

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – July 15, 2020
Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey NH
and remotely using Zoom Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Selectman Kenneth P. Colby, Jr. at 5:15 pm at Whitcomb Hall Main Street, Swanzey, NH and remotely using Zoom Meeting. Present at Whitcomb Hall were W. William Hutwelker, Sylvester Karasinski and Kenneth P. Colby, Jr. Also present was Town Administrator Michael Branley. Recording Secretary Beverly Bernard was present via Zoom.

OTHERS PRESENT

Moderator Bruce Tatro, Fire Chief Bill Gould, Conservation Commission Chair Wally Smith, State Representative Jennie Gomarlo, Residents Bob Audette, Ed Sheldon, Jasmine Belcoure, and Intern Julius Peel

MINUTES

- The regular meeting Minutes of July 1, 2020 were considered. There was a **motion** by Hutwelker to approve the regular meeting Minutes of July 1, 2020. The motion was seconded by Karasinski and there was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion was made by Hutwelker to approve the Consent Agenda. There was a second by Karasinski. There was no further discussion. All were in favor by roll call. ***Motion passed.***

- Payroll Manifest
- Payables Manifest
- Decision to not use PA 28-Inventory of Taxable Property Forms for 2021
- Donation of Bench at West Swanzey AA Park
- Yield Tax Levy – Operation #20-441-04
- Junkyard License #2020-02 – Buffum Auto Parts
- Personnel Action Report(s)
- Release of Public Assistance Lien

PUBLIC INPUT

The public was able to participate remotely over Zoom by going to www.zoom.us, using Zoom App on a cell phone, or on a landline calling 1 929 205 6099 and entering Meeting ID 235 370 4380#. If the public is unable to access the meeting, they are asked to call 352-7411 ext. 107. There was none at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

Location for Upcoming Town Elections

Branley noted emails received by the Town regarding the issue of the Town holding elections at the Christian Life Fellowship Church. Discussion was held regarding renting of voting machines and the cost associated with that to the Town if we were to have multiple voting locations. Tatro and the Board discussed how to manage voting during the COVID-19 emergency, for example allowing only a certain number of voters into a building at a time. Colby said the Town could utilize a fire station. Colby added that the Secretary of State of New Hampshire doesn't have a problem with the Town's vote being held

at a church. Tatro said there is another church that might be large enough to hold elections. There was a discussion about sufficient parking. Hutwelker said the Board needs to determine a non-religious site for voting. He said absentee ballots being expanded are a benefit this year so physical turnout should be lower. He said the challenge is notification to the public for a change in venue for voting. Hutwelker said it is anticipated that there will be a budget challenge by the end of the year. There is a concern about December receivables. There was a discussion about various possible sites for holding elections.

PUBLIC INPUT

Wally Smith spoke about signs encouraging folks to wear masks such as the one he saw at a doctor's office that said "wearing a mask shows that you care."

Bob Audette spoke about meeting in a safe comfortable place to vote. He said he must speak out for neighbors who are not comfortable with going into a church to vote. He said he is happy that the Board is taking the issue seriously. He thanked everyone and added that he hopes the everyone is safe and comfortable.

Jennie Gomarlo asked that Tatro recap what he has learned. There was mention of a school being used for voting. Branley said in the past the school has not been interested in allowing use for voting but thought it might be useful to pursue again. The empty former Sears store, the Cheshire Fairgrounds, and the Homestead Woolen Mill were also discussed as possible venues for election.

Gomarlo expressed dismay that the Board did not take initiative to pursue the school for voting sooner. She said the school has sufficient parking. The church parking lot that has been used in the past for voting is often muddy and has uneven ground. She said she wishes that the Board would take the desires of residents seriously to find a new venue.

Ed Sheldon spoke and said we do have time to get a new location by November and he is willing to help. He urged the Board to treat the issue with urgency and said that many on the call are willing to help. Hutwelker asked about the urgency for the primary in September or for the election in November. Sheldon said the ideal is to have a solution before the September primary, but what is critical is the November election.

Jasmine Belcoure said the Board owes it to the residents of Swanzey to remove barriers to voting. She said the Board should make voting as accessible as possible and she said there are options like the airport and the high school and she noted that many towns divide up the vote with different sections of town voting in different buildings. Colby said the Moderator has to have staff for the elections and he has had a tough time to find enough people to staff the election in various locations.

Jennie Gomarlo said she has a list of people who can work at the polls and she has given that list to the Moderator. She asked the Board to consider renting machines and splitting up the voting at different buildings around town.

Possible Grant for Public Art in Roundabouts

Branley referred to a letter in regard to the possible interest of the Selectmen to take part in a grant to fund sculptures within the centers of roundabout(s) by Friends of Public Art. Branley said Director of Planning and Economic Development Matthew Bachler has agreed to serve as the point of contact of this project should the Board be supportive. They are looking for a letter of support by end of July.

Karasinski said there is a safety factor involved. Roundabouts should not have items in them that would take folks eyes off the road. Branley said he was surprised that New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NH DOT) would agree to this. It is inconsistent if they are in support of items in the roundabout since they wouldn't let Deb Crowder's sign stay in the new roundabout at Rt. 32 and Sawyers Crossing Road. Hutwelker said the challenge would be to get consensus from the community on what should be in the roundabout. Colby said the State Route 12 roundabout with its flowers and shrubs is a thing of beauty. The Board agreed not to pursue this at this time.

May Expenditure & Revenue Report

Branley said the Board has the report and there are no significant surprises.

Julius Peel – Letter of Support for Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation Complete Streets Implementation Grant Application for Sidewalk Improvements.

Peel was present to provide a brief overview of this project. A proposed letter of support was provided as well. He said this grant would allow for the improvement of sidewalks in central Swanzey. Costs: \$43,000 from Monadnock Alliance. Department of Public Works (DPW) labor and \$5,000 cash match which would come from the 2021 asphalt budget. Hutwelker asked about maintaining the new sidewalk. Peel said the DPW has been maintaining the present sidewalks and this would be an extension of that work.

Peel added that he is leaving his internship with Swanzey and has found a job with another community. He will be working in Milton, NH. The Board congratulated Peel and thanked him for his efforts on behalf of the Town.

Hutwelker **moved** to approve a Letter of Support for Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation Complete Streets Implementation Grant Application for sidewalk improvements. Karasinski seconded the motion. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

PUBLIC HEARING

Public Hearing Pursuant to RSA 41-14a regarding the proposed donation of Map 18 Lot 138 (Monadnock Highway) to the Town

Public Hearing opened at 6:00 pm

Colby read the Public Hearing notice. He said this is the second of required hearings. Branley noted that the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board are supportive of the acquisition. This is the lot at the southwestern corner at the roundabout on State Route 12. Branley asked if there were any public comments and there were none.

Public Hearing closed at 6:01 pm

APPOINTMENTS

Michael Delisle – 2019 Property Tax Abatement

Mr. Delisle was not present to speak of his dissatisfaction with the denial of his abatement request.

Motion was made by Hutwelker to deny Delisle abatement request based on the recommendation by the Assessor and recommend the resident go to the Board of Tax and Land Appeals (BTLA). Second by Karasinski, and no further discussion. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

Town Conservation Subdivision Regulations

Hutwelker said his main objection to conservation easements is the permanency of them. He said that future generations should be able to make those decisions. He said the Town should not be supporting permanent easements. Hutwelker said he would like to discuss this further with Director of Planning and Economic Development Matthew Bachler. Branley said he would discuss approaching the Planning Board with Bachler.

Police Cruiser

Branley said the Capital Improvements Program had included rehabilitating an existing cruiser this year, although the Department a used police cruiser with better mileage and condition which could be purchased for less than the budgeted rehab.

Motion was made by Hutwelker to expend up to \$10,000 from the Police Cruiser Capital Reserve Fund to purchase a used police cruiser. There was a second by Karasinski and no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Fire Chief Bill Gould – Update to Fire Department Labor Grades & Organizational Structure

Branley reported that staff has solicited pay scale from a number of area organizations and communities of reasonably comparable size. Gould provided documentation for labor grades from neighboring communities. He said the higher the grade, the greater the pay. Gould said he matched up to Swanzey grade and wage as best he could. Branley said some of the towns did not respond to Swanzey's request. They did get Jaffrey, Peterborough, Winchester and DiLuzio EMS, and several other communities to compare with Swanzey. Hutwelker said he was pleased that other communities contributed as quickly as they could. Gould said that Swanzey is in the lower range, but some grades are above. Discussion was held about the grades in Swanzey as compared to similar grades for the other towns. Gould pointed out the other employees of the Town are paid based on the Step Program. The Board reviewed the 2020 proposal. Gould referred to operational changes. The Deputy would become an Assistant Chief. The two Captains would become Deputy Chiefs for administrative purposes. The three stations would each have a Station Captain and a Lieutenant. The Inspector would become a Deputy Chief. There would be a Chief, an Assistant Chief and two Deputy Chiefs.

