Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – June 17, 2026
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair James Tempesta at 5:30pm at Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey, NH. Other members present were Selectmen Mark LaBelle, W William Hutwelker, James Ward and Alan Gross. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola and Recording Secretary Susan Ells.

OTHERS PRESENT

Kai Kraemer with FACT TV, Cathy Bergstrom, Barbara Skuly, Ann Heffernon, Bob Audette, DPW Director Joe DiRusso, Assistant Chief Mick Sanchez, Deputy Chief Mike Burke, Fire Chief Eric Mattson, Sheila Heffernon, Mark Scalera, and Steve Russell

MINUTES

The regular meeting minutes of June 3, 2026 were considered. A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to approve the minutes as amended. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

The regular meeting minutes of June 8, 2026 were considered. A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to approve the minutes as presented. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

The non-public session minutes of June 3, 2026 and June 8, 2026 session 1 and session 2 were considered. A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to approve the minutes as presented. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Payroll Manifest
B. Accounts Payable Manifest
C. Certification of Taxes Yield – M/240 L/30
D. Original Warrant Tax Levy – M/240 L30

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to approve the Consent Agenda. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

PUBLIC INPUT

Barbara Skuly explained to the Board that the Town's Energy Committee had energy audits completed in 2025 which were funded by Eversource. The audits provided estimates by Northeast Sealing as to what projects would be beneficial for energy savings, and how much those projects might cost. Eversource also provides grants for some of these projects, so the Committee applied for the grants and received letters of approval for Energy Incentives from Eversource. For the Whitcomb Hall project, the estimate was for $25K and Eversource would pay about 50%. Carpenter Home's estimate is $55K and Eversource would pay about 40%. Accepting letters of approval does not obligate the Town. The plan would be that RFPs to be sent out and determinations would be made as to how much of the proposed improvements would be made.

Initially, the letters indicated that the projects needed to be completed by the end of July, but Jessi Duston at Eversource extended it to the end of 2026; if the projects are not completed, she will rewrite the letters for another year.

Joe DiRusso said he had reviewed the estimates; he feels that the Whitcomb Hall project makes sense, but Carpenter Home has a lot of other work to be done and there is no money for that. One concern he has would be if the projects were not implemented, and the Eversource grants not used, would it affect their chances of applying again. He suggested that Barb talk with Eversource about that. Barb has been communicating with Eversource and was told that if the project gets altered, they will simply adjust the amount approved.

Bob Audette added that he would like to find a way to get a match for the funds, possibly from the State.

Joe remarked that Eversource also has an incentive for providing up to $150 per light fixture, so he is looking at what could be replaced at the Town Hall, Stratton Library, and Whitcomb Hall.

Alan asked who would present the projects to the CIP and Joe said the Energy Committee could if the Selectboard authorized them to.

Bill Hutwekler made a motion to have the Selectboard Chair sign the letters of approval from Eversource for the Energy Incentive; this was seconded by Mark LaBelle; all were in favor and the motion carried.

APPOINTMENTS

A. Ann Heffernon – Governance Committee

Ann explained that the committee would like to change their mandate a bit to include more communication but to maintain the original purpose of the committee. She read the suggested revised mandate: *The SGC will be charged with the exploration of specific current ordinances and policies for the Town of Swanzey, as dictated by the Selectboard. We will review said policies relevant to projects and issues that the Town is facing and determine if these policies and projects need to be updated, or remain as they stand, making specific recommendations to the Board. Further, we will create a subcommittee to assist other committees within the Town in publicizing specific events of importance. A template would be created to aide with the communication needs relative to projects and issues that the Town is facing. SGC may help with these tools, and/or provide guidance for the committee requesting help to do so.*

The Board agreed by consensus to the revised mandate. Ann also informed the Board that the SGC would like to add Scott Self as an alternate committee member, to which they agreed.

Ann announced that the committee will be hosting a community conversation on Saturday Aug 29 at 10am; venue to be determined.

B. DPW Director, Joe DiRousso – Assignments & Projects/Transition of Town Administrator

Mark LaBelle made a motion to authorize the DPW Director, Joe DiRusso, as the designated representative for the Town of Swanzey for the following Clean Water SRF projects: California & N Winchester Street Improvements, Comprehensive WWTF Study, Comprehensive Storm Water CIP. The motion was seconded by Jay Ward. All were in favor and the motion carried.

