Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – January 8, 2025
Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey, NH

Note: Draft Minutes are subject to review, correction and approval by the Board. Review and approval of Minutes generally takes place at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board.

CALL TO ORDER
The meeting was called to order by Chair Sylvester Karasinski at 5:30 p.m. at Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey, NH. Present were Selectmen W. William Hutwelker III, Sylvester Karasinski and James Tempesta. Also present was Town Administrator Michael Branley and Recording Secretary Meagen Kerris.

OTHERS PRESENT
Mark Scalera, Mark LaBelle, Mike York, DPW Director Joe DiRusso, Charles Harbeck, Chad Branon, Mike Gomarlo, Larry Ames, Bob DeRocher, Garrett Rainie with FACT TV

MINUTES
- The regular meeting Minutes of December 30, 2024, were considered. There was a motion by Tempesta to approve the regular meeting Minutes of December 30, 2024. There was a second by Hutwelker and no further discussion. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

CONSENT AGENDA
Motion was made by Tempesta to approve the Consent Agenda. There was a second by Hutwelker. Hutwelker recused himself from items related to 10 Perry Lane. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**
- Payroll Manifest
- Payables Manifest
- Abatement #2024-56
- Supplemental Tax Warrant
- Veterans Tax Credit & Solar Exemptions
- Personnel Action Reports

PUBLIC INPUT Chad Brandon with Fieldstone Land Consultants prepared material to discuss wetlands related proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance. Brandon does not believe these changes to be a bad thing to consider however feels a 75 foot buffer from wetlands will impact proposed developments. Karasinski requested Branon wait until Charlie Harbeck gets to the meeting.

APPOINTMENTS
DPW Director Joe DiRusso – Driveway Permit Related to Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit at 166 Christian Hill Rd. DiRusso met with the applicant's contractor who indicated they are willing to extend the paved road by 100ft and offer an easement for plow trucks to turn around. This will eliminate the issue regarding private maintenance of that section of the road. DiRusso believes this is the best solution for all parties involved. This update comes before the driveway permit has been issued. He explained a formal easement to formalize the agreement. **The Board approved this solution by consensus.**

Discussion ensued of the cameras on the Cresson Covered Bridge. The Board agreed by consensus they would like to install cameras at the other covered bridges in town because the existing cameras have proven successful.

The Board briefly reviewed the draft cover for the 2024 Annual Report with a covered bridge recognizing the efforts that the Town has had to protect them. The Board agreed by consensus.

Selectmen's Ex-Officio Representative to the Planning Board Charles Harbeck
Branley stated they are overdue to meet with Harbeck for an update with his position on the Planning Board. Harbeck felt that the amendments for wetlands should be left up to the town to vote. Hutwelker wants to know how the experience is on the Planning Board and Harbeck said there is a lot to learn and he isn't sure he wants to continue. Hutwelker asked what Harbeck's reservations are and he said, the experience is not what he was expecting. There is a lot to learn. The Selectmen thanked him for agreeing to represent them on the Planning Board.

Chad Branon was invited back up to present his information. Discussion continued regarding his concerns with the proposed zoning ordinance changes related to wetlands. As they are written, they do not allow for balance, allowing the exceptions using special exceptions or conditional use permit. This allows a dialogue between interested groups and review of design plans to come together with plans whereas trying to apply for a variance is a high bar with limited development for plans. The current suggested wetland setbacks would prevent development that is already in progress such as Safford Drive and there will need to be redesign for the proposed new Fire Station.

Branon suggests that the Selectmen not support the proposed wetlands amendments as they currently stand. He believes there is more work to be done with it including transparency and education for the residents in town who will be voting on this.

Hutwelker thinks the board should weigh in on behalf of the community using Branon's information to continue the process to bring in relief to situations. Safford Drive can't be taken off the map for development. He suggests the Planning Board take it off the warrant this year and do some more work on this and put it up next year. Conditional use or special exception would be beneficial. He wishes this was brought forward in October to get feedback. Hutwelker thinks there is a lot of merit to the amendments but his concern is that it shuts down development in addition to an open door to litigation. He suggests a letter to the Planning Board with feedback. Tempesta thinks the warrant article is too big to push too fast and there is a lot to consider and it needs more time. The Board agreed by consensus to send a letter to the Planning Board with concerns, written by Hutwelker and Branley.

NEW BUSINESS
Contracted Assessing Services: Contract with Marazoff Assessing with revaluation has expired. Branley said it may be time to go out to bid based on the time that has gone by but there are not a lot of options. Assessing Coordinator and Branley met with Marazoff and discussed improvements with communication and dedicated time in office. Branley recommends staying with this company pending proposal. Hutwelker asked if they would be willing to do 1 year contract and Branley said he believes so. Hutwelker asked what he is hoping to see and Branley said immediate and consistent follow up. The Board agreed by consensus to not do an RFP at this time and to review a proposal for general assessing from Marazoff Assessing.

Contracted IT Services: Agreement with Twin Bridge Services has expired. Branley said we previously had two servers in town hall, an email server and file server. When we retired the email server and went to accounts with Microsoft for all email accounts we added annual subscription costs. First year costs were paid as part of the email server replacement project, however go into our service agreement in 2025. This leads to a higher than normal year over year increase.

There was a **Motion** by Tempesta to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the contract with Twin Bridge Services for contracted IT services for 2025. There was a second by Hutwelker. All in favor. **Motion passed.**

Requested Expenditure – Design Expenses related to Lower Winchester Street / West Swanzey Road project: Branley confirmed with Mr. Ruoff that the City of Keene is requesting reimbursement from the Town for $2,768.57 at this time for the Lower Winchester Street Project and $7,732.36 for the completion of Phases 2 & 3 of design.

There was a **Motion** by Tempesta to authorize the expenditure of us to $11,000 for design work associated with the Lower Winchester Street / Rt. 10 redesign project from the InvestNH Per Unit Grant. There was a second by Hutwelker. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

OLD BUSINESS

West Swanzey TIF District Development Plan – Branley stated that this will go forward to public hearing next week. The Board reviewed the development plan prepared by Branley and Town Planner Adam Paquette. The School district and County need to be informed of the creation of a new TIF District. Branley said he met with Jeremy Rathburn and mentioned the hearing next week. Tempesta questions do they have a say or we need to inform them, Branley said they just need to know. Karasinski requested it be emailed to the board as it came in down to the wire.

2025 Town Warrant Review – Branley said he had a phone call with Attorney Johnston to review the draft warrant. No major changes so far.

- Article 12 – Need to finalize wording on this article. Branley said the statute specific to acquiring / accept water utilities requires this article to get a 2/3 vote to pass and cannot be brought back for consideration for 2 years. Hutwelker asks article 5 is 3/5 and article 12 is 2/3? Branley states it is correct. The Board discussed possible combinations of Article 5 and 12 passing / failing and Branley will look into this.
- Article 14 – Branley stated some of the language in the middle can be removed because we are readopting the commercial and industrial tax exemption. The Board agreed by consensus to remove the language that could come out and add to the voter guide.
- Article 15 petition article – language is prescribed for a petition related to increasing the Board of Selectmen to 5 members.
- Article 16 – appropriation needs recommendation from selectmen before finalization of warrant. The Selectmen will need to recommend or not before the deliberative.

Other 2025 Budget Follow Up – As Needed updated numbers for public assistance and other updates. Increases to be updated.

Hutwelker is hoping public assistance has enough because of the lack of housing.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

Discussion of the work completed in the town hall.

Non-public session(s) per RSA 91-A:3II(b) hiring of a public employee

Motion was made by Tempesta to enter Non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3II(b) the hiring of a public employee. The motion was seconded by Hutwelker. The Selectmen voted unanimously by roll call to go into non-public session at 7:11 p.m. **Motion passed**. Present was James Tempesta, W. William Hutwelker III, and Sylvester Karasinski. Also present was Town Administrator Michael Branley and Recording Secretary Meagen Kerris**.**

Motion was made by Tempesta to come out of non-public session, seconded by Hutwelker. All in favor by Roll Call and the ***motion passed***. Non-public session ended at 7:20 pm.

Motion was made by Tempesta 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 Hutwelker. All were in favor and the ***motion passed***.

Motion was made by Tempesta to enter Non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3II(L) Consideration of legal advice provided by legal counsel. The motion was seconded by Hutwelker. The Selectmen voted unanimously by roll call to go into non-public session at 7:21 p.m. **Motion passed**. Present was James Tempesta, W. William Hutwelker III, and Sylvester Karasinski. Also present was Town Administrator Michael Branley and Recording Secretary Meagen Kerris**.**

Discussion of legal advice from Counsel regarding the Town Warrant.

Motion was made by Tempesta to come out of non-public session, seconded by Hutwelker. All in favor by Roll Call and the ***motion passed***. Non-public session ended at 7:31 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Tempesta. The motion was seconded by Hutwelker without further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.*** Adjournment occurred at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Recording Secretary Meagen Kerris

Approved on January 15, 2025