Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – July 15, 2026
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair James Tempesta at 5:31pm 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.

OTHERS PRESENT

Kai Kraemer with FACT TV, Police Chief Joseph Gonsalves, Sgt Kevin Clark, Sgt Nicholas Paquin, Officer Colby Zilinski, Tara Tinker-Burt, Tom Burt, Bob, Jen and Bryanna Allison, Joe DiRusso, Anna Zilinski, Ann Heffernon, Sheila Heffernon, Richard Whitney, Chris Weeks, Kristy Rose, Allyce Romanuk, and Lisa Mango.

BOARD OF SELECTMENT RECOGNITIONS

1. Board of Selectmen – Recognition of Bryanna Allison

On behalf of the Town of Swanzey and the Board of Selectmen, Mark LaBelle presented a certificate of recognition to Bryanna for her outstanding achievements in Special Olympics; he also presented Bryanna with a bouquet of flowers.

2. Board of Selectmen – Recognition of Tara Tinker-Burt

On behalf of the Town of Swanzey and the Board of Selectmen, Mark LaBelle presented a certificate of recognition to Tara Tinker-Burt for her exceptional courage in assisting in an emergency without hesitation, showing courage, service and integrity.

MINUTES

The regular meeting minutes of June 30, 2026, July 1, 2026, July 7, 2026 and July 10, 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 30, 2026, Session 1, 2 & 3, July 1, 2026, Session 1 & 2, and July 10, 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.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Payroll Manifest
B. Accounts Payable Manifest
C. Junkyard License- Buffum Auto Parts
D. Special event Permit- Monadnock Moonlight Cross Country Meet
E. Raffle Permit- Swanzey PTO
F. Raffle Permit- Cheshire Fair
G. Intent to Cut- M/232 L/39
H. Original Warrant Yield Tax Levy – M/233 L/9
I. Current Use Application – M/205 L/2

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

APPOINTMENTS

A. Police Chief Gonsalves – Recognition of Officer Colby Zilinski

Police Chief Gonsalves awarded the honor of Police Chief Citation to Officer Colby Zilinski for responding to a drowning and displaying exceptional courage, professionalism and selflessness.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Review of Amended Lease Agreement Proposal – Honey Bee Hollow

This is a continuation of the previous conversation at the meeting on July 1, 2026 regarding the upcoming lease; Honey Bee Hollow had presented 3 options of leases to the Board.

The option they prefer is Option 1, which lower the rent and would place responsibility on the Town of the pest issue (woodchucks), repairing the holes in the foundation, replacing the toddler room double door, and the cost of the ongoing intermittent heating issues.

Joe DiRusso stated that he didn't want to use a trap due to potential danger to children and pets; he is using alternate methods to discourage the woodchucks and will seal up the foundation once the pests are out of the basement. The door will be replaced tomorrow. He said the heating issues are ongoing but seem to be different issues each time. Joe also said that Stephon Mehu is working on getting a grant for the weatherization and the floor issue.

The Board will have the Town Attorney review the proposed lease.

Bill Hutwelker noted that the current lease expires July 31 and has a condition that if the rent becomes month-to-month, the cost would be 2.5 times the current rent; he suggested that if the attorney is not able to review the revised lease in time, they would not assess that fee.

Mark LaBelle made a motion to approve Option 1 with the pest control on the outside of the building be the responsibility of the Town, and the interior pest control be the responsibility of Honey Bee Hollow, with the lease be commencing August 1 for one year; Jay Ward seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion carried.

APPOINTMENTS

B. **Richard Whitney – Authorization to extend Rabbit Hollow Rd** –

DPW Director Joe DiRusso explained that Richard Whitney wants to subdivide his property on Rabbit Hollow Road; he needs some frontage on the road and wants to upgrade the Class 6 road to Class 5 up to 1000 feet based on what is needed for the sub-division; Joe is in support of this. The road needs more gravel which Richard will supply, and the DPW will grade it; it will include a turnaround for plow trucks and the DPW would maintain that section. The subdivision is on the Planning Board agenda for the 7/22 meeting.

