Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – June 11, 2025
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair W. William Hutwelker III, at 5:03pm 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 Susan Ells.

OTHERS PRESENT

Garrett Ranney and Seamus Malloy with FACT TV, Jay Ward, Ann Heffernon, Ron Parent, Katherine Snow, Mark Scalera, Steve Bittel (Trustee of the Trust Funds), Joe DiRusso (Director of Public Works), Eileen Longe, Rob Kenney, Lillian Chirichelle (Golden Rod Grange Hall), Michael York, Marty and Stephanie Rose (MJR Painting).

FIRE STATION BOND

Chair Hutwelker explained that the budget which was approved for the new fire station by the voters was $3.4 million. The expected cost is now expected to be $2.8 million because the bid which was accepted was lower than estimated. It might even be lower because the contractor is allowing the Town to do some of the work which will reduce the cost to closer to $2.5 million. Hutwelker said the reduced price makes it prudent to discuss whether to have the bond amount of $2.5 million be reduced.

Steve Bittel said the bond could be reduced to $2 million – there are risks in having too high a bond. Some of the funds available will depend on US Senator Shaheen's USDA congressional funding grant specifically for the fire station (if it does become available which is unclear). The lower the bond, the better for the Town and taxpayers. $500K has already been spent using money from the Capital reserve which is to be used strictly for the fire station.

Expenses would first be paid from the bond, then $200K from USDA grant (if we receive it - it must be used for this purpose); there is $433K left in the *Invest NH* reserve fund (which is money the town received when the affordable housing next to Gomarlo's was approved; we received $840K; we have used some of this money to fund infrastructure; if we don't need it for the fire station we could use the balance for other purposes); next used would be $150K in undesignated funds from the warrant article. Last would be $150K from general taxation funds as approved in the warrant article.

DPW Director Joe DiRusso said the project isn't going quite as smoothly as he hoped – still waiting for final design - but he still feels there is money to be saved off the original estimate based on how much work the Town DPW is able to do on the project; he gave some examples. There is still concern for materials cost to rise due to tariffs, materials availability, and higher cost if it extends into the winter season.

Jay Ward suggested the architectural payment might be due before the bond comes in; Hutwelker said that would not be the case. Ward stated that he thinks Bittel's recommendation makes sense.

Mark Scalera would like to see us reduce the bond since the estimate came in less; Michael York said it would build trust with the voters if we reduced the bond.

Tempesta feels we should not reduce the bond because by using the bond we could save the other funds. Bittel explained the financial plan which the Town must project debt service out several years. Tempesta asked some clarifying questions to understand the pros and cons.

Rautiola said the board has been diligent in reducing costs, but she would rather keep the bond at $2.5 million and use any leftover money on other projects but she and Bittel disagreed on whether leftover bonds can be used for other projects. She stated there is an RSA that deals with this.

LaBelle has some concerns about the material costs and wished there had been more time since the bond application must be submitted on Monday.

Marty Rose said he has had similar experiences and that the bond money could be used by the Town if it goes back to the voters; he liked the transparency of the reduced cost.

Tempesta appreciated Bittel's knowledge, experience and recommendations. DiRusso read the RSA which stated that any unused bond money would need 2/3 vote on a warrant. If that fails, the money must be used to pay the principal.

LaBelle expressed concern about reducing the bond; Hutwelker reiterated the amounts needed; he would like to see a reduced bond. He said that even if the building was completely completed in November, by the time bills were paid, it would be too late to get an article on the next ballot to have the town approve the use of the leftover bond, so it would be more than a year we would be holding the leftover money. There would be no guarantee the voters would approve the use of the leftover bond. He suggested something in the middle. Bittel explained it is important to have each project stand on its own – that it is not good business practice to borrow money and pay interest on it for the possibility of a project a couple years later. Hutwelker asked again if the other selectmen would be comfortable with a number in the middle; they discussed the subject further.

- **Motion** made by LaBelle to withdraw the $2.5 million bond approval and rescind the $2.5 million loan agreement. The motion was seconded by Tempesta and there was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***
- **Motion** made by LaBelle to authorize the Town Administrator to complete paperwork for a $2 million dollar bond. The motion was seconded by Tempesta and there was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

A special meeting is needed and will be held at the Town Hall on Friday at 11:30 in the conference room.

MINUTES

- The regular meeting Minutes of April 23 and June 4, 2025, were tabled until the next meeting.

- The non-public session Minutes of April 23 and June 4, 2025, were considered. There was a **motion** by LaBelle to approve the non-public session Minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Tempesta and there was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

CONSENT AGENDA

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

- Payroll Manifest
- Accounts Payable Manifest

- Raffle Permit 2025-02 Cheshire Fair Grounds
- Raffle Permit 2025-0 Northern Lights

PUBLIC INPUT

- Ann Heffernon and Jay Ward asked for the Town to request assistance from Fish & Game to patrol the Wilson Pond boat launch area. Heffernon and Ward are part of the Wilson Pond Association, and they pick up trash to keep the area clean. They are grateful to the DPW for picking up the trash but now there is more trash, and bigger items, such as abandoned boats. They requested that the Town ask Fish & Game to witness what is going on there, such as swimming, camping, partying, etc. Mark Scalera said that Fish & Game were there a couple of years ago; he had a conversation with them; they suggested better signage. Ron Parent asked whether it was sanctioned as a swimming hole. Ward said swimming is not allowed. Rautiola will reach out to Fish & Game.

APPOINTMENTS

- **Golden Rod Grange Advisory Committee** – Lillian Chirichella – Swanzey Advisory Committee.
    - Lillian Chirichella provided a memorandum of understanding to continue as a Grange Advisory Committee. Hutwelker asked for a meeting at a future date so they can devote more time to this subject.
    - Chirichella said the committee was approached by Stephanie and Marty Rose who own MJR Painting who have offered to scrape and paint the Golden Rod Grange Hall.
        - Marty Rose read a letter to the board offering to provide 100% cost of materials and labor. Sherwin Williams and Benjamin Moore have agreed to generously provide paint and supplies. He has contacts from contractors who will be donating their time for repair projects needed. This project could be done at the end of September.
        - He went on to say that each year his company will choose a project to donate via the *MJR Painting Forward* project.
        - They are Lead paint certified, bonded and insured.
        - DiRusso recommended not pressure washing due to the age of the building.
        - The details will be worked out between DiRusso and Rautiola to make sure that proper liability insurance etc. are in place.

NEW BUSINESS

- **2025 Road Improvement Contract Award** – requested by DiRusso
    - **Motion** was made by LaBelle to award the 2025 Road Improvement Contract to All State with a total value of $295,000. There was a second by Tempesta. There was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed***.
- **West Street Road Project & Eaton Road Drainage Improvement** - DPW Director Joe DiRusso – initial costs were reduced on other sidewalk projects so there is a surplus he would like to use to work on this project. They will be removing the sidewalk on West Street and will be paving the road wider and painting to designate pedestrian traffic. This area has had a flooding problem for years. There will be 2 catch basins that will be discharging on John Lessor's property; abutter Mark Perry agreed to provide an easement for a retention pond that the other 2 catch basins will discharge into; he negotiated that the Town will extend the sewer connection to his property. Eaton Road needs some work, a catch basin and paving. Costs are expected to be $32K for Eaton Road; $12K for West Street. Requesting to spend the surplus on these projects. **Agreed by consensus**.
- **KCS/Gordon Services Contract** – discussion regarding the contract that was received on Monday which is being reviewed by Gordon, Rautiola and Attorney Johnston
- **Carpenter Home Repairs** – DPW Director Joe DiRusso – Discussed the repairs needed. No decisions.

- **Formation and establishment of the Lucy Carpenter Trust Committee**. Hutwelker described the committee as requested at the meeting last week. (See minutes from June 4, 2025)
    - **MOTION** made by LaBelle to establish a Lucy Carpenter Trust Oversight Committee to oversee and guide decisions regarding needs assessments and fund distribution of the trust funds as outlined in the Lucy Carpenter Trust Oversight Committee Policy and Guidelines. There was a second by Tempesta. There was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed***.
    - **Motion** made by Hutwelker to assign Mark Scalera as a designee to the committee. There was a second by Tempesta. There was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed***.

Cemetery Perpetual Care Trust Policy

- This was tabled.

Abatements: M240 L37, M220 L6, M227 L28/0/BGO/41, M256 L13/0/0/0, M218L71/0/0/0, M227 L28/0/BGO/5

- MOTION made by LaBelle to accept the recommendations from Marazoff Assessing Services for the following abatement applications for 2025- M240 L37, M220 L6, M227 L28/0/BGO/41, M256 L13/0/0/0, M218L71/0/0/0, M227 L28/0/BGO/5. There was a second by Tempesta. There was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed***.

OLD BUSINESS

- None

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

- None

CORRESPONDENCE

- None

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

Motion was made by LaBelle to enter nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of a person., seconded by Tempesta. All in favor by Roll Call and the ***motion passed*.** The Board entered nonpublic session at 7:20pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola, Recording Secretary Susan Ells and DPW Director Joe DiRusso.

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 at 8:04pm.

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***.

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 non-public session at 8:05 p.m. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola, Recording Secretary Susan Ells and DPW Director Joe DiRusso.

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 at 8:08pm.

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 8:09pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells
Recording Secretary

Approved on October 22, 2025