the Fire Department budget. Skantze and the Board discussed the proposed capital appropriations and expenditures.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Hutwelker, second by Colby. No further discussion. All were in favor. **Motion passed.** Adjournment occurred at 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Branley, Town Administrator
Approved on November 10, 2015