

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – April 6, 2020
Town Hall, 620 Old Homestead Highway and remotely using Zoom.
Swanzey, NH

ZOOM MEETING during Health Emergency

Town Administrator Michael Branley hosted a ZOOM online conference call at 2:00 pm at Town Hall due to the public health emergency. Emergency Meeting pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, Section 8 and Emergency Order #12, Section 3.

Present were Selectmen W. William Hutwelker, Sylvester Karasinski and Kenneth P. Colby, Jr. Also present was Town Administrator Michael Branley and Recording Secretary Beverly Bernard.

PUBLIC ACCESS

Notice was given to the public to participate remotely over Zoom by going to www.zoom.us or using the Zoom App on a cell phone, or a landline calling 1 929 205 6099 and entering Meeting ID 235 370 4380 #. The notice also provides a phone number: 352-7411 ext. 107 to call should a member of the public be unable to access the meeting.

OTHERS PRESENT

Conservation Commission Chair Wally Smith, Code Enforcement Officer Michael Jasmin, Health Officer Pam Fortner, Head Librarian with Mt. Caesar Union Library Cadigan Gregory, Planning and Economic Development Director Matthew Bachler, Deputy Fire Chief Mick Sanchez, Recycling Center Manager Josh Whipple, State Senator Jay Kahn, Assessor Dave Marazoff, State Representative Jennie Gomarlo.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Branley updated the callers stating that NH now has 669 cases and 9 deaths and 92 hospitalizations. CDC is now recommending wearing of face masks. He said staff is considering using masks at Town Hall but no decision at this point. Fortner has been making masks. He noted an executive order from the Governor regarding ability of Town's to waive interest on unpaid taxes. He said there are no bills pending at this time and the order created questions. The other is about evictions, folks must be responsible for rent eventually. Property owners also must pay their taxes.

Fortner spoke about Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster declaration and she said the State is working out the details.

Bachler said the Town has been accepting electronic applications of land use applications, available as PDF documents. Most of the time applications come in as electronic applications. Site plan review requires a hard copy of the plan but given the circumstances, applicants can use electronic plans for now for that review as well.

Kahn gave a brief review of the Small Business Association (SBA) process to get assistance and said the medical supply issues are real and he would like to hear more about that. He said he would be joining legislature committee this Friday discussing movement of funds from Federal to State level.

There was a brief discussion about whether the Town's recreational facilities are open and Branley said some signage might be worthwhile to show that the facilities are open for now.

Colby asked about Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) status for staff. Branley said Recycling had challenges. Whipple said a resident brought masks to the Recycling Center and they will be able to be washed. The Fire Department said PPE is what they had in stock and are not re-useable items. Deputy Fire Chief Mick Sanchez said that anyone using a non-washable mask and needs to use it again should store it in a paper bag. The paper bag will absorb any moisture. Sanchez said to not use plastic to store it once used.

Colby asked about the amount of hand sanitizer available. Jasmin noted there is a distillery in Brattleboro that is offering sanitizer. Colby said he would discuss with Branley.

Branley noted that one challenge is that there are no resources for people who do not have earnings minimum to meet requirement for unemployment. This will have an impact on Town's welfare system. Kahn said that those folks should make an appeal if they are denied for unemployment.

Smith said small businesses endorsement to business insurance, question as to interruption to a business caused by the virus. This may not be covered. Should send a request to State insurance department.

Bachler said there were some updates to the Town's business webpage to direct businesses to resources. Bachler said they are doing another call on Wednesday at 12 noon as part of South West Region Planning Commission's Economic Advisory Committee work.

Gregory asked if anyone has heard about virus and water. Will we be able to swim in the lakes this summer? Branley said the closure of beaches had to do with people being close to each other. Karasinski said he didn't think you can catch the virus from just one cell. Dilution in water would probably make the virus ineffective.

Marazoff said Emergency Order #25 – municipalities are authorized to use their abatement authority. He said RSA 76:16 applies to abating taxes, not interest. 76:13B is the precise RSA dealing with interest. Blanket decision could give folks an incentive to not pay their taxes. He advises the Town to deal on case by case basis and not issue a blanket decision. Could be a waiver on interest and not an abate of taxes. Marazoff said they will be looking for further clarification from the Governor's office and Kahn asked Marazoff to keep him updated.

Gomarlo asked about Carpenter Home – has decision been made to use as emergency housing? Branley said no final decision has been made. Gomarlo asked about use of Chrome books for internet access, should we ask the School District if they have any extras that won't need to be purchase by the Town? Branley said he would check on that.

Gomarlo asked about the rumor that the Town is buying an ambulance. Branley said the Board approved that in case there is a surge. With the projected calls, DiLuzio and City of Keene might not be able to provide backup so the Board felt it was important an ambulance was available to transport people in Swanzey.

Gomarlo mentioned changes with recyclables at the Recycling Center and is leaflet available online. Branley said he would check on it, it should be on the website.

Hutwelker said that the Board of Selectmen did authorize the ambulance after an extensive discussion with the Fire Department. He said he understands it is a controversial decision but the EMS staff and Fire Chief said they have the staffing available and the Board felt it was the best decision for the Town since DiLuzio and the City of Keene might not be able to back each other up. He said this decision will be reviewed in six months. He added that the Board felt this was the best for the citizens of Swanzey. Gomarlo thanked Hutwelker for the clarification.

Branley closed the meeting at 2:35 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

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

Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary
Approved on April 8, 2020