

Hinsdale Grange Re-organization

Home, home for the Grange
By DOMENIC POLI / Reformer Staff

HINSDALE, N.H. -- The chairman of the Board of Selectmen informed the master of Hinsdale Grange #358 that the organization will be allowed to use a town-owned building for its meetings. Chairman John Smith told Alfreda Tedford at Monday's meeting that the board discussed the issue months ago and decided to grant the Grange permission to convene at the Hinsdale Historical Society. This prompted Tedford to give a literal sigh of relief from the other side of the board's table. The National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry is a dues-based fraternal organization that advocates and promotes farming families and agriculture. It was founded in 1867.

Smith, also the president of the historical society, told Tedford that Grange meetings would be an excellent use of the building. Outside the building after the meeting, he said the historical society has a goal to remove any remaining items -- such as books and furniture -- from the building by July 1 so the Grange can use it. Smith said he has no concerns about the Grange using the facility. Though the process of forming the Grange started in February, it was wasn't officially established until April. It has been holding its meeting at the First Congregational Church on Main Street, but fundraising there is not permitted. The historical society is located around the corner and is visible from Hinsdale Town Hall. Tedford began talking to Smith in March about using the facility. The issue of the local Grange was on the evening's agenda and after she started speaking with the board, Tedford was joined by Jim Tetreault, the president of the New Hampshire State Grange. Tedford told the selectmen she would love the Grange to hold activities, such as low-admission dances for the town's youth, and eventually run a food pantry. She said dances, when held on Friday or Saturday nights, have helped keep young people off the street. "It seemed to work out quite well because they didn't have school or anything the next day," she said. Smith added that other groups want to use the building for a variety of other purposes as well. "The more use it gets, obviously, the better it is," he said. He also said the board would like a written plan of what exactly the Grange would like to do in the building.

After the meeting, Tetreault said it takes a minimum of 13 people to start a Grange chapter, and that #358 has sent a charter application signed by 20 individuals to the National Grange in Washington, D.C. "We're very excited about this opportunity to bring Grange back to Hinsdale," he said. "We're working on helping some struggling Granges throughout the state and re-organizing Granges in communities. ... The beliefs of our organization can be very popular."

Membership costs are \$32 a year, with a \$3 initiation fee. Tetreault stated that the money typically covers the quarterly dues to the State Grange, which pays fees to the National Grange for its members. Tetreault, who is affiliated with the Winchester chapter, said State Grange is also working on organizing a new chapter in Troy. "A lot of people say the Grange is a dying organization and that's not necessarily true," he said. "With Hinsdale, this is the third Grange in the last four years we've organized."