

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – March 15, 2016
Swanzey Town Hall, 620 Old Homestead Highway, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Bill Hutwelker at 6:00 p.m. at the Swanzey Town Hall. Present were Bill Hutwelker, Kenneth P. Colby, Jr. and Sylvester Karasinski. Also present was Town Administrator Michael Branley and Assessing Coordinator Coleen Birmingham.

OTHERS PRESENT

Fire Chief Norm Skantze, Conservation Commission Chair Wally Smith, Code Enforcement Officer Mike Jasmin, Emergency Management Director Bruce Bohannon, Tax Collector Lori Belletete, resident Michael Goldschmidt, resident Judy Gallaresi, Old Home Day Committee member Jack Bys, Open Space Committee Chair Victoria Reck Ames, and Stacy Gambrel from the Monadnock Conservancy.

ORGANIZATION

Selectmen Hutwelker and Colby welcomed new member Sylvester Karasinski. Hutwelker explained that a couple of housekeeping items needed to be handled first thing. The first is to elect the Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary.

Motion was made by Colby to nominate Hutwelker as Chair. There was a second by Karasinski. There was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Motion was made by Hutwelker to nominate Colby as Vice Chair. There was a second by Karasinski. There was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

The Board agreed by consensus that Karasinski will serve as Secretary.

The Board agreed by consensus that Colby will continue to serve as the Selectmen's representative on the Open Space Committee. Also, the Selectmen's Representative to the Planning Board will be broken up as follows:

Hutwelker – April 2016 to July 2016
Colby – August 2016 to November 2016
Karasinski – December 2016 to March 2017

Branley stated he would like to send letters to members of the Board appointed committees whose terms are expiring. He asked the Board if they would like him to post all open positions. The Board agreed.

Discussion ensued about the possibility of changing the Board meeting night. Hutwelker stated that the School District may be changing the night of their meetings. He suggested the Board wait to make a decision until it was known if the School District changes their meeting night. Colby and Karasinski agreed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Judy Gallaresi handed out a copy of NH RSA 669:7, Incompatibility of Offices, to the Board. She stated that she believes Karasinski should step down as either Selectmen or Superintendent of the North Swanzey Water Fire Precinct as RSA 669:7 states that "No full-time town employee shall at the same time hold the office of selectman". Hutwelker explained to her that Karasinski is not a Town employee. The NSWFP is a separate legal entity from the Town of Swanzey so there is no incompatibility issue.

Jack Bys was present and stated that at last night's Old Home Day Committee meeting the idea of requesting funding to purchase new American flags to hang from the telephone poles from May until November was discussed. Bys explained that in the past, OHD member Bill Carson provided the flags but he is no longer able to do that. The OHD Committee has committed their budgeted funds. He would like to request money from the Board to purchase ten (10) wooden pole American flags for a cost of approximately \$20 per flag. Accepting donations to pay for the flags was also discussed. Hutwelker said the Board will consider the request and will make a decision at the next meeting.

MINUTES

- The regular meeting minutes of March 1st, 7th, & 8th, 2016 were considered. Karasinski abstained from voting because he was not serving on the Board for those meeting. There was a **motion** by Colby to approve the regular minutes of March 1st, 7th, & 8th, 2016. The motion was seconded by Hutwelker with no further discussion. Hutwelker and Colby in favor, Karasinski abstained. **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
- Group II Position Certification Form – Fire Inspector Position
- Raffle Permit #2016-08 – Cast and Brass
- Raffle Permit #2016-09 – Cast and Brass

APPOINTMENTS

Fire Inspector Position

Chief Skantze spoke in favor of extending a conditional offer of hire to Eric Mattson to move from part time Fire Inspector to full time Fire Inspector now that the budget has been approved. Skantze and Branley recommend waiving the probation period and offering Mattson two (2) weeks of vacation time due to his longevity with the Town.

