

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – November 10, 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

State Representative Jim McConnell, Chair of the Conservation Commission Wally Smith, Conservation Commission member Jane Johnson, Fire Chief Norm Skantze, Director of Planning and Community Development Sara Carbonneau, Open Space Committee Chair Victoria Ames, Planning Board Chair Glenn Page, Code Enforcement Officer Mike Jasmin, Municipal Facilities Review Committee Chair Don Skiba, Liberty Utilities representatives William Clark, Michael Licata, and Rich MacDonald, Interim Carpenter Home Administrator Judy Bohannon, Chair of Trustees of Trust Funds Richard Scaramelli, and Meghan Foley from the Keene Sentinel newspaper. Also present were residents David Hoyt and Janice and Kenneth Sevene.

MINUTES

- The regular meeting Minutes of October 31, 2015 were considered. There was a **motion** by Colby to approve the regular Minutes of October 31, 2015. The motion was seconded by Hutwelker with no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***
- The regular meeting Minutes of November 3, 2015 were considered. There was a **motion** by Colby to approve the regular Minutes of November 3, 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 November 3, 2015 were considered. There was a **motion** by Colby to approve the non-public Minutes #1 and #2 of November 3, 2015. The motion was seconded Hutwelker with no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

CONSENT AGENDA

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

- Payroll Manifest
- Payables Manifest
- 2015 Property Tax Warrant

APPOINTMENTS

Liberty Utilities

A presentation was held regarding natural gas expansion into Swanzey. The Chair noted that no decisions would be made tonight and this is an informational meeting only. Liberty Utilities Director of Government and Community Relations Michael Licata led the presentation. He noted that Liberty Utilities is the largest gas utility in New Hampshire, serving 90,000 customers. He noted that Liberty Utilities purchased NH Gas Corp. in Keene in January of 2015 which is served through an underground distribution system. He noted that natural gas provides less CO2 per Million BTU as compared to other fuels and showed a slide showing the price per million BTU for Natural Gas being at \$11.42, the cheapest of all the fuels listed. He noted that Liberty makes their money on delivery of the gas. Business Development Professional William Clark spoke about the purchase of NH Gas

Corporation. He noted that they currently serve 1250 customers. He said storage of gas would be on Production Avenue. Clark showed the areas they are hoping to serve in Swanzey and Keene, primarily off State Routes 10 and 12. He spoke about energy efficiency rebates available for customers and financing programs. Rich MacDonald spoke about distribution and safety; he is Director of Gas Operations for Liberty Utilities. He said that the company is in compliance with Federal and State requirements. He referred to public safety and traffic control standards that they comply with during construction and repair. He also spoke about a 24 X 7 emergency dispatch center that he said it is a state-of-the art facility. He said lines are installed by qualified personnel. He passed out samples of the pipe material that is strong and lightweight. 60 lbs per square inch (PSI) is operational pressure on main lines. He noted pressure meters reduce the pressure to a ¼ pound PSI at customer connection. He spoke about tracer lines for the pipes in the ground so the pipes can be located. He referred to Dig Safe which requires 72 hour notice for excavations. Licata went on to speaking about next steps saying they would be happy to continue to present more information as requested to groups of folks like town boards. He spoke about growing business in Swanzey, and that is not dependent on the proposed Kinder Morgan pipeline. He went on to say that should that line be constructed, a connection would provide a cost savings with compressed natural gas. Licata said they want to work with the Town based on what the Town desires.

There were questions from the people in attendance. Victoria Ames asked for clarification on pricing. Smith asked about company financials. Licata mentioned that part of the review by the State for a Public Utility company includes financials. There is a “rotten-egg” smell added to the gas so that a leak can be detected immediately said Clark. David Hoyt asked how often trucks would be delivering gas and where the trucks would be coming from. CNG comes from Vermont and other locations. LNG comes down from Montreal, Quebec, Canada or from Everett, Massachusetts. Mrs. Sevene asked about costs for construction. Clark said that there are no costs to the Town for the infrastructure. David Hoyt asked about bottled propane changes and there would not be any changes for them according to Licata. You have to be on a line to get the service. Hoyt asked if there would be any price increases for bottled propane and Licata said no. Meghan Foley asked about a timeline – and Licata said that it depends on the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) for approval. Once approval is obtained, it is a matter of construction. Foley asked about the use of the word “phase” in the presentation and what other phases might be proposed. Clark said the company is prepared to put in 3-4 miles of pipe each year. Each incremental construction would be a phase. Foley asked about the maps filed with the PUC being different than shown tonight. Licata said that they were trying to capture the goals that might go beyond the original idea, assuming that more neighborhoods want service. Smith asked about insurance liability. They are self-insured said MacDonald and have construction bonds. Licata mentioned a possible Letter of Support from the Board which would be appreciated. The Board thanked the Liberty Utilities representatives and told them they would take some time to consider their request for a Letter of Support.