Mark LaBelle made a motion to extend Rabbit Hollow Road up to 1000 feet to Class 5 status on Map 255 Lot 24; Jay Ward seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion passed.

C. DPW Director Joe DiRusso – Covered Bridges Update

Joe DiRusso said the Thompson Bridge was hit again just after it was fixed and sustained minor damage; fortunately, this event was witnessed. The driver was stopped in Keene, and the identified company will pay for the repair. Cameras are in the process of being installed. He was informed that the bridge decking is beginning to pop up and needs to be replaced. He obtained a couple of quotes for replacing the white oak

deck boards; GDS was the lower quote at $52,200; the other was Cold River Bridges at over $70K. This will be scheduled for late October or early November with GDS.

Joe went on to say he's been working on getting a price for flashing warning signs for the bridges; the package costs about $39K and he still needs an estimate to install them. His guess would be that it would be around $10K to install; the cameras are just under $5k; he is not sure if there is enough in the Capital fund or if some would be needed from his operating budget.

Joe also said that DPW has moved the signs closer to the intersections and will install high visibility green signs. He said he recently stopped a tractor trailer before crossing the bridge; the driver said he saw the sign, but his GPS instructed him to follow this route. This is a common issue with GPS technology. There was some discussion as to whether this could be corrected with companies such as Google Maps.

Mark LaBelle made a motion to approve spending up to $53K from the Covered Bridge Capital Reserve Fund to replace the decking on Thompson Bridge; Jay Ward seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Joe informed the Board that the fire alarm company was scheduled to perform the inspection today in the new fire station, but they did not show up. Now he is being told they can't be there until August 3; he is looking for other solutions and will keep the Board updated.

Lastly, Joe updated the Board on the current road projects and stated they are going well and likely under budget; DPW also did some work on the rail trail.

PUBLIC INPUT
None

NEW BUSINESS
A. Assessing- Abatement
    a. M/248 L/43/0/CGO/89

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to approve the Assessing Abatement for Map 248 Lot 43 as recommended by the Town's contracted assessor, Bernaiche Consultants. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

Bill provided a list of Town Hall employee vacations. He also stated that Gus Lorandeau has resigned from the Economic Development Advisory committee and Sly Karasinski volunteered to take that position.

Bill Hutwelker made a motion to reappoint the following to the Economic Development Advisory Committee:
Cathy Bergstrom through Town meeting of 2027
JR Coughlin through Town meeting of 2027
H Gregory Johnson through Town meeting of 2028
Jessica Sanchez through Town meeting of 2028
Hannah Maynard through Town meeting of 2027
Angelo DiBernardo through Town meeting of 2028
Sly Karasinski through Town meeting of 2029
Mark Scalera as alternate through Town meeting of 2027

Jay Ward seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion passed.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

Jay received a memo from Mike Burke who is requesting a decision on ordering the fence and the blinds at the new fire station; the Board will determine where the money is coming from.

The Board discussed the new phone system quotations.

Police Chief has asked for an increase in the wage for part time police officers; Chair Tempesta had suggested he come to the next meeting and provide more information at that time.

Jay was asked by the Finance Director what account should the charge for the note taker's wages for taking notes at the Water & Sewer committee meetings come from; it was decided it would come from the administrative budget.

Jay reported that Meagen has created a draft of the updated job description for the DPW Director; she inquired whether she should send a draft to Joe to review and make edits and the Board agreed.

PUBLIC INPUT

None

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 6:25pm. 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 6:28pm.

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

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 6:28pm. 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 6:36pm.

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 6:37pm. 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 6:48pm.

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 6:49pm. 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 7:01pm.

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

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 7:02pm. 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 7:07pm.

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 7:07pm. 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 7:12pm.

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 7:14pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on July 22, 2026