Motion was made by Colby to extend a conditional offer of employment to Eric Mattson for the full-time position of fire inspector, with no probationary period, allowing him to begin with two weeks' vacation, and allowing him to begin accruing and using vacation time immediately. There was a second by Karasinski. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

Public Hearing Pursuant to RSA 41-14a Regarding Proposed Acquisition of Back-up Conservation Easement on a parcel owned by the Ballou Family Revocable Trust

Ames introduced herself and explained the work of the Open Space Committee. Ames then introduced Stacy Gambrel from the Monadnock Conservancy. Gambrel explained that the Ballou property is in a focus area because of its habitat. It is home to a lot of unique wildlife and also plays a part in flood prevention. The property has good agricultural soils. As part of the easement plan, there will some trees planted in certain areas and the haying area will be left as it is currently. This is consistent with the town's open space plan. Funds are being used from the Conservation Land Acquisition Fund. If the Town approves funding, it could be called a third party interest, which gives the Town the right to uphold the conservation easement if the Conservancy were to sit back and do nothing if the easement were violated. Mr. Goldschmidt asked if the planting of trees would interfere with the Airport and questioned what the FAA rules would be in this case. Stacy said she was unsure but would mention this issue to the Conservancy. Branley asked if the easement would include restrictions on tree cutting. Sly asked what the structure

of the Conservancy is and if they went away would the town then be required to enforce the easement. Stacy explained that other groups similar to the Conservancy would be required to do that if the Conservancy ceased to exist. The town would only ever be a backup. Mr. Goldschmidt asked what the potential for development would be if the Conservancy does not get the easement. Stacy explained that by Town zoning ordinance it is possible to put two houses there, but with the easement there could not be any houses. This is what gives the easement its value. Hutwelker asked for some clarification as it was his understanding from another transaction he was involved in that the owner had control of 5 acres and the Conservancy had control of the balance of the acreage. Stacy said that not being familiar with the easement he was speaking of, she could not really speak to this. She explained that current rules allow for tree clearing. Issues of snowmobiles and hunting are left up to the owner. This particular conservation easement would not address recreation. Ames explained that the easements on her two properties are from two different entities—one from the State of New Hampshire and one from the Monadnock Conservancy. She views them as resources and not a hindrance. Smith stated that if the easement does not go through there will be an incentive to develop it. Hutwelker asked if there was a way to take the permanent piece of the easement out of the agreement. Stacy responded no. Hutwelker is concerned about what the future may hold. What if future residents want to be able to develop the land. Stacy said that the same could be true if building is allowed but in the future that open land is needed. Stacy explained that she discussed public use with Ms. Ballou and that she is comfortable with hiking, snowshoeing, picnicking, and fishing, but is not comfortable allowing use of motorized vehicles nor hunting. Ames explained that public access should be considered on a case by case basis and that “public access” should be clearly defined. Ames pointed out that March 29, 2016, is the date for the second required public hearing.

Motion by Colby to close the Public Hearing. There was a second by Karasinski. All were in favor.
Motion passed.

Motion to enter non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(b), Hiring of a public employee, by Colby. There was a second by Karasinski.

Branley spoke regarding interim staffing in the town clerk office. He explained he had reached out to other organizations looking for potential interim staffing. Beth Fox answered that Keene has a clerk from Revenue Collection who is certified in the State of NH’s motor vehicle system and works part time two days per week. This person is willing to help the Town of Swanzey out three days per week. She is not a resident of Swanzey but can work as an office assistant. She is willing to work either short-term or longer term depending on how matters progress with the new Town Clerk.

Motion by Colby to extend a conditional offer of temporary employment to Mary Steely as a part-time Town Clerk Office Assistant at \$16.00 per hour. There was a second by Karasinski. No further discussion. Roll call.
Motion passed.

Motion by Colby to leave non-public session. There was a second by Karasinski. **Motion passed.**

OLD BUSINESS

Town Clerk Transition

Branley explained that Mary Steely was just hired to help out as a temporary assistant in the Town Clerk’s office. He explained that as the Board requested that he contacted other towns and organizations as well as MRI for help with the transition of the Clerk’s office. The new temp knows the State of New Hampshire motor vehicle system but not dog licensing, voter registration, elections, or vital records. Colby questioned the travel pay for MRI and where would the MRI person be coming from. Branley stated he believed she was coming from the Manchester/Allenstown area.

Discussion ensued about when training will be available for the new Town Clerk and where residents would go in the meantime. It was stated that vital records can be done anywhere in the State, motor vehicle registrations must be done here and Lori Belletete, Tax Collector is willing to handle dog licensing until the new person is trained.

The Board and Tax Collector Belletete discussed her helping out in the Town Clerk's Office. Belletete said she would like to know what the plan is. Hutwelker explained that the board is hoping she can help out, as needed, for at least a couple of months as Mary Steely's term is indefinite at this point.

Colby stated that if the town goes with MRI, he wants it closely monitored. Karasinski asked if the person from MRI would be here on March 25th, Branley stated yes that was what he hoped. Colby wants to know what days MRI will be here and how much travel time is logged.

Motion Karasinski moved to engage MRI as outlined in their proposal for Town Clerk Office consulting, and to reevaluate the situation on April 26th. There was a second from Colby. No further discussion. All were in favor.

Annual Town Employee Compensation

Branley asked the Board for confirmation regarding annual Town employee compensation. Colby stated that the Board approved an increase of up to 2% per employee effective April 3 and the Board agreed.

All town hall employees will now work a 40 hour week based on the passage of the budget. Town hall will also increase the number of hours it is open to the public. Branley asked the Board to reconsider the 8:00 am to 5:00 pm open hours in order to avoid employees accruing over time on a regular basis. He suggested perhaps 8:30 am to 5:00 pm hours for Town Hall open hours. The Board agreed that Town Hall office hours will be 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Employee hours will be 8:30 am to 5:30 pm with flexibility for different offices depending on their workflow as long as they are open to the public 8:30 to 5. The Board agreed the new hours will be effective as of April 3, 2016.

The Board agreed that vacation accrual will be calculated at 40 hours moving forward and will be effective starting April 3, 2016. Vacation time already accrued will not be adjusted.

The Board asks that Branley, Human Resources Coordinator Coates, and Bookkeeper Louder make the necessary administrative changes to the personnel policy and report back as soon as possible.

General Update from Code Enforcement Officer Michael Jasmin

Jasmin stated that the walls for the new corner office in Town Hall will be started Thursday night. As part of the first phase walls will be put up, windows and a door will be added, as well as electrical outlets. He mentioned the stuff that is currently stored in that area now will need to be moved. He spoke with the Swanze Preservation Society which handles the Grange building across the road from Town Hall to ask if they would be willing to let the Town store material in that building. Jasmin reported that they seemed agreeable. Jasmin is asking for the Board's backing of this plan and the Board agreed it made sense.

Jasmin stated that he would like to send out the RFP for the work on the attic trusses and electrical repairs on Monday. Hutwelker asked what is involved. Jasmin said it is intensive, that not an inch of the truss will be left untouched. The back parking lot area will be used as a work area. It is expected that the work will be completed in four to six weeks. A building permit will be required. Hutwelker questioned how much the work will cost and where will it would come from? Branley stated as of the end of 2015 there was \$129,000 in the Town Hall Repairs,

Maintenance, & Improvements Expendable Trust Fund and \$78,000 in the Town Hall Expansion Capital Reserve Fund. He stated he would want to confirm that the purpose of the Capital Reserve Fund met this purpose in the event it was needed. If the bids come in too high, the Board can reconsider their options then.

Karasinski asked about ventilation for dust, etc. Jasmin explained that there is a plan in place for that issue. Engineer Ted Fellows, who designed the truss repair, will be here for the site meeting and to answer contractor questions. He will also review the final construction to ensure it is suitable.

In the barn mezzanine there is a two hour fire wall. There was only one exit at first, but now there are two ways out. Jasmin explained he may need \$200 to \$300 more for completion.

Motion by Colby to approve an expenditure of up to \$500 from the George Whitcomb Jr. Common Trust Fund for repairs at the Carpenter Home. There was a second by Karasinski. There was no further discussion. **Motion passed.**

Beverly Kowalik is helping to develop a fire suppression design install bid package. Part of this package will include a new below grade cistern.

Jasmin stated once he wraps up the Town Hall truss RFP he will work on finalizing the Carpenter Home middle bathroom update RFP.

Hutwelker asked about the health officer. Jasmin explained that she has extensive knowledge and takes her job very seriously. She is interested in adding health tips to the Town's website. He spoke very positively about her.

Branley spoke further about staffing in the town clerk office. Interviews for the interim town clerk (there are two applicants) must be held during public session. He asked the Board to hold them on Tuesday, March 22, 2016 and the Board agreed.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Colby, second by Karasinski. No further discussion. All were in favor. **Motion passed.** Adjournment occurred at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Coleen Birmingham, Assessing Coordinator