

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – March 22, 2016
Swanzey Town Hall, 620 Old Homestead Highway, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

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

OTHERS PRESENT

Ronald Fontaine, Pete Johnson from the Whitcomb Hall Committee, Director of Public Works Lee Dunham, Conservation Commission Chair Wally Smith, Director of Planning & Community Development Sara Carbonneau, State Representative Ben Tilton, and Don Skiba.

MINUTES

- The regular meeting Minutes of March 4, 2016 were considered. There was a **motion** by Colby to approve the regular Minutes of March 4, 2016. The motion was seconded by Hutwelker with no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***
- The regular meeting Minutes of March 15, 2016 were considered. There was a **motion** by Colby to approve the regular Minutes of March 15, 2016. The motion was seconded by Karasinski with no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***
- The non-public meeting Minutes #1, #2 of March 4, 2016 were considered. There was a **motion** by Colby to approve the non-public meeting Minutes #1 and #2 of March 4, 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 Karasinski. There was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

- Payroll Manifest
- Payables Manifest
- 2016 MS-232 Report of Appropriations Actually Voted
- Raffle Permit #2016-10 – Cheshire County Forest Fire Wardens Association
- Event Permit #2016-03 – Keene Beer Festival
- Personnel Action Report(s)

NON-PUBLIC SESSIONS

Non-public session(s) per RSA 91-A:3 II (c) Reputation

Motion was made by Colby to enter nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (c), seconded by Karasinski. All in favor by Roll Call and the ***motion passed.*** The Board entered nonpublic session at 6:02 pm. Present were Kenneth P. Colby, Jr., W. William Hutwelker III, and Sylvester Karasinski. Also present was Town Administrator Michael Branley and Recording Secretary Beverly Bernard.

Motion was made by Colby to come out of non-public session, seconded by Karasinski. All in favor by Roll Call and the ***motion passed.*** Non-public session ended at 6:13 pm.

Motion was made by Colby to seal the minutes because divulgence of the information likely would affect adversely the reputation of a person other than a member of this board, seconded by Karasinski. All in favor and the ***motion passed.***

NEW BUSINESS

February Expenditure Report

Branley asked the Board if there were to be any adjustments to the budget and if there was a need to transfer monies. The Board agreed that there were no transfers to be made. Branley did speak about funds for the lights on the bridges would be overspent based on how they moved funds over when they created the new bridge budget. He stated he did not think it was worth transferring funds to cover it.

Colby mentioned that the West end of the Thompson Bridge has damage and the light is out. Branley said he would check with Public Works Director Lee Dunham about it.

Water Study Committee Charge & Reactivation

Branley said he held off on finalizing the charge to reactivate the Water Study Committee awaiting the Geolnsight report. The charge lists the major potential funding sources identified to date. While the report from Geolnsight has not yet been received, based on what we have been told it should be forthcoming.

Karasinski asked whether he should be on that committee since he is now a Selectman. Colby said he thought it would be okay. Former Chair of the Water Study Committee, Don Skiba, was present and spoke about not putting the committee together until the report is in. He also recommended establishing a water district. He said he felt a bond would not pass, and the Town needs to make sure there is funding to cover the costs of operating the West Swanzey water system. Skiba asked if the State approached the Browns about receiving the MtBE money. Branley noted that the State only was interested in providing funding if the Town owned the system.

Skiba said there has to be major source of income for the water system and it needs to be run like a business so as not to be a drain on the Town's resources. He said the Public Utility Commission (PUC) prefers that small utilities go out of business. He also mentioned that the current West Swanzey water system users pay a very low rate as compared to other communities with small water systems. He said that the committee could be brought together as long as there is money to be obtained. Hutwelker said he would like to see the committee ready to go.

Skiba said he did not see the charge for the Committee and Branley noted he had not sent it to Skiba. Skiba said he would also like to listen to the engineering study first before a committee is reactivated. There was a brief discussion about having the state take-over the system.

Skiba said given a week's notice he will pull the committee together. Skiba said that Karasinski should be on the committee and Scott Self should be on it because of their experience with water systems. Karasinski asked if a precinct could be formed ahead of time, before a utility is actually present, to begin saving tax money to acquire or repair the system. Skiba said the State could set it up as a Water District Precinct. He noted that if the State took ownership, the State would not want to run the system, but they could clean up the finances. Colby asked about the Geolnsight delays in providing a report. Carbonneau said that Geolnsight keeps changing the date as to when the report would be ready. Branley said he will get the charge to Skiba.