Johnson, McConnell, the Sevenes, and the Liberty Utilities representatives left the meeting at 6:54 p.m.

Code Enforcement Officer Mike Jasmin

- **12 North Pine Street**
Inspection of 12 North Pine Street was briefly discussed. Discussion included whether the former owner would remain as a tenant. Branley said that the prior owner will not be paying rent but will continue occupancy for 90 days. The Board authorized Jasmin to move forward with the critical life safety improvements needed.
- **Carpenter Home**
Carpenter Home building status update was provided by Jasmin. Jasmin spoke about life safety issues that need addressing. Jasmin spoke about meeting with an engineer and that the cistern could be inspected. \$3,850 is the cost for inspection. Jasmin stated he did not think that was a good use of money because the inspection will likely show that the cistern needs to be replaced, which we already know. It is a 30 year

old medal tank. Jasmin recommended that the cistern be replaced with an underground fiberglass cistern. He said a fire suppression system needs to be designed to know what size cistern would be needed. Hutwelker asked about the costs. Davis agreed with Hutwelker that the Board needs to know what the costs would be for the design. It was noted that there is approximately \$175,000 that can be spent from the trust funds tied to the Carpenter Home. Branley recommended using those funds. Jasmin said he would respond to the letter from the State. Branley said that the \$500,000 principal cannot be accessed, only income from the trust funds. Jasmin left the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Norm Skantze

“A Very Swanzey Christmas” event application & request to use Town property was discussed. It was noted that the permit committee has reviewed the application and has no issues with the logistics of the event in regards to safety, security, etc. although an issue has been raised concerning the Christian/Christmas theme and whether such an event is appropriate to be hosted by the Town. Skantze spoke about having the event that the Fire Department would be doing that would not be for fund-raising. He said that within the Department there is a lot of interest and support for it. The proposed event is scheduled for from 4:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at night and the proposal includes having Santa arrive on a fire truck and lighting of a Christmas tree. Skantze asked for permission to put lights up on the bridges, permission to have folks at the Whitcomb Hall property, and permission to put up a Christmas tree. He spoke about liability issues; Property Liability Trust has indicated that insurance is not a problem as long as the Board approves the event. Skantze said he was looking for the Board to waive fees and grant permission to use the fire trucks and fire station. Hutwelker asked about legal issues that might arise being a Town-sponsored event. Skantze said he checked into the statutes and it is okay so long as the Town is not promoting Christmas. Colby spoke about the City of Keene having a Christmas tree on Central Square and the mayor reading the “The Night Before Christmas”. He also noted concern about persons of other religious persuasions not feeling welcome. Skantze said that everyone would be invited and there will be no crèche which has religious connotations. Hutwelker asked Skantze about expanding the idea to include other activities. Skantze spoke about partially closing off Main Street in West Swanzey to limit traffic except for local traffic.

Motion was made by Hutwelker to authorize use of the Town facilities for the “A Very Swanzey Christmas” Event and to approve the permit for the event. There was a second by Colby. A brief discussion was held with Smith suggesting notifying the Town’s insurance carrier and Skantze repeated that had already been done. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

Hutwelker asked Skantze if the Whitcomb Hall Committee is involved in the planning for the event and Skantze said they are involved. Skiba and Page and Carbonneau left the meeting at 7:19 p.m.

2016 Budget Appointments

- **Recreation Department** – Director of Recreation Judy Bohannon was present to discuss the Recreation budget with the Board. Hutwelker asked about using email to increase participation. Bohannon said that information is posted on the website and she has many children participating and did not know if she could handle many more than she already has signing up. She mentioned that credit card payments on a website would be beneficial. She spoke about her proposed budget for 2016. Softball may be substantially different. She said the rest of the budget pretty much stays the same. There was a discussion regarding Richardson Park staff pay. Bohannon said life guards are getting hard to come by. She also mentioned that things need to be cleaned up and readied in May to prepare for opening on Memorial Day but that she is unable to get help for that work. Part-time salaries were discussed. She said that would be primarily paid to Bohannon for 12-14 hours per week at \$14.00 per hour. She said that payroll is set level to 2015 for camp. Soccer and softball may change because she cannot get a solid number – and that is because she is not sure of how many teams she will have. Bohannon said as far as

participation by Swanzey children versus children from other towns, there is one rate charged for Swanzey youngsters, and different pricing for children from other towns. There was a discussion regarding the Rail Trail line item. Branley stated in the past funds available at the end of the year have often gone towards the rail trail and he stated he is in favor of that rather than a dedicated amount in the budget. Hutwelker asked Branley to create an analysis showing revenue versus expense for the Recreation programs and Branley agreed to do so.

