9.28.26

Swanzey Governance Committee Meeting

Present:

Ann Heffernon, Dick Lane, Scott Self, Mike York

Call to order 5:35 PM

Without a quorum we were not able to approve notes from the previous meeting.

The following notes are important because we will need to move quickly on putting together the video's, copy and create a dated plan to help with both the sewer and water company plans and possible warrants:

The meeting focused on community communications, public education about West Swanzey water and sewer projects, and outreach planning for upcoming town decisions.

Update on Community Conversation Meeting-

- The community conversation involved approximately 35–40 people and led to a proposed quarterly, news-focused email newsletter with article links, optional printed mailings, historical and human-interest content, and possible business sponsorships.
- The newsletter would use a QR-code signup process, with interim information stored until the town's website transition is complete. Grant funding must be in hand by the end of the year; remaining funds may support adult or children's game nights at Mount Caesar Library.
- Katie supports the concept but would no longer handle the full layout workload. Bob Audette, a former Brattleboro newspaper reporter, may assist with layout and writing.
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Discussion of Water CO. and Sewer treatment plant and how to educate the public about them:

- The group favored short educational videos, potentially combining Self's subject-matter expertise with presentation techniques used in the fire department videos.
- Proposed outreach includes informational meetings in multiple locations, at varying times and in different villages. Community House? Fire Station etc). Plus flyers or tables at Trunk or Treat and November elections in conjunction with SGC Ad Hoc committee. Topics for open meetings may include water, sewer, zoning, recreation, and conservation in order to attract a larger and diversified crowd.

Water Sewer Education

- Water and sewer costs would affect West Swanzey ratepayers rather than general taxpayers; other villages would not be affected by these specific rates. ONLY RATES would change. NOT taxes.
- The water company purchase may cost approximately $600,000, with a possible Northern Borders grant and additional borrowing. Potential rate changes, operating costs, debt service, grant status, and trust-fund restrictions remain unresolved.

Action Items

- Email everyone a copy of the previous public-information release for reference. (Heffernon)
- Check access to the existing engineers' presentation or fire-department PowerPoint video so it can be reused for public outreach.(Self to provide to Heffernon)
- Ask the select board for clarification on whether the sewer project will be placed on the 2027 warrant. (Self)
- Ask Steve Bittel whether the select board can transfer money from the water or sewer trust funds to another trust fund; raise the question at the October 5 meeting. (York)
- Sewer planning awaits preliminary and final engineering information. The group also discussed treatment requirements for phosphorus, copper, aluminum, and potentially nitrogen, as well as possible plant retrofits.
- Self to report the outcome of the Thursday water-and-sewer discussion to Heffernon so the public-outreach plan can be finalized.
- After receiving the Thursday discussion outcome, place the public-outreach proposal on the select board agenda and present the plan, including videos and meetings in different locations. (Heffernon This is done)
- Ask Jessica Sanchez to participate in producing two short public-information videos, with a backup videographer if she declines. (Heffernon)
- Ask Ashlee Crosby for recreation or conservation topics that could be included in the public-information meetings and outreach materials. (Heffernon)
- Prepare outreach information or a flyer for Trunk or Treat and the November election, including the sign-up QR code and available meeting or project information. (Heffernon)
- The group also discussed public explanations before deliberative sessions and the need to clarify technical, financial, and rate-related questions.