APPOINTMENTS

Interim Town Clerk Interview

Ronald Fontaine was interviewed by the Board. Hutwelker asked Fontaine to introduce himself. Fontaine said he ran in 2015 against Donna Munson (the current Town Clerk) and received quite a few votes. He said he works the ambulance service with older folks now and says he enjoys working with people.

Karasinski asked about computer skills. Fontaine said he is comfortable with computers, and he understands that he would need some training and he feels that he is a quick learner. His current job requires computer connection with the State of NH.

Colby asked Fontaine about early closings. He was particularly interested in the last day of the month and around holidays. Fontaine said he would not close early if customers needed to be taken care of. Colby said he is looking for someone who can work with the Town staff and the Board of Selectmen with closing issues. Fontaine said he would be here to work as a member of a team.

Hutwelker asked about the scope of his responsibilities narrowing over time. Fontaine explained his role with Walmart. Hutwelker asked why he left Walmart. Fontaine said that \$250,000 worth of merchandise was coming in to the store each night with a lot of paperwork especially during the Christmas season. Overnight management team wasn't doing the invoicing work that they should have been doing. Fontaine said that the manager wasn't being supportive to Fontaine's issues and therefore he left that job.

Colby asked about Fontaine's willingness to work early hours or late hours to accommodate working residents. He said he would be willing to do so. Fontaine said he would keep his EMT license and work per diem for DiLuzio Ambulance Service – perhaps do special events. Fontaine said he would not be on call from DiLuzio unless it was after hours from the Town Clerk's duties.

Karasinski asked what Fontaine's goals were. Fontaine said he would like to continue to work with the public. He also mentioned that in the future that he may like to consider other possible positions within the Town.

Hutwelker asked if Fontaine had the information he needed. Fontaine asked about doctor's appointments and whether he would be able to have time off for them. He asked about vacation time - unpaid vacation – was discussed. Colby said the key is that the office has sufficient coverage when the Town Clerk is taking a vacation. Hutwelker said that there will be someone to help three days a week who knows how to register vehicles. Fontaine said the Town Clerk Association has a mentor program that is helpful. Fontaine said that he acknowledged he would be appointed until the Town Meeting of 2017 when the Town Clerk would be elected by voters.

Fontaine gave an example of bad customer service he witnessed at the Town Clerk's Office. He spoke about maintaining an accounting journal at Walmart. He said he had experience in nightly balancing out cash. He also mentioned working with the auditors for Walmart. He said that he is detailed oriented. Hutwelker asked what Fontaine needs to work on or where he needs education or training. Fontaine said that the computer system might be a challenge, he needs to get to know the system and how to handle the glitches. Karasinski asked about making sure things are done weekly and not letting things accumulate. Fontaine said that he would not allow things to slip because it makes things easier to keep up. Colby spoke about how longevity is important to make folks comfortable. Hutwelker asked about preservation of Town records. Fontaine said he is a history buff and would be interested in being part of that. Hutwelker asked about a list of responsibilities for the Town Clerk. Branley said that the article from the Municipal Association has an article that would be helpful, which he had given to Fontaine and previously emailed out to the Board.

Motion was made by Colby that it is the intent of the Board of Selectmen to appoint Ron Fontaine Interim Town Clerk upon the resignation of the current Town Clerk Donna Munson, her resignation being known as March 31, 2016, with Fontaine to be appointed effective April 1. Branley explained that appointment to Town Clerk could occur before he has completed training however he will be limited in what he can do in the office. There was a second to the motion by Karasinski. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

Whitcomb Hall Project

7:00 – Pete Johnson & Lee Dunham –Whitcomb Hall Project

Johnson said that Sharon Greatbatch announced that the committee would be receiving a donation of 11 gallons of paint. Johnson said that Greatbatch is planning to begin painting the ceiling. Johnson said Ken Greatbatch will donate the wainscot work in the main room. Johnson mentioned other work that is being done. Johnson asked for funding for electrical work. Suggestion was to put sconces on the poles in the lower room. He also would like to place LED bulbs in the fixtures in the ceiling. Johnson spoke about Scott Self finding the electrical panel that powers the lights that they thought were not working.

