# Few argue for and against land donation for Swanzey fire station

**By Meghan Foley Sentinel Staff**
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SWANZEY CENTER — Selectmen heard from less than a handful of people arguing for and against accepting a land donation for a new central fire station during a public hearing Tuesday night.

Three people, in addition to Swanzey Fire Chief Norman W. Skantze, attended the hearing, the first of two that will be held this month about the matter.

After the hearings, selectmen will decide whether to accept the donation of roughly 3 acres off Safford Drive, which connects to Old Homestead Highway (Route 32), and is under construction to intersect with Monadnock Highway (Route 12).

The property, which is owned by John G. Burk of Keene, is across from Carlisle Wide Plank Floors and is part of an area town officials have sought to develop as an industrial park. The donation is contingent on voter approval of the fire station project.

Town officials propose an approximately $4.5 million, 17,600-square-foot fire station to replace the existing central fire station, which is in the basement of Swanzey Town Hall.

Town officials are planning to have an article about the project on the March town meeting warrant. Swanzey officials plan to keep the east and west fire stations open and operating, saying they're important in making sure firefighters can respond quickly to calls.

Town hall opened in 1914, and the fire station addition was built in the 1960s.

The arguments for the new station have included that the current station is cramped, doesn't meet health, fire safety and building codes, and is a subterranean building with no windows and drains.

During Tuesday's public hearing, Swanzey resident David B. Osgood said he isn't against a new fire station, but believes there is a better location for the fire station than Safford Drive.

"I feel we're looking at free property and water and sewer access before location. To me, location is critical," he said.

The central fire station is now at the crossroads of town.

Resident Bill Gallauresi said he believes Safford Drive is a good location, especially since it's already an industrial area.

A bond hearing for the project is expected to be held in January.

The next public hearing is scheduled for Dec. 23 at 7 p.m. at Swanzey Town Hall.