Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – July 1, 2026
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

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

NON-PUBLIC SESSIONS

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 5pm. Present were James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, W. William Hutwelker III, James Ward and Alan Gross. Also present was 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 5:18pm.

Non-public session(s) per RSA 91-A:3, II *(a) the dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee.*

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to enter a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a) 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 5:18pm. Present were James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, W. William Hutwelker III, James Ward and Alan Gross. Also present was 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 5:29pm.

OTHERS PRESENT

Kai Kraemer with FACT TV, Richard Robuchaud, Nicole Luz, John O'Rourke and Allison McNeill from Good Energy, Fire Chief Eric Mattson, Cathy Bergstrom, Barbara Skuly, Richard Scarameli, Gail Duplisse, Caitlyn Steele, John and Paula Snide, Scott Self, Mark Scalera

MINUTES

The regular meeting minutes of June 16, 2026; June 17, 2026; June 23, 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 16, 2026, June 17, 2026 Sessions 1 and 2, June 23, 2026 Sessions 1, 2, and 3. 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. Raffle Permit- Cheshire Fair Association

D. Land Use Change Tax Bill – M/209 L/4 , M/209 L/21-1 , M/209 L/1-1

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

PUBLIC INPUT

Mark Scalera stated that he missed seeing the packets on the website but understands this is likely due to recent staffing changes.

Scott Self requested a decision about whether the Grange Hall should be closed due to the recent engineering study or if it could remain open with some alterations. He suggested cordoning off the kitchen area and the stage area upstairs where the chimney is located behind a wall. He added that Stephon Mehu had been contacted to tour the building for the LCHIP grant which is encouraging that the building might be on a short list for consideration. The group deliberated about reducing the occupancy limit; Fire Chief Mattson stated that the limit is currently under 50 and concurred with the Board that changing it to 25 would be reasonable and would still allow the public to view the building to learn about the projects being proposed. Mark Scalera remarked that the stairs going upstairs is opposite the stage area so perhaps the public could go that far to be able to see the upstairs. Bill suggested that they forward the engineer's report to Primex and ask whether they would support these conditions. Chair Tempesta will call Primex tomorrow and inform Scott of Primex's recommendations.

PUBLIC HEARING

Chair Tempesta opened the public hearing at 6pm to hear public comments regarding a road name change for part of Aldrich Road because the middle section of the road is Class 6 so traffic does not pass through. Chief Eric Mattson provided a map to the board; he explained that the department responded to a small fire to 80 Aldrich Road; the dispatch was hard to hear so the first responders entered the Taft Road end of the road instead of the Carlton Road end and they had to turn around. Fortunately, it was a small fire caused by a lithium battery, and the homeowners, John and Paula Snide, were able to get it outside, but it prompted Mr. and Mrs. Snide to request a name change to avoid that happening in the future.

Chair Tempesta asked for public comment – Richard Scarameli said he and his wife named this road in the 1970s when the Keene Post office required it. It is named for a soldier who served in the American Revolution. His descendants grew up on that road until the late 1880s. He added that when the Town was renaming some roads in Swanzey a few years ago, Richard had testified at that time to change the road name, but it didn't come to fruition. He is in support of changing the name of the Taft Road end of Aldrich Road.

Gail Duplise asked for clarification which side would be renamed and was told it was proposed to be the Taft Road End. Caitlyn Steele supports a name change but commented that there are far fewer people on the other end of the road that would be affected and that it might make sense for that end to change. John and Paula Snide remarked that they have been concerned about this for the past 30 years. They chose the name of Coolidge Road to maintain the presidential styles names in that area.

Chair Tempesta thanked them for following through on this process. The Snides complimented Chief Mattson's assistance in the process.

Chief Mattson said the update would go through either August 2nd or at the beginning of September. This would give the residents to make address changes. He will draft the letter for the Selectboard to send.

There was more conversation regarding the name, and which end should be changed. Gail Duplisse stated this would be the 3rd change since she's lived there and that a lot of work was done to get it named. When considering the name, Chief Mattson stated that 911 wants to stay away from names that sound similar or from adding N, S, E, W to avoid confusion.