Dunham said that the Committee needs funds for the electrical work which would include the fire alarm system. \$17,800 was asked for the fire alarm system and lighting for the first floor which includes plugs for the office rooms in the front of the building. Hutwelker asked about running phone lines. Dunham said it hasn't been discussed, but phone lines do need to be included and could be added given the savings from not having as much lighting work to do.

Motion was made by Colby to approve an expenditure of \$17,800 from the Whitcomb Hall Expendable Trust Fund for electrical work, including the fire alarm system with phone lines, for Whitcomb Hall. The motion was amended by Colby to \$18,500. There was a second to the motion as amended by Karasinski. No further discussion and all were in favor. **Motion passed.**

Skiba suggested pulling cable/co-axial cable through Whitcomb Hall.

Dunham spoke about the need for a paint job for the exterior of Whitcomb Hall. He said that an RFP should be put out for a bid so a firm number could be obtained for the cost of painting the building. The Committee might be able to get donations from residents or businesses to pay for that paint job if they have a firm goal. Branley stated in Frankestown with a prior building similar to Whitcomb Hall he painted a few sides at a time to break up the cost, which could be an option if the bids come in higher than available funds. Colby stated he wanted to make sure there was a buffer in the Whitcomb Hall funds in the event something comes up. The Board agreed Dunham could move forward with an RFP.

OLD BUSINESS

West Swanzey Park Update

Dunham spoke briefly about the location of benches. Permit by Notification (PBN) is required for the flagpole to be donated. Also a PBN is needed for a bike rack. Colby asked about the necessity of a PBN for the flag pole. He said he wants to notify the folks donating the pole that they can order it and have it delivered to Public Works.

Falls Brook Project Update

Director of Public Works Lee Dunham spoke about the project. The original agreement was that the Town would expend \$10,000 plus \$5,000 of in-kind work. Dunham said the estimate of costs has gone up significantly. Dunham spoke about the possibility that a bridge replaces the culvert.

Colby asked about whether there are State funds available for replacing a culvert with a bridge. Colby suggested that it would cost the Town more money should the Town have to replace the culvert on its own. Dunham said he believed it is worth having doing this project as previously agreed to. He said the Cheshire County Conservation District is asking the Town to increase our contribution. He said the cost of putting in the bridge went from \$35,000 in 2014 to \$50,000 in 2016. The entire project is more than \$100,000 which includes engineering, paving, and guardrails. There was a discussion regarding the grant money. Branley also mentioned that the contract needs to be updated since the \$100,000 loan from the Town was supposed to be repaid in January of 2016.

The Board agreed that they need a better understanding of the changes in costs and to re-negotiate the contract. The Board asked Dunham to come back with Amanda Littleton from the Cheshire County Conservation District as soon as possible.

Follow-up on Bond Votes

Director of Planning & Community Development Sara Carbonneau met with the Board to suggest conducting a survey of the town's residents as to why they didn't vote for the bond. She suggested using Survey Monkey online and having some hard copies available as well. She pointed out that the Town has expended a lot of Town money on the bond projects and volunteer hours; getting some feedback might be useful before spending more money. Carbonneau said using an online tool like Survey Monkey can be fun for folks who are willing to take the survey. There was a discussion regarding bulk mailing a postcard to all residents notifying them of the survey with an estimated cost of \$1,000 for printing and postage. The Board agreed to not do a bulk mailing at this time and try to get the word out other ways.

The Board agreed that the survey is a good idea. Carbonneau asked for comments and suggestions. Karasinski asked to have email addresses added to the survey.

Update on Stratton Library Status

Tuesday morning Branley and Colby met with the Stratton Library Trustees, Attorney Mayer, and Terry Knowles from the Attorney General's Office. There were two solutions discussed: one to make it a public Town library or for it to become a private nonprofit association under 501-C3. Branley stated the meeting went well and the Stratton Library Trustees will meet within the next month or so to discuss their preferred option, which will require agreement with the Board of Selectmen.

Legal Services

The Board discussed various options for legal services. Discussion was also held about legal fees. The cost of travel was considered. Branley said some firms do not charge for travel. The Board agreed to have Branley, Coates, Carbonneau, and Colby conduct interviews with legal firms and report back as soon as possible.

Consideration of Sealed Bids for Tax Deeded Property – 68 Diana Drive

Branley said that Pine Grove Mobile Home Park has been more than gracious to the Town by not charging rent since the Town has owned it, however they have indicated that will no longer be the case effective April 1, when the Town will begin being billed \$400 per month in lot rent. As such, Branley requested that the Board authorize him to dispose of this property by the most economical means possible and expend funds as necessary. Hutwelker said he would ask Dunham how much it would cost the town to remove the property from the lot. Branley will report back next week.