C. Fire Chief, Eric Matson – Update & Grand Opening for New Fire Station & Equipment Inventory

The Board discussed with the fire department leadership team what the plans are for moving into the new fire station and when to have an open house. Chief Mattson said they are still working with the construction foreman, Bill Wheeler, and will have a final walkthrough on the 29th with the architect. There are some items that need to be corrected and/or completed, but they can start building furniture and setting up the offices. The phone system and IT still need to be installed. After the 29th they should be able to move in the trucks and would like to make this a ceremonial event and have Lee Dunham and Keith Bell back the trucks in. Mike Burke said they will be moving into the building in phases; he will send a punch list and inventory to the Board. Mick Sanchez said the recruiting and training of new firefighters is going well; the department should have 6 new certified firefighters by the end of the summer.

Bill asked if the department could update the Selectboard when a significant event, such as the recent fire or the drowning at Wilson Pond, so they hear about it from the department instead of on Facebook.

D. Energy Committee Chair, Bob Audette – SolSmart Program & Clean Energy NH

Bob Audette explained to the Board that the Town is a member of SolSmart which is a free knowledgebase resource on renewable energy. There are levels awarded when reaching various benchmarks and having the accreditations is helpful when applying for grants. The Energy Committee used SolSmart to review the proposed solar ordinance (there is currently no ordinance on solar panels). This is on the Planning Board's agenda for their next meeting. Bob agreed to be the contact.

Steve Russell told the Board about the Mt Caesar Library Museum and invited the Board to tour it during old home days.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Golden Rod Grange Hall – Foundation & Structural Assessment

Joe said the engineer inspected the foundation and the resulting report expresses concerns about safety; heavy rain could cause more erosion and the support under the chimney is a big concern. Joe noticed items are being stored there but feels the Town should limit the public use. He said the floor joists look good. Stephon has reached out to the State for grants. The building could be jacked to replace the foundation and install a complete drainage system. By using the original brick as a façade, the historical significance is maintained. Grayson Smith provided a rough estimate of $160K to do the work. Scott Self agreed the chimney is a concern and firmly believes that there should not be a lot of people in the building at one time and thought the plan for the building to be open during Old Home Days should be reconsidered. Bill agreed the report was vague. The report said to close the building or to limit the occupancy, but not by how much. Fire Chief Mattson said the occupancy is currently limited to under 50 people and that could be reduced if the Board decided that was the option they chose. Bill suggested having the Town attorney review the audit; Lori suggested having the Town's insurance company, Primex, review it as well. There was discussion regarding where the Grange Committee and Coffee Connections would meet. Steve Russell told the Board that when Mt. Caesar was a seminary, the Grange was used as a dormitory for the students. He offered the Mt Caesar Library second floor for the Grange Committee and Coffee Connections to use for the time being instead of using the hall since there is a concern about safety and liability. The Board agreed to temporarily close the building to public use; the lawyer and insurance company will be contacted for advice.

Joe next talked about Marcy Hill Road's width which is not standard; some places are 30 feet wide, and some areas are about 22 feet. The intersection at Fox Run is wide with a sweeping corner and the traffic is too fast. They will be narrowing it to standard width of 24 feet; this should slow down traffic and will reduce maintenance cost.

B. Finance Director Job Description

Jay will bring the changes to Meagen when he goes to the Town Hall.

C. Award - RFP- 2026-02 EMS & Ambulance Coverage

Bill remarked that they only received one quote for the contract.

Mark LaBelle made a motion to award the 2026 EMS & Ambulance Service Contract to Cheshire Emergency Services; Jay Ward seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion carried.

D. Acceptance of Donation for the First Responders Non - restricted Trust Fund

Mark LaBelle made a motion to accept the donation for the First Responders from Sly Karasinski. The funds will be placed in the 1st Responders Non-restricted Trust Account. Jay Ward seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion carried.

E. Transfer of Title – Recreation Vehicle (Ford Explorer)

Mark LaBelle made a motion to transfer the title of the 2015 White Ford Explorer to Denis Grow who purchased the vehicle on Municibid for a total of cost of $925.00. Jay Ward seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion carried.

F. Assessing – Abatements

a. M/243 L/43/0/CGO/91
b. M/248 L/43/0/CGO/136
c. M/248 L/43/0/CGO/131
d. M/248 L/43/0/CGO/70
e. M/248 L/43/0/CGO/144

Mark LaBelle made a motion to approve the slate of Tax Abatement Applications. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

G. Assessing – Veterans Tax Credit Exemptions

a. M/249 L/28

Mark LaBelle made a motion to approve the Veterans Tax Credit Exemption Application. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

H. Quote for Fire Department Phones

Lori said the current phone contract is coming due in August and she recommends putting out an RFP; Emertech will help month-to-month until a contract has been awarded. Jay said there are upgrades needed in Police department and Town Hall.

Mark LaBelle made a motion to accept the proposal for the Fire Station Phones as presented, up to $2800; Jay Ward seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS
none

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE
Jay provided a form for Jimmy to sign as Board Chair for the annual audit.

CORRESPONDENCE
The Town received a Thank You note from MRHS softball program for the use of Brown Field while their field was being created. The note was signed by the coaches and all the players.

A notification was received from the Hancock Planning Board regarding a cell tower that will be installed which will be visible from Swanzey.

PUBLIC INPUT
Jay told the board that the HR coordinator has contacted a resident who could work on grant work; a meeting is scheduled for next Wednesday, June 24th at Town hall lower level at 5pm. Lori reminded Jay that the meeting needs to be posted.

Jimmy Tempesta made a motion to require Town Hall employees who leave the hall during their workday to sign out at the Administrative Assistant's desk, and to state the reason for leaving, as well as when they will be expected back and then sign back in when returning. Mark LaBelle seconded the motion; Jimmy opened the discussion by saying that he felt it was important to know who is in the building and to be able to inform visitors if the person is not in the building and when they are expected back. This new process will be in effect as of Monday and Jay will inform employees when he is at the hall tomorrow. Jimmy also stated that the town employees should be using the company vehicles; if they use personal vehicles on business he is concerned about the liability. Lori will draft a policy for personal vehicle use. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Alan Gross complimented Saturday morning race and was thankful to all the town employees who helped out.

Alan then asked if there is a certification and or thank you for exceptional or heroic measures, as an example the attempted rescue at the recent drowning at Wilson Pond. Bill suggested he talk with the Police Chief and asked Alan if he would draft a letter of thanks.

Bill reported that there was a question at the recent Planning Board meeting whether he should be seated in place of the designated board member. He suggested that all 5 members be designated to the Planning Board.

Jay Ward made a motion that all members of the Selectboard are designated as ex officio members of the Planning Board with the proviso that they only serve one at a time; Mark LaBelle seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion carried.

Bill brought up another concern of the Planning Board which was regarding the joint meeting that the Selectboard chaired. The Planning Board Chair requested that if there is any land use issue, the Planning Board should chair the meeting. Bill will ask Attorney Cordell Johnston if there is an RSA that designates that the Selectboard must chair the joint meeting.

Bill also said that the Planning Board is doing very well; the change is leadership is going well; and is supported by past board chair.

NON-PUBLIC SESSIONS

Non-public session(s) per RSA 91-A:3, II (c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of a person

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to enter a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (c) which was seconded by Jay Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed**.** The Board entered the non-public session at 7:39pm. Present were James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, W. William Hutwelker III, James Ward and Alan Gross. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola and Recording Secretary Susan Ells.

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to come out of the non-public session, seconded by Jay Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed. The non-public session ended at 7:45pm.

Non-public session(s) per RSA 91-A:3, II (b) Hiring of a Public Employee

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to enter a nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (b) which was seconded by Jay Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed**.** The Board entered the non-public session at 7:46pm. Present were James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, W. William Hutwelker III, James Ward and Alan Gross. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola and Recording Secretary Susan Ells.

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to come out of the non-public session, seconded by Jay Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed. The non-public session ended at 7:50pm.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to adjourn the meeting; Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

Adjournment occurred at 7:51pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on July 1, 2026