Chair Tempesta closed the public hearing at 6:27pm.

Mark LaBelle made a motion to change the Taft Road end of Aldrich Road to Coolidge Road. Jay Ward seconded the motion; with no further discussion, the motion passed 5-0.

APPOINTMENTS

A. Honeybee Hollow – Lease Agreement

Nicole Luz is the VP of the board of Honeybee Hollow. She explained that she has been having ongoing conversations with Lori Rautiola and Stephon Mehu regarding the lease proposal; now that Lori is no longer employed by the Town, Nicole attended this meeting to review the 3 options of the lease proposal with the Board. The Board will gather more information from Joe DiRusso regarding the building and would like to return to this subject at the meeting on July 15 and would appreciate having more members of Honeybee's board attend so they can meet them. Nicole agreed to let them know.

B. Rick Robichaud, Whitcomb Hall Caretaker – Recommendations for Whitcomb Hall

Rick reviewed the list of concerns he would like to be addressed; the Board decided to hold a separate meeting to discuss the items and will get back to him.

C. Allison McNeill, Patrick Roche – Swanzey Community Power Program

Allison provided a presentation explaining the program and the updated rates for the next 2 years for the energy buying group who has been serving Swanzey since 2021. Letters will be sent in late July for newly eligible customers; customers may join, leave or change options within the program at any time without penalty. 70-80% of residents are currently participating.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Finance Director Job Description

Mark LaBelle made a motion to approve the job description as presented; Jay Ward seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion was approved.

B. Review of Proposed Septic Ordinances for Rivers, Lakes and Streams

Cathy Bergstrom and the Swanzey Lake Association have been working on a proposed ordinance for the Town to consider adopting to protect the water quality in Swanzey's water bodies. She provided an update on the work they have done, including a septic survey to which about 60% of the homeowners of Swanzey Lake responded. The results showed that most of the residents reported having septic systems; some have holding tanks. Many reported never having their systems or tanks inspected. She provided examples of what other municipalities have for their ordinances. Scott Self then made some suggestions for consideration, and also suggested Cathy present this proposed ordinance to the Planning board as they would be the board who would be required to have a public hearing if this was to move forward. Bill suggested she work with the Governance committee. Ultimately the decision was that she would approach the Planning Board.

C. Review of Credit Card Policy

Bill explained the purpose of the policy and that it is being reviewed now as information to the new board members. The Board had no recommendations for changes to the policy.

D. Assessing – Abatement
    a. M/248 L/43/0/CGO/31

Mark LaBelle made a motion to approve the Tax Abatement for M 248 L 43/0/CGO/31. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Jay provided a quote for a laptop for the new Finance Director which would replace the quote for the desktop computer. This was put on hold for now.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A. Review Board Meeting Schedule

Chair Tempesta asked the Board's opinion to return to meeting every week starting July 15th. All agreed.

Bill let the Board know Town Hall staff have been working very collaboratively with the changes that were implemented between Lori leaving and a new Town Administrator being hired.

CORRESPONDENCE

A. Letter regarding Wilson Pond

The Board received a letter from Jon and Betty LeClair inquiring whether the Town of Swanzey is doing anything about the terrible weed problem in Wilson Pond which has become worse over the past 2 years.

Bill said the Board toured the lake with Mark Scalera last week and received some education about this problem. Jay said homeowners are allowed to remove the weeds up to 30 feet. Mark Scalera said the weeds are so bad he's not sure he can use his boat in August to perform the water test since the weeds have become so dense. He stated that some varieties of the bladderwort can be poisonous and wondered if they could get it identified.

Mark Scalera suggested someone from the Board call or contact the homeowner to explain what the Town might be able to do and to let them know that they did tour the lake and received some education on the concern.

B. Thank you Letter Recognizing Police Department and Fire Department

Mark LaBelle read a letter from Lillian Chirichella thanking the EMS team, police and fire department for their response.

PUBLIC INPUT

None

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 7:45pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on July 15, 2026