Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – April 16, 2025
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair W. William Hutwelker III, at 5:31pm at Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey, NH. Other members present were Selectmen James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola and Recording Secretary Meagan Kerris.

Chair Hutwelker welcomed our new Town Administrator, Lori Rautiola

OTHERS PRESENT

Garrett Ranney with FACT TV, Susan Ells, Kevin Wescott, Joe DiRusso, Steve Bittel, Dave Marazoff, and Michael York.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion was made by Labelle to approve the Consent Agenda. There was a second by Hutwelker. There was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

- Payroll Manifest
- Payables Manifest
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- Elderly and Disabled Tax Deferral Applications – M243/55/0/MHO/97, M101/L12, M227/L10, M107/L7, M243/L55/MHO/52
- Notice of Intent to Cut – M240/L15 – Hale Hill Road
- Timber Tax Warrant Operation #24-441-02-T
- Permanent Applications for Property Tax Credits/Exemptions – M110/L112, M220/L136, M227/L15, M222/L25
- Assessing Official's Response to Tax Credits/Exemptions or Deferral Application – M243/L55/0/MHO/45
- Abatements – M243/L55/0/MHD/22, M254/L58, M210/L12, M109/L91, M247/L25, M234/L13, M205/L1/0/19/1, M205/L1/0/19/2, M205/L1/0/19/3, M205/L1/0/19/4, M205/L1/0/19/5
- Personnel Action Reports

PUBLIC INPUT

- None

APPOINTMENTS

- Kevin Westcott – Present potential deeded property, obtain the necessary approvals or waivers, and provide an Emergency Management Department update
    - Westcott reported the properties for review in two groups:
        - In the first group, the payment plans don't cover current taxes. He's seeking directions from the board on how strict payment amounts should become. Hutwelker asked for Westcott's opinion: Westcott stated he isn't confident that they will be able to get payments current with the minimal payment amount they are making.
        - In the second group:

- One is a mobile home, and Westcott has been in contact with mobile home park's treasurer. The condition of the property is poor, and he hasn't been able to get any communication from them. Westcott is looking for directions from the board on this case. Hutwelker suggested that he work with the park treasurer to collaborate. Tempesta said he isn't sure if they are behind on park rent. He offered to investigate it.
- #150 – the homeowners have committed to a payment plan that is difficult to keep up with and they will continue to fall behind. Westcott has been communicating with them. He is looking for some guidance from the board and is considering having the Human Services Coordinator see what help may be extended.
- #164 is paid up and current.
- #31 came in and made a payment. Westcott was able to communicate through mobile home park manager.
- # 422 – Westcott has received many complaints of the condition of the property. The owners are unable to keep up with the property financially. Hutwelker asked what our remedies are, can we provide a dumpster to clean it up. LaBelle said that Josh Whipple has also had problems with the property owners. Tempesta discussed taking action – his concern is that we're not getting cooperation from the property owner. He wants to take into consideration the neighbors as well. He would like accountability with the property owner to clean up the land. Hutwelker requested Westcott talk with Attorney Cordell and the Human Services Coordinator. Westcott suggests he and the Code Enforcement Officer go out to the address to discuss a possible plan that will be followed. Tempesta will participate in this visit.
- Discussion of Emergency Management Department. Pam Fortner has gone and Westcott suggests more attention be paid to this department. Westcott has a resident that is interested in getting involved. Hutwelker would like to see what has been going on and where we can build the department. LaBelle will work with Westcott on this. Possibly putting a room in the new fire station as an EMD room. Hutwelker suggested Westcott investigate the design phase for that. Hutwelker asked Westcott to come back in a month.

- Selectman Tempesta's update with police department and bridges:
  - He spoke with the Chief about Lisa Thorne's concern on trucks crossing covered bridges. The police are addressing the issue as they have time. We are short-handed right now; there is a good outlook fora new police officer coming in and they are proactively addressing companies whose vehicles have been identified. Tempesta stated that this will take time but there is active progress on this. The overweight concern should be addressed with the police Chief and the concern with tickets. Lisa Thorne spoke with Officer Philips from DOT and he is more than welcome to address the issues. He is looking to communicate with the police chief to put together a plan. Tempesta will follow up on this.
- Steve Bittel – Update on bonding for the Fire Station
  - Bittel outlined general concepts to help the new board members. Bittel presented an overview of where the town is with bonds. Over the years, the town has focused on long-term big projects for larger bonds. Discussion of the different terms of bonds. Focus tonight should be term of the bonds. There are factors when looking at the length of bonds and how they will fit into the future of the capital structure of the town.

- Several of our bond issues will being paid up over the next year. As receipts come in for tax increments, we may pay off a year early for TIF. The Bond Bank has two sales each year. The July sale is what we're looking at for the Fire Station Bond.
- Next factor is that long-term costs more money because there is more interest that will be paid because the debt is drawn out. Review of debt schedule and how it fits into that and how large the spread is in interest rates in 20-25-30-year bonds. Right now, there is a 17-point spread between the years. Bittel has never seen it this low. The current political situation is unsettling. He will file the application this week. Key dates: May 23rd to change their minds on what terms to commit to. Bittel filed for 30 years. He will monitor the market all the way up until the 23rd and alert the board should something swing drastically. The board needs to decide on a term. Bittel outlined the debt schedule for the board to review while considering the length of the Fire Station Bond. Bittel provided the debt analysis and how to consider the term to save room for borrowing to cover a fire truck.
- Hutwelker asked if May 23rd has a set rate; Bittel stated that the bond rate is as of the day it is sold. The application must be in by April 28th. Bittel is going to keep an eye on rates.

