

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire  
**Board of Selectmen**  
Meeting – January 12, 2016  
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**

Fire Chief Norm Skantze, Town Clerk Donna Munson, Director of Planning & Community Development Sara Carbonneau, Conservation Commission Chair Wally Smith, Municipal Facilities Review Committee Chair Don Skiba, Open Space Committee Chair Victoria Ames, Moderator Bruce Tatro, Police Chief DeAngelis, Department Heads Lee Dunham, Bob Osterhout, and Judy Bohannon, State Representative Ben Tilton, Keene Sentinel reporter Meghan Foley, and many residents of the town.

**MINUTES**

- The regular meeting Minutes of January 5, 2016 were considered. There was a **motion** by Colby to approve the regular Minutes of January 5, 2016. The motion was seconded by 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
- Event Permit #2016-02 – Fast Friends Grey Hound Adoption Center Fast Friends Road Race
- Raffle Permit #2016-02 – Swanzey PTO

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Proposed School Resource Officer Program Update**

Branley updated the Board on the proposed School Resource Office Program. He said that revisions to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would be forthcoming. Essentially, the School District would be paying 100 percent of the cost of this part-time position and that the District will be paying projected costs for each quarter up front and then will reconcile to actual expenses incurred periodically. Branley said the projected budget for this position is roughly \$60,000 for July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017 fiscal year. Branley suggested the position be placed on a Warrant Article since there will be no tax impact and that would allow us to only have to appropriate \$30,000 this year.

Suggested Warrant Article: “To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$30,000, such sum representing six months funding of a school resource officer to be offset by \$30,000 from the Monadnock Regional School District. Full funding for this position estimated at \$60,000 will be included in the 2017 operating and default budgets.”

There was a brief discussion about what happens if the voters turn down the Warrant Article. Following the discussion on how voters might react to the Article, the Board agreed to the Warrant Articles as presented and

Branley made a note to follow up. Branley stated the appropriation would need to be discussed briefly during the budget hearing.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

### **Fire Chief Norm Skantze – Requested Purchase of Yukon**

Chief Skantze met with the Board to request expenditure from the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund of \$48,096 for the purchase and outfitting of a 2016 Yukon. Skantze said the Yukon would replace the rescue truck that is being traded in. Branley noted that as of 12/31/15 the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund had a balance of \$139,416.68 (\$269,416.68 in the fund – and \$130,000 authorized on 12/1/15 for the ladder truck purchase.) Quotes presented by Skantze are from Fairfield's for a 2016 Yukon for \$44,600 and from MacMulkin Chevrolet for a 2016 Suburban for \$43,557 (State bid). Additionally, Skantze requested \$4,750 from the Fire Department budget to paint the 2010 Yukon red, stripe the 2016 and 2010 Yukon, and install a radio in the 2010 Yukon.

Skantze suggested transitioning the current Command vehicle into an EMS vehicle. No further EMS vehicles should be needed for ten years. Davis asked if this purchase would be the last one for a while and Skantze said it would some time before he would need another vehicle, with the exception of the engine. Skantze stated there would not be sufficient reserves for the engine when that comes due for replacement. Davis emphasized the importance of having three bids and following the purchasing policy. There was further discussion about getting bids from another vendor. Colby said blue tooth hands-free accessibility is important which would be provided on the Yukon. Hutwelker said he would like to see two additional quotes for the Yukon. Davis agreed and pointed out that the bids should include all the same equipment being provided with the Fairfield vehicle. Colby also agreed. Skantze agreed to get the quotes.

Chief Skantze also requested approval for expenditure of \$3,961 from the Fire Department budget for a tool swap between the two heavy rescue trucks. By consensus the Board agreed Skantze could move forward with this out of the Fire Department's budget.

Chief Skantze also requested approval for modifications to Bay Five (Ladder Bay) in West Station to raise the door 6 inches to 12 feet 6 inches and expenditure of the funds to do so. He said this was required to accommodate the new ladder truck and will likely be needed for other apparatus in the future. The total cost of the project is \$9,186. Branley said the Fire Stations and Related Facilities Expendable Trust Fund has an estimated balance as of 12/31/15 of \$47,323.85. Skantze said that trucks are being made larger over time. Davis asked if an additional 6 inches is enough – and perhaps a 14-foot door would be better for future use. Colby said he asked previously when discussion was held about acquiring a new ladder truck if anything would have to be done to the West Station and the answer then was "no". Skantze said they had to replace the standard tires on the truck coming from Plano, Texas with snow/heavy duty tires for use in New England and that made the difference in height. Hutwelker agreed with Davis that if the Town were to spend this money, it should first consider a quote for a 14-foot door, plus a new motor, if that were to be necessary. Skantze said he would be happy to look into some pricing.

### **Donna Munson – Town Clerk Position**

Munson passed out letters of resignation to the Board stating that her last day would be March 31, 2016. She will not be filling out her term which runs to March of 2018. A discussion was held about how to fill out the term. Branley said based on the resignation date the Deputy Town Clerk automatically assumes the Town Clerk position until the next election. The Deputy would serve until March of 2017. There was discussion about the fact that the current Deputy works part-time. Branley said the Deputy could continue to work part-time and hire a new deputy for full-time work or could become full-time and hire a new part-time deputy.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Sevene Petition**

A discussion was held regarding the request from Kenneth and Janice Sevene for explanations to be added to their petition article for the Warrant. Branley said he believes the Board does not have any obligation to place an explanation on the ballot, but Branley said he would check further to confirm. There was a discussion about the length of explanations for the Warrant Article and the Voter Guide. Branley said he would speak to the Municipal Association for advice. The Board agreed to place the petition at the end of the Warrant where petitions are generally placed.

### **Whitcomb Hall Renovations**

Branley spoke about meeting with Pete Johnson from the Whitcomb Hall Committee with regard to going out for bid for the upcoming work. Branley stated he met with Chair Pete Johnson and he thought they had a good meeting and that it was made clear that the project would need to comply with the purchasing policy.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Suggestion for a Candidate's Night**

Director of Planning & Community Development Carbonneau spoke about the idea of a Candidate's Night for folks running for office. Branley said it might be better if there was an organization other than the Town to organize such an event so it was viewed as neutral. There was a discussion about which groups might be interested in hosting such an event.

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

### **Public Hearing on Proposed 2016 Budget & Warrant**

Public Hearing opened at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Davis. Davis also read the notice of the meeting to the public in attendance.

### **Budget Summary**

Davis turned the meeting over to Michael Branley who gave a summary of the budget. He referred to an increase from 2015 of \$250,000 (4.16%) The recommended budget is \$195,000 higher than the 2016 default budget (3.22%) which is the real choice voters make on voting day. He referred to the list of major increases which were noted on the handout. Barbara Skuly asked about the expense associated with the Fire Inspector and whether or not that included benefits. Branley said that it did and that it assumed the most costly benefits. Michael Goldschmidt asked about the fiscal year. Branley said the Town's fiscal year is the same as the calendar year. Kathy Nicholson asked about increase of Town Hall staff hours to 40 hours and if that meant Town Hall would no longer be closed on Wednesday, and Branley said the Town Hall would be open on Wednesdays and the Board had discussed changing Town Hall hours to be from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Branley referred to the Carpenter Home Fund – with an increase of staffing to 3 full-time employees and some additional part-time shifts.

Branley also referred to major decreases including a reduction in regional police prosecutor's office costs of \$16,000. He said General Assistance was reduced by \$46,000 for 2016. And he spoke about savings from heating oil reductions in price. Branley spoke about the default budget and how it increases for contracted and legal obligations. Branley spoke about revenues being increased. Net amount to be raised by taxes is an increase of \$87,000 or 2.7%. The approximate tax rate impact of this article is \$4.953/\$1,000.

Barbara Skuly asked about the function of the Administrative Assistant position. Branley said that it would be primarily a Customer Service function to direct the public to the appropriate department. He said part of the job would be similar to a receptionist, but also assist with reports and newsletters, preparing for Board meetings and

general clerical support. The job would also be a general resource to backup other employees. Skuly asked who would supervise the person and the Board said that Branley would do day-to-day supervision.

Michael Goldschmidt asked about the Town portion for the overall tax rate and Branley responded that the projection for 2016 is \$6.06/\$1,000. He next discussed Warrant Article 6 for contributions to capital reserve and expendable trust funds. He covered major reductions from last year in some funds and increases in other funds. Warrant Article 7 served to offset operational expenses for the Carpenter Home – there is a projected deficit between expenses and revenues of roughly \$30,000. The Board is asking the tax payers to subsidize the Carpenter Home, which is the amount that will not be offset by revenues. Branley said the Article is meant to give the voters a choice in supporting (or not supporting) the Carpenter Home. He noted that it's the only assistance living facility operated by a Town in the state. Barbara Skuly asked if this was a new fund, and Branley said it is not, but that there is only \$15,000 in the fund now and it has not been contributed to since 2005. Richard Scaramelli asked about the portion of residents that are Swanzey residents. Interim Carpenter Home Administrator Judy Bohannon said that out of 15 current residents, 7 were Swanzey residents before they came to the home.

Branley spoke about Warrant Article 8 – which creates a special duty revolving fund, and which has no tax impact. This is for both the fire and police departments.

Branley summarized by saying that the approximate overall tax rate impact of all non-bond warrant articles is \$6.06/\$1,000 with \$3,293,223 to be raised by taxes. He noted that for a \$100,000 valued home, \$606 is the estimate of the Town portion of 2016 taxes. Goldschmidt asked for more explanation. Branley said that the previous rate was \$5.90/\$1,000 or \$590 for the Town portion of 2015 taxes, which is an increase of \$16.

Branley passed the meeting to Bruce Tatro.

Michael Goldschmidt asked if we would be looking at line by line budget. Tatro said that we would not be doing so but this was the opportunity to ask questions or provide input. Goldschmidt asked about expenditures showing up as valid until 11/30. Bookkeeper Theresa Lounder said that she is working on getting the numbers for the entire year, including December, by next week. Goldschmidt asked whether expenses jump up at the end of the year. He referred to some line items showing money still remaining in the 2015 budget. Tatro said that at the Deliberative Session the numbers will be tighter. Branley noted that the Board doesn't punish departments if they don't spend their entire budget monies by reducing what they get the following year.

### **Carpenter Home Discussion**

Davis spoke about the Carpenter Home situation. She said in the past the Town has been able to keep funds level. She referred to the State of New Hampshire not providing enough funds for Medicaid residents. She also spoke about the land going back to the heirs if the Carpenter Home is shut down. The land includes a good portion of Mt. Caesar. Hutwelker said that the Board wants to bring to attention to the public the Carpenter Home situation. He spoke about a report from Municipal Resources Inc. that was conducted in the past that was bold in referring to the Town's largest liability being the Carpenter Home. He referred to Judy Bohannon being willing to take on the role of Interim Administrator and how lucky the Town is to have her. He referred to the difficulty of keeping personnel at the Carpenter Home and the difficulty in keeping up with life-safety issues and code. He spoke about the reduced amount in monies from the State for Medicaid residents, and the need for private pay residents to make the home viable as opposed to Medicaid folks. Judy Bohannon said that she has limited the number of Medicaid beds and raised the rates as high as practical. Assisted Living has to be covered 24 hours a day and 7 days a week and there have to be enough help to be safe for the clients and personnel. She spoke about the difficulty in keeping personnel under 30 hours to reduce the Town's outlay for personnel benefits.

Barbara Skuly asked about the upside for the home. Davis said the benefit is being able to offer residents of the Town a facility such as this. Bohannon said that the facility is like family and the residents like this kind of atmosphere which is rather unique. Skuly asked about capacity of the Home and Bohannon said there is an empty bed because someone just passed away. Colby said that the Carpenter Home is a gem for the town. Johnson asked about the daily rate. Bohannon said that a Semi-private room goes for \$2,450 per month, but the State of New Hampshire only reimburses the Home for Medicaid clients at \$49 per day and therefore she runs a deficit for any Medicaid client. Colby said that Bohannon has been making an effort to make the Home profitable but it has been difficult. Kathy Nicholson asked about doing more publicity for the home. Davis said that Keene Sentinel reporter Meghan Foley may publicize the issues around the Carpenter Home, which would help. Colby suggested the possibility of an Open House at the Carpenter Home for citizens of the town.

There was a brief discussion about the lack of attendance at the Deliberative Session. Skuly said that more information needs to be offered at the Deliberative Session to make it worthwhile to attend.

Hutwelker said that an Administrative Assistant could facilitate bringing back the Town's newsletter, "Swanzy Uncovered", and publicize the Carpenter Home in that newsletter. Johnson asked whether there is a Carpenter Home page with its history on the town website. Branley said there is a page for the Carpenter Home on the website, although there was not before Bohannon took over. Linda Faulkner asked about the attempt to hire a permanent Administrator for the Home. Hutwelker spoke about the efforts to recruit an Administrator. Goldschmidt spoke about the referendum for funding Carpenter Home – if this does not pass, will there be another Warrant Article to examine the fate of the Home? Hutwelker said if the answer is "no" then the Board will sponsor a forum to discuss the implications. He referred to the need to continue to operate the home while there is just one client still in the Home. Richard Scaramelli offered some observations: the NH population is graying, and we are only four years away from the centenary of the Carpenter Home – making 2020 a goal to make or break the home.

Francis Faulkner agreed that the population is aging, and an expansion of the facility might be explored. Ken Sevene asked if there were any donations coming into the Carpenter Home. Bohannon said that when someone passes away there are some small donations. Ben Tilton asked how much is in the trust funds. Francis Faulkner mentioned that other facilities promote the idea of donations. Branley said that the Lucy Carpenter Fund had \$147,000 in the income fund last year. Steve Bittel said that the income fund is about \$200,000. Principal fund cannot be spent. Bittel spoke about the timber harvest income that was obtained last year.

#### **School Resource Officer**

Branley spoke about the School Resource Officer (SRO) being placed on the Monadnock School District Warrant Article. It will be a sworn officer and being paid by the School District (100%). The budget for the year will be \$60,000, only half the year will be on the Warrant for \$30,000. He noted that the School District will keep the position for the School Security Officer (SSO). The SRO will mainly be kept at the high school while the SSO might be making rounds to other schools in the district. The Selectmen have agreed to put this item on the warrant.

Tatro asked the attendees for further questions and there were none.

Public Hearing closed at 7:58 p.m.

#### **Bond Hearing on Proposed \$5.5 million Bond for Town Facility Construction, Improvements, and Related Expenses**

**Public hearing opened at 8:00 p.m.**

Chair Davis read the notice for the public hearing to those in attendance. Davis asked the Chair of the Municipal Facilities Review Committee (MFRC) Don Skiba to present the results of the determinations of the Committee.

Skiba spoke about the direction given to the Committee by the Board to assess the bare minimum for all the facilities for the next ten years. He said the Committee referred to each of the Department Heads and asked for their minimum requirements.

Skiba spoke about the Recycling Center in need of a new roof, and electrical problems. He referred to there not being any American Disabilities Act (ADA) restroom facilities and the plan for addressing that need. He said the Recycling Revolving Fund will be able to fund the expense. He then referred to the needs of the DPW, including needing a new salt shed. He spoke about how a clear span structure would address the need. He said that the salt shed needs to be large enough to accommodate salt a majority of the season. He then addressed the Police Department needs. He spoke about adding 700 square feet to the back of the police station which will fix the drainage problems and then allow for restructuring the inside at a cost of about \$450,000. He then spoke about the Fire Department. He spoke about how the Committee first looked at a rental facility to put the fire trucks into. He said that they determined that in order to make the buildings useable, quite a bit of money would be required, which would not be a good use of the Town's money. He spoke about reducing the size of a new building and using building block material for the equipment area. He spoke about an attic with nothing in it as space to be possibly used in the future. The bonding for this building is \$2,715,000. As for Town Hall, he said the first floor, once the fire department was removed, can be refurbished to hold offices and a large meeting area. He noted a tower to the east side of the building with an ADA compliant elevator. He addressed the situation for the trusses for Town Hall. He mentioned that the Town cannot insulate the roof now because if they do, the snow won't melt, and if the snow doesn't melt, then the roof might collapse. He said the bonding for Town Hall is about \$2,160,000. Scaramelli asked if insulation was included for the Police Department. Skiba said the idea is to meet code compliance which would include insulation. Page added that relative to the attic of Town Hall, it has been discovered that there is live wiring up there.

Davis mentioned that in a study done in the past, there was about \$500,000 worth of Americans with Disability Act code violations at Town Hall. She noted that the Town could be liable for any damages should someone be hurt by the Town failing to follow up on the study report. Skiba mentioned the Open House on the last Saturday of January and that it will be an opportunity to see the drawings for the various facilities from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. He went through three drawings for those in attendance, describing the plans for the Police Department, Town Hall, and the Fire Department. He noted that 7,000 square feet was removed from the previous proposed plan for a fire station.

Barbara Skuly thanked the Committee for their work. Pat Bauries asked about the Expendable Trusts and how much money will be taken out of the trusts. Bittel said that he can provide the detail of how much is being taken out of the trusts and will give that to Bauries but for the most part the amount in the funds is being expended completely first. Goldschmidt asked about accounting for cost overruns. Skiba said that there are contingencies of about 10% included in the costs. Bittel noted that the bond authorization includes \$5.4 million for construction and about \$100,000 to cover the cost of issuance. Branley stated additional money would also help cover inflation. Kathy Nicholson asked about Article 4 – she said she has concerns with all the facilities being included in one Article. Davis said that last year townsfolks complained that the Town was not addressing the other facilities when it asked for bonding to build a fire station. Davis said it was important to address all the facilities, not just the one. Bittel said that it is cheaper to authorize the total bond, but the money would be bonded separately unless the rates are spiking up. Bittel said that it could be done in up to three individual bonds. Nicholson asked what happens if the Article gets voted down. Skiba said that two items are tied together because you cannot fix Town Hall until the Fire Department is moved out. Bittel spoke about the ability of the Selectmen to tweak the

bonds and that the costs could be less. Skuly said the concern is reaching the voters and if it were broken up into two Warrant Articles it might more easily pass. Hutwelker pointed out that Fire Department and Town Hall together come to \$4.8 million, which is the bulk of the bond. Skuly said the concern is that folks will only see the numbers and not knowing all the details, would vote against it. Bittel said that the tax increase will be based on how long the Town wants to have the bonds outstanding. Bittel said the recommended period would be 20 to 30 years. He said if the bonds are paid over 20 years, the average impact will be about \$0.80 per \$1,000 valuation.

There was a discussion about the how the School District funded renovations. Bauries said that the District opted for a pay-as-you-go process instead of bonds, but they also got reimbursed by the State of New Hampshire for a portion of the costs. Davis noted that reimbursement from the State is not available to Towns. Bauries said that a step by step process is better – she suggested fixing the Police Department and DPW and that would get passed by the voters. She asked for the impact if all the Warrant Articles pass. Bauries said that there are families who cannot afford additional taxes.

Ruth Snyder said that the reason last year's bond issue was denied was because only one facility was considered. She said that she thought that this bond has a good chance to pass because it covers all the buildings in need of repair, not just one. Kathy Nicholson said she agreed with Snyder and believes it is best to address all the facilities at once and not to approach the problem piecemeal. She said perhaps that some of the school items might be denied this year and maybe the town items will be voted for. Bittel pointed out that the School District has gotten funding and the town has not gotten anything for facilities. As for bonds, he said inflation will make the bonds cheaper. He noted that cheap money is coming to the end. Bonds are inherently fairer to each taxpayer because the costs are spread over a longer period of time while the buildings are being used and therefore the funds are better matched to the benefits. If you fund as you go, you are charging this year's tax payers for the benefit for future tax payers. Funds sitting in the Capital Reserves are actually shrinking because interest rates are lower than inflation. Bittel emphasized that there is no way that the Fire Station and Town Hall can be done without a bond.

Linda Faulkner asked about how the bond will be promoted. Skiba said that it will be on the website, and will be addressed with some marketing. Faulkner suggested direct mailing might work. Bauries said that she wants both the school and the town to prosper. She said she also understands that the town's facilities are not in good condition. She asked how to get the word out to the rest of the voters who do not attend meetings. Smith said that a handout given at the Recycling Center could be effective. Francis Faulkner noted that the School District bonds are impacted by other towns and not just the Town of Swanzey. Bittel said that Bauries point is well taken and the Town needs to sell the idea.

Colby thanked Skiba and the Committee for all the work they did and said that the Board will get the word out as best they can. Skiba noted that the handout failed to include Scott Self as a Committee member by error and asked to add his name to the list of Committee members.

Public Meeting ended at 9:05 p.m.

The Board agreed to stay with the budget as presented.

There was a brief discussion about the MS-636 and the account codes for a number of entries. The Board agreed to have Branley change them as he saw fit. He will finalize the budget forms and the warrant for the Board to approve next week.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion** to adjourn was made by Hutwelker, second by Colby. No further discussion. All were in favor. **Motion passed.** Adjournment occurred at 9:27 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary

Approved on January 19, 2016