Request by Jack Bys –Approval for Expenditure / Solicitation of Donations for \$200 for replacement flags

The possibilities of soliciting donations to cover the expense or using funds in the budget were discussed. The Board agreed to spend \$200 for the flags. There was a discussion regarding wood versus cheap aluminum. Branley said he would confirm the \$200 covered wood flags and if so he would make the purchase.

NEW BUSINESS

Cheshire Fair Association Revisit

Colby stated he had spoken to Coates regarding a meeting staff members had with the Fair Association and he wanted to make sure progress was being made. It was noted that the Fair Association isn't discussing with their vendors the activity of the vendors. Hutwelker suggested holding up the latest permit and ask the Fair Association in to talk to the Board. Branley stated he felt that would punish the vendor who is not at fault. The Board agreed not to hold the permit. Colby said that posters have been raised for the Motorcycle Swap in May, yet no event permit application has been submitted. The Board agreed they wanted to make sure the Fair Association and Town are making progress to getting various items sorted out.

Ambulance Contract Update

Branley spoke about suggested changes that the Fire Chief was supposed to make to strengthen the contract, but Branley said the Chief was unclear as to what he was supposed to do. Karasinski and Colby both agreed that the vendor should be providing the contract first and then changes negotiated from that point. The Board agreed. There was a discussion about the idea of putting out an RFP which the Board did not want to do because they felt the service needs to be local.

RFP for Assessing Companies

Branley referred to the summary list of companies who provided responses to the Town's RFP. Vision Government Solutions did not respond to the RFP. Branley talked about interviewing KRT Appraisal, M&N Assessing Services, and Steve M. Allen as potential vendor for Swanzey. There was discussion about the software being used. Branley said he hadn't given the Board the entire proposals from the companies. Branley said he planned to have the Assessing Coordinator, Branley, and the Code Enforcement Officer interview the finalists and asked if Hutwelker wanted to participate in the interviews. The Board agreed to have Hutwelker participate and to only interview Steve M. Allen and M&N Assessing Services initially. Colby said the important point is that the vendor chosen can defend their values with the Board of Tax and Land Appeals (BTLA). This has not always been the case and the Board has had to make settlements. Hutwelker asked Branley why Avitar did not submit a proposal and Branley stated it is because they only work with Avitar assessing software and Swanzey uses Vision software. Branley pointed out that the software is separate from their assessing services from Vision. Colby suggested asking Avitar for a software price. The Board agreed to have Branley get a price from Avitar for assessing software and see if the Town switched software if they would then submit a proposal.

NON-PUBLIC SESSIONS

Non-public session(s) per RSA 91-A:3 II (b) Hiring of Public Employee(s)

Motion was made by Colby to enter nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (b) seconded by Karasinski . All in favor by Roll Call and the ***motion passed***. The Board entered nonpublic session at 9:19 pm. Present were Kenneth P. Colby, Jr., W. William Hutwelker III, and Sylvester Karasinski. Also present was Town Administrator Michael Branley and Recording Secretary Beverly Bernard.

Motion was made by Colby to come out of non-public session, seconded by Karasinski. All in favor by Roll Call and the ***motion passed***. Non-public session ended at 9:28 pm.

Motion was made by Colby to seal the minutes because divulgence of the information likely would affect adversely the reputation of a person other than a member of this board, seconded by Karasinski. All in favor and the ***motion passed.***

Administrative Assistant Applications and Deputy Town Clerk applications

The Board asked Branley about applications forthcoming for the Administrative Assistant and Deputy Town Clerk positions. Branley said there are plenty of applications for the Administrative Assistant and he said he would like to sit down with Fontaine to discuss the transition in the Town Clerk's office before following through with Deputy Town Clerk applications. Branley said he hasn't had the time to start the interview process.

Payments by Credit Card/debit cards for MV registrations

Hutwelker asked for some research to follow up on this. He asked that the Bookkeeper and the Tax Collector be involved. Branley stated he planned to have Diane Demers from MRI assist with that, especially in the Town Clerk's Office, because she has experience working with credit cards.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Colby. The motion was seconded by Karasinski without further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.*** Adjournment occurred at 9:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary
Approved on March 29, 2016