- Joe DiRusso – Update on various Town projects
  - Fire department update: project started March 31 with soil and land work. The Construction Manager RFP is out. Bids are due on April 28th. The plan is to select the contractor soon. There are Issues with pending permit issues with FAA who will need to provide approval because of the department's location. Chad Brandon is waiting for a reply. Once the site plan is finalized, he estimates to start work in mid-May and have the foundation in place. DPW will continue to do a good portion of the work on the site to save the town money. He will go before the planning board in May to show respect for the process we ask of other developers. He thinks by November to have the fire trucks out of town hall is an achievable goal. Tempesta asked about the well. DiRusso is going to investigate the existing well to see if it can be saved. Testing will need to happen to review the condition of it. The foundation will be part of the GC's work, the town won't bid that out separately.
  - N Winchester Street and California Street – he is working with DES to get final approval. Needs to assign the notice of award to the contractor for $1,299,985. Awarded to J Evans Construction.
    - **Motion** by LaBelle to authorize DPW director to sign contract with J Evans at $1,299,985 and to expend $401,100 from Road Rehabilitation Expendable Trust Fund and $150,000 from sidewalk committee fund approved by Gordon Ayotte. Tempesta second. The motion was seconded by Tempesta and there was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed*.**
    - Balance is coming from the State for these funds.
  - DPW is repairing and extending the Railroad Street sidewalk to the intersection of Pine Street.
  - Currently DPW is grading dirt roads; the new grader is working great. Lots of Spring projects.
  - Eaton road will be addressed with a catch basin to help with water collection.
  - Sewer plant – solar array project working with DES. Engineering work is ongoing and moving forward. Pilot plan in place to try another chemical to correct phosphorus.
  - RFP for engineering for Swanzey Lake Damn. 7 engineers replied and DiRusso will need to interview them with Rautiola. The selected engineer will come up with the design based on the state's feedback. Will need a funding source for the engineer.
  - Joe is working on an RFP for paving Forest Ave, Prospect St and West Street. On West Street, the plan is to remove the sidewalk and pave the whole area and paint lines to mark a walking area; this is to help with drainage. Looking to get an easement from landowner to allow

drainage into a catch pond. DiRusso would add catch basins. Hutwelker asked if the walking lane will be clearly marked; DiRusso has a plan for striping and signs.
    - Hutwelker asked DiRusso to follow up on the sidewalk from Sawmill Drive to the school. Joe will follow up. One challenge is that the State won't allow them to create a crosswalk.
    - Great Wall update – the slope is just about done, and topsoil will be added then hydroseeded and finish the drainage at the top. 4-6 weeks complete.
    - Sue Ells – West St – thanked DiRusso for giving West Street some much needed attention.
- Dave Marazoff – Update on abatements
    - He has a reference manual for the new selectmen which takes them through the taxation process. Filings, dates, how-to's. Explains process of abatements. Discussions of what to look at and how to review the information provided for abatements. Discussion of the software and how it streamlines the assessing process. What qualifies for an abatement request. It is important to have supporting documentation. Marazoff looks to be fair. Must be filed March 31st. Answers to abatement requests required by July 1st according to the RSAs. Tempesta asked how many abatements have been denied and Marazoff doesn't believe he has denied any this year yet. He makes recommendations; however the Board is the assessing body and ultimately, they decide what is approved or denied. Marazoff's job assists and provides all the information. Discussion of how airport hangers were re-evaluated this year.

NEW BUSINESS

- CAI Technologies Agreement
- Authorization to apply to NH Municipal Bond Bank
- NH School Funding Fairness Project - Looking for support in support of lobbying to encourage support from the state for schools. Consensus.

OLD BUSINESS

- Response to Public Input: Jim Tempesta – Police action regarding the covered bridges
- BOS goals for 2025- LaBelle's goals: work on water system, set up committee for governance, he's looking for volunteers for that committee. Hutwelker's goals are to welcome Rautiola, continue working on fire station project, and take a strong approach to completion. Regularly monitor processes. Continue to work with Adam Paquette on town hall streams. EDAC follow up- LaBelle is asking the fire/police to come together. LaBelle asked to move meetings earlier.
- Follow ups from prior meeting

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

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CORRESPONDENCE

-

PUBLIC INPUT

- Michael York is looking for committees to be put together so he can join one. There was a discusson about impact fees. Hutwelker said they are looking to get Rautiola in place. Impact fees need research so more work isn't added to the Town's staff.

NON-PUBLIC SESSIONS

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.

Motion was made by Labelle to enter nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a) the dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, seconded by Tempesta. All in favor by Roll Call and the ***motion passed*****.** The Board entered nonpublic session at 7:42pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Town Administrator Lori Rautiola and Recording Secretary Meagen Kerris.

Motion was made by LaBelle to come out of non-public session, seconded by Tempesta. All in favor by Roll Call and the ***motion passed***. Non-public session ended 7:59pm.

Motion was made by 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, seconded by Tempesta. All were in favor and the ***motion passed***.

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Motion was made by LaBelle to come out of non-public session, seconded by Tempesta. All in favor by Roll Call and the ***motion passed***. Non-public session ended: 8:37pm.

Motion was made by 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, seconded by Tempesta. All were in favor and the ***motion passed***.

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Motion was made by LaBelle to come out of non-public session, seconded by Tempesta. All in favor by Roll Call and the ***motion passed***. Non-public session ended 8:45pm.

Motion was made by 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, seconded by Tempesta. All were in favor and the ***motion passed***.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by LaBelle. The motion was seconded by Tempesta without further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.*** Adjournment occurred at ___???__ p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Meagan Kerris
Recording Secretary

Approved on October 22, 2025