- **Carpenter Home** – Bohannon discussed the Carpenter Home budget with the Board. Branley said the income projection comes to \$472,000 so in theory the budget should also be \$472,000, however they have come to a budget \$30,000 higher. Bohannon spoke about the home being viable and changes need to be made to how staff is deployed. She said there is a need for a full-time Director and full-time clinical coordinator, plus full-time person for 3-11 p.m. shift, and need two persons from 11:00 p.m.-7:00 a.m. shift. Branley also spoke about four people who would potentially need to be offered benefits based on the Affordable Care Act, given the number of hours they are working. They may have to be offered health insurance in 2017. Bohannon said that Home Health Care might be able to be contracted for a registered nurse for 10 hours per week, but she said she doesn't know if that service is still available. Bohannon said that trying to stay at 29 hours for part-time staff is difficult because the caregivers don't stay when they can get 40 hours elsewhere. Bohannon spoke about a possible reimbursement contract if the Town spends money on training personnel. Branley spoke about reducing the Building Maintenance and Building Improvement line items since maintenance costs can be assigned to income from the trust funds. Bohannon said that she felt the budget that has been prepared will work now that she has a year under her belt as Interim Administrator. She said she has limited Medicaid beds to four. Bohannon asked the Board to speak to State Representative Ben Tilton about the idea of growing income perhaps by renting the land to build low income senior housing to bring in more money than the Town is getting from logging the land. The Board decided that it might be a good idea to have Tilton in to share his ideas with them. Bohannon mentioned a line item Maintenance/Finance Support Staff for staff support. She said her budget is paying for help but she isn't getting that help consistently enough. Bohannon said she could use a total of 750 hours, 500 hours at Carpenter Home and 250 for Recreation to line soccer fields. Hutwelker said a conversation could be held with DPW Director Lee Dunham regarding availability of staff. The Board thanked Bohannon for her work. Bohannon left the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

Non-public session(s) per RSA 91-A3II(a) – Disciplining of a Public Employee

Motion Hutwelker to enter Non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3II(a) Disciplining of a Public Employee. The motion was seconded by Colby. The Selectmen voted unanimously by roll call to go into non-public session at 8:11 p.m. **Motion passed.** Present were the Board members Kenneth P. Colby, Jr., Deborah J. Davis, W. William Hutwelker, III, Town Administrator Michael Branley, Fire Chief Norm Skantze and Recording Secretary Beverly Bernard.

Motion was made by Hutwelker to leave non-public session and return to public session. The motion was seconded by Colby, with all in favor. **Motion passed.** Non-public session ended at 8:24 p.m.

Motion was made by Hutwelker to seal the minutes of the non-public session because it was determined that the minutes might adversely affect the reputation of a person other than the Board. The motion was seconded by Colby. The Selectmen voted unanimously by roll call to seal the minutes. **Motion passed.**

NEW BUSINESS

Public Assistance Levels for 2016

Branley provided a chart of assistance levels from Human Services and Resources Coordinator Coates who asked the Board to perform the annual review of the public assistance levels for 2016. Discussion was held about burial allowance of \$750. The Board agreed to maintain the burial allowance at the same level for 2016.

Colby **moved** to approve the 2016 allowable levels of assistance as proposed. There was a second to the motion by Hutwelker and no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Review of Recommendation for Town Committee: Mike Gomarlo – Whitcomb Hall Committee

The Whitcomb Hall Committee requested of the Board that Mike Gomarlo be appointed to the vacancy on the Committee created by the resignation of Nancy Carlson.

Hutwelker **moved** to appoint Mike Gomarlo to the Whitcomb Hall Committee. There was a second to the motion by Davis and no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

OLD BUSINESS

Keene Housing CDBG Grant Application

Branley said that he and Director of Planning and Community Development Sara Carbonneau recommended that the Board not move forward with this application. He pointed out that since Keene Housing is not a Swanzey based organization, it seems reasonable for the Board to give preference to Swanzey based projects which may be forthcoming during 2016. Also Swanzey has other possible local grant applications so may not want to commit all of our funds to the Keen Housing project. The Board agreed. Branley will contact the Executive Director to inform them of the Board's decision.

Tax Deed Properties

- **12 North Pine St.** – Branley said that the auctioneers recommended not putting up this property for sale until the spring of 2016. He also advised the Board that Ms. Landry will be given 90 days by the court to remain on the property until she can find other accommodations.
- **52 Mountainview Road** – Branley said that after meeting with Human Services and Resources Coordinator Edna Coates, Mr. Lefebvre determined that he could only make payment arrangements to pay taxes owed at \$400 per month and has offered to pay \$400 per month for three months and \$300 per month thereafter. Branley mentioned that Lefebvre will be consulting with his mortgage company with regard to paying off the deeding balance.

Colby **moved** to authorize the Town Administrator to enter into a payment agreement with Gary Robert and Vincenza Lefebvre for taxes owed on property located at 52 Mountainview Road, Map 73, Lot 22/576 which will require a monthly payment of \$400.00 for December, 2015, January and February 2016 and \$300 per month thereafter until all taxes are paid, and with the understanding that upon missing a payment the Board accepts the tax deed. There was a second by Hutwelker and no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

- **28 Pondview Drive** – there was a discussion about the request of a relative of the former owner to possibly purchase the property from the Town. Given the information that the purchaser would have to pay all taxes, interest, costs and penalties, the relative said he would get back to Branley if he was able to secure the funds. Branley said he suggested that the relative attend the auction for the property.
- **28 Pondview, 27 Aylward, 68 Diana Drive, and 8 Old Lake Street** are scheduled to be auctioned this Saturday morning beginning at 8 Old Lake Street at 9:00 a.m.

Administrative Update

Branley spoke about Haley Park easement public hearings being scheduled as required by statute.

Budget Review

- **General Administration - Executive** – Branley noted a new line for Consultants, Lake Host Program, HR Overtime, and HR Recruitment. Hutwelker asked about the proposed Administrative Assistant being 25 hours per week and whether the job could be justified as a full-time position. Davis said we could look at the total cost for a full-time position. Branley said he is nearly ready to discuss with the Board posting the position whether full or part-time. Branley will cost out the job as a full-time position and provide a job description.
- **Financial Administration** – There was a discussion about various line items. He noted that Trustees of Trust Funds are looking to add a Bookkeeper and therefore providing for that eventuality with funds.
- **Reappraisal** – Branley spoke about some of the work that is being done by Town staff that should be done by a contracted Assessor. He spoke about a Current Use Update that will need to be done. He said he felt that the abatement work that Vision is doing is not up to par, which may have been based on what the Town was telling them to do. They did not visit any of the properties up for abatement and Branley said that should have been done. He said we need better service especially for abatements. They should be doing sales analyses and that work should not be on the staff, but on the contractors to properly assess the property. There was a discussion regarding having a contract with Vision for month to month work. Branley said he would check to see about a contract.
- **Legal** – Branley spoke about separating out Legal from IT expense. He said he bumped down the legal budget because he is trying to have staff do more work rather than having some things done by counsel. IT support is the contract with EMF, Inc. He discussed the website support budget and said there was a small amount of money if he needed to hire someone to work on the website.
- **General Government Buildings** – Branley mentioned adding to the budget for Town Hall Building Maintenance and slightly up for Whitcomb Hall Maintenance and Repairs.
- **General Government Expenses** – overall down \$260.00 said Branley. Hutwelker asked about Professional Development and Branley said that he is trying to be more proactive having staff attend trainings. Hutwelker asked about postage expense. Branley spoke about some of the frustration of the staff with the present postage meter which makes it difficult to allocate postage expenses to the individual budgets.
- **Health Agencies** – Branley said that the request is set level for next year. There was a discussion regarding funding for Other Outside Agencies. He noted that the American Red Cross now has its own budget line item. The Board agreed to have him request a few agencies attend an upcoming meeting.
- **General Assistance** – Part-Time Salaries line item was discussed. Branley referred to backup for Edna Coates and said that the employee who has been providing back up does not wish to serve in that role anymore. Hutwelker asked about Medical Services which Branley said is sporadic. Davis asked about Housing Assistance request being down. Branley said that staff is helping folks to find housing options.
- **Debt Service** – there was a brief review of the spreadsheet. Branley stated he reduced the tax anticipation note line because he does not anticipate needing TANs.

Wage Increases

Branley asked the Board to consider wage increases.

Town Hall hours

Branley asked the Board to consider Town Hall staff working at 40 hours instead of 37.5 hours per week. Branley said he would work up the numbers for the Board to review.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Hutwelker, second by Colby. No further discussion. All were in favor. **Motion passed.** Adjournment occurred at 9:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary
Approved on November 17, 2015