Karasinski said with this proposal the pay raises for the officers would be higher than for the firefighters. He asked if Gould could pay the firefighters a bit more and lower the officers pay raises to a bit less. Gould said the officers will be doing the same work and hold the absolute responsibility. Karasinski said firefighters will be doing officer work too which would justify a better pay raise for them. Gould said the officers are the critical part of staff and hold a higher level of responsibility and therefore they should be in the step that would give them better pay. He said he is resolute about this. Karasinski asked if work is getting done by staff because a fuel tank was empty. Gould said he wants staff in the Fire Department to come to him with their concerns and comments and not hear about it from a third party.

Branley said the idea is to set up the framework for the Step Program now. He said staff has not started looking at specific employees for actual raises. and it will take time to determine what would be a suitable pay raise for each employee and it may be spread over multiple years, said Branley. Hutwelker asked about phasing in the officer raises over time so we can ultimately end up where we need to be. Gould said he will work with Branley to work out a phased approach to come up with recommendations for pay raises.

Karasinski said it is a matter of putting employees into steps. Karasinski said firefighters must take command occasionally and Gould said perhaps that should be a separate step for when there were no officers on the scene.

Motion was made by Hutwelker to recognize the work that was done to compare Swanzey to other communities and approve a conceptual plan provided by the Fire Chief to bring Fire Department staff into the Step Program and to bring the plan to the Board meeting in mid-August. There was a second by Karasinski and no further discussion. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

Hutwelker said it is critical that the fire station vote in March at Town Meeting be approved, and he encouraged those in attendance from the Fire Department to support the Chief. A new station would be available for elections. Hutwelker said the Board has full faith in Gould and wants the fire department to support the Chief. He said it is frustrating to hear that concerns are not going to Gould and instead being brought to others. Richard Lewandowski spoke briefly about how the empty fuel tank should have been brought to Gould rather than a Selectmen.

Gould left the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Display Sign for Town Hall

Discussion was held regarding the cost of a sign and the intensity of the lighting of the sign that could be purchased for Town Hall. Branley noted that the Town Hall Repairs, Maintenance, and Improvements ETF has an estimated balance of \$90,463.77. Branley noted the front of the Grange Hall might be a better location for a sign and easier to see. Branley said installation would be \$5,000 and potential is about \$30,000 in total including the sign itself. Hutwelker asked about a solar opportunity for the sign and Branley said he did ask about that and it would be a bit more costly. Colby said what if we approved a sign for the front of the Grange and then the Grange doesn't get supported by the public what happens to the sign. It was noted there is a power pole right at the Grange. Karasinski said he would like to see something classy. Colby said the sign could be lit in black and white, without color. He said we do not need graphics for the Town sign. Branley was asked if the sign can be activated from Town Hall and Branley replied that it can. Colby noted a more colonial looking sign would be appropriate.

Consensus of the Board was to have Branley bring a design and costs to the Board next meeting. Karasinski suggested a Survey Monkey to the public as to whether to do it, given the cost. Karasinski said it would be better to find out now what the public thinks and Branley said he would pursue that.

Licensing Dogs

Discussion was held about residents not licensing their dogs. Branley said some residents have complained about the inability to get rabies vaccine for their dogs due to COVID 19 and therefore not getting their dog licensed. Police have been following up and there is a fee involved. Board could extend the time to license the dog and pay the fee. Karasinski said staff should follow up where there are rabies shots offered. It was noted that rabies can cause serious illness and the Town cannot let residents have licenses without proof of rabies vaccinations. Karasinski suggested a notice that police could give out informing residents of an extension to September 1st to get dog licensed. This was agreed upon by consensus.

Recycling Center Electrical Work

Branley noted that the Board approved \$3,000 previously for electrical work to move balers. He said

that it turns out that Solid Waste Manager Josh Whipple needs an additional \$500.

Motion was made by Hutwelker to approve up to \$500 from Recycling Center Revolving Fund for electrical expenses to move balers at the Recycling Center. There was a second by Karasinski and no further discussion. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

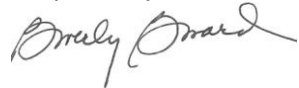
COVID-19 Issues

Discussion was held regarding the wearing of masks if in contact with the public at the Recycling Center. Hutwelker said he is encouraging Recycling Center Manager to discuss that further since there are areas where workers are not in contact with the public. Branley said he will follow up with Whipple.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Hutwelker. The motion was seconded by Karasinski without further discussion. All were in favor. **Motion passed.** Adjournment occurred at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary

Approved on July 29, 2020