Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – July 22, 2026
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER
The meeting was called to order by Chair James Tempesta at 4:43 pm at Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey, NH. Other members present were Selectmen Mark LaBelle, W William Hutwelker, James Ward and Alan Gross.

OTHERS PRESENT
Kai Kraemer with FACT TV, Sharon Greatbatch, Rob Robichaud, Jillian Schenek, and Ann Heffernon.

APPOINTMENTS
A. Rick Robichuad – Whitcomb Hall
Rick Robichaud presented the Board with an agenda of discussion items, but it became evident that Rick had not realized most of his questions were covered in his job description. Chair Tempesta said that this explained much of the confusion and Rick was given a copy of his job description.

There was discussion about the chair covers and the use of other linens such as tablecloths. These items had been found in storage and Rick was using them to make the chairs and tables more attractive. It was explained that there was no money in the current budget to purchase more chairs or for engaging a laundry service for the linens. A suggestion was made to use the DPW laundry service to pick up a small package of kitchen towels each week or two.

Ann Heffernon pointed out that there was a liability concern with the chair covers. It is possible that a person wearing high heels could get entangled in the covers as they are long and there is extra material extending at the bottom. The Board felt there was a need to discuss the liability issue with the town's attorney.

It was suggested that we might offer renters the opportunity to have chair covers and tablecloths for a fee as part of the rental agreement. It was also decided that Rick should get a copy of each rental agreement so he can know what the Town and renter are expecting to be provided.

There was some confusion about Rick's hours, pay, and duties. The Board clarified that his responsibilities were in his job description and that he was paid weekly even if there were no rentals.

The back room at the southwest corner of the second floor was discussed. It is a useful space for some rentals but currently houses audio equipment that needs protection. The construction of a cabinet for the equipment which could be locked was discussed.

Rick brought forward some safety concerns. There are some screws in the handicap ramp which need to be replaced. The stairs to the attic need to be secured from curious renters. The Board will mention this to Scott Self who has a need to use the attic and may have a key.

The meeting was recessed until 5pm when it was reconvened. Recording Secretary Susan Ells assumed the recording duties from Jay Ward at 5pm. Scott Self and Police Chief Joseph Gonsalves joined the meeting.

MINUTES

The regular meeting minutes of June 24, 2026, July 8, 2026, July 15, 2026 (Bill Hutwelker amended), July 17, 2026, were considered. A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to approve the minutes, and Alan Gross seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

The non-public session minutes of June 24, 2026, Sessions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6, July 8, 2026, July 15, 2026, Sessions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6, and July 17, 2026 Sessions 1, 2, 3 & 4 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. Raffle Permit- Connecticut River Sportsman Club
D. Raffle Permit- Northern Lights

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

PUBLIC INPUT

None

APPOINTMENTS

A. Chief Gonsalves – Part Time Officer Compensation

Chief Gonsalves notified the Board that after a Facebook post regarding the Chief's Citation that was awarded to Officer Zalinski for his efforts to rescue a drowning victim, the Keene Sentinel published an article about it.

Chief Gonsalves and HR Coordinator Meagen Kerris have been trying to attract more candidates for the police department openings. They have posted the openings on a website to attract candidates; the candidate must pay to apply; they have not received any applicants yet.

Meagan also suggested increasing the hourly wage for part-time police officers to attract candidates from other communities. Our entry wage is fair; currently the rate for an experienced certified officer is $34/hour, but he feels we need to increase it to attract candidates. The hours would be flexible, but some candidates might need to restrict their hours to 1320 hours/year if they are on a pension. The department has no part-time officers so there is a lot of pressure on the current officers to cover the hours. The Board discussed the pay range that would allow for some negotiation based on the candidate's experience.

Mark LaBelle made a motion to increase the part-time pay from $34 to $40/hour up to $50/hour. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

B. Scott Self – Water & Sewer Committee

Scott explained that when the Wastewater Treatment plant went online years ago, they determined how much to charge per User for the sewer based on an average of 260/gallons per day. A User was based on 3.4 people per home. Periodically, an inventory of the number of people per household was obtained and the bills were adjusted accordingly. At some point, they stopped inventorying, subsequently the rates varied greatly. When the West Swanzey Water Company meters came online, this skewed the billing.

The committee is proposing a method to charge by gallon of usage; they propose to divide the annual cost of operating the plant by the number of users to calculate the basic rate for the following year, billed quarterly.

Scott then reviewed the calculations they made and the resulting rate per gallon.

Sewer customers received a letter in the most recent quarterly bills explaining that the rates are being increased and the reasons why; Scott would like to have a public meeting for general users; a separate meeting might be needed with the metered users to explain the option of changing to a standard user fee.

Scott then changed the subject to the West Swanzey Water Company. He's been talking with the owner who wants to sell the business to the Town. The committee will be discussing it at the next meeting to determine what is included in the sale of the business. The hope is to get this on the warrant for the next town meeting.

The Board thanked Scott and the committee for their work.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Assessing- Tax Abatement

a. UTL-2-0-0-0

Mark LaBelle made a motion to approve the Tax Abatement for UTL-2-0-0-0 as recommended by the Town's contracted assessor, Bernaiche Consultants. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

B. Consideration of Acceptance of Donated Baler Machine from Nanotech for the Recycling Center.

Alan explained that Nanotech is not using the baler for their cardboard and would like to donate it to the Town. Recycling Center Manager Josh Whipple is excited to have it at the Recycling Center; he thinks they will be able to use it for the aluminum. There will be an expense to install it; DPW Director Joe DiRusso thinks the Town can move it with Town equipment. Josh will determine how much will be needed to install it and will present it to the Board. This is a great addition, a $20K unit which will be very useful.

Alan Gross made a motion to accept the donation of a baler machine from Nanotech for the Town of Swanzey Recycling Center. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Mark LaBelle made a motion to appoint Josh Guion as an alternate member of the Capital Improvements Program Committee (CIPC); Jay Ward seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

Jay Ward told the Board that he hopes they will be able to decide on the phone system after the presentation which is at 10am on 7/23. He believes the funding is coming from the infrastructure budget but will check with the Finance Director.

Jay made a list of the items that can be reimbursed by the State for the new fire station. Stephon Mehu confirmed the funds are still available. There was discussion regarding planting trees beside the fire station instead of installing a fence.

Bill Hutwelker provided a handout of an email from Clean Energy to the Board for informational purposes.

Bill explained that he had a meeting with Sara Barrett and recommended hiring her to write grants, starting with the pre-application for the Northern Borders grant.

Mark LaBelle made a motion to engage Sara Barrett Consulting LLC as a grant writer for the Northern Borders pre-application, and for future grant writing possibilities. Jay Ward seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion carried.

Mark LaBelle made a motion to expend up to $3000 on electrical work performed by Tenney Electrical Services at Whitcomb Hall per Quote #349 with the funds coming from the Whitcomb Hall Expendable Trust. The motion was seconded by Jay Ward. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC INPUT

Alan Gross complimented the Town of Swanzey and the Old Home Day committee for their work on the event.

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 6:48pm. Present were James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, W. William Hutwelker III, James Ward and Alan Gross. Also present were Recording Secretary Susan Ells and Scott Self.

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 7:49pm.

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 7:51pm. 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 8:05pm.

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.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to adjourn the meeting; Bill Hutwelker seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0. Adjournment occurred at 8:06pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on July 29, 2026