Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – September 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 4:58pm. 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.

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

There was a motion made by LaBelle to enter a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (c) which was seconded by Tempesta. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed**.** The Board entered the non-public session at 4:58pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola and Recording Secretary Susan Ells.

There was a motion made by LaBelle to come out of the non-public session, seconded by Tempesta. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed. The Non-public session ended at 5:15pm.

There was a motion 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; the motion was seconded by Tempesta. All were in favor and the motion passed.

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

There was a motion made by LaBelle to enter a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (c) which was seconded by Tempesta. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed**.** The Board entered the non-public session at 5:16pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola and Recording Secretary Susan Ells.

There was a motion made by LaBelle to come out of the non-public session, seconded by Tempesta. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed. The Non-public session ended at 5:24pm.

The Chair called the regular meeting to order at 5:35.

OTHERS PRESENT

Kai Kraemer with FACT TV, Representative Barry Faulkner, Mark Scalera, Jane Kennedy, Jay Ward, County Commissioners Skip DiBernardo, Claudia Stewart and Terry Clark, County Administrator Chris Coates and Finance Director, Sheryl Trombly

NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion on 2026 Budget Preparation – *moved to the beginning of the meeting due to a schedule change and Lori Rautiola needs to leave early*

Rautiola is looking for guidance from the board to give to department heads. This is her first year in this position and is looking for areas to improve and those to make more efficient; she would like to see level funding. She is waiting for health insurance rates and for heating estimates. She is hoping for no more than 5%

increase in the budget. Hutwelker knows there will be increases in EMS services but is not aware of any other impending major increases.

MINUTES

- The regular meeting minutes of September 3, 2025 were considered. There was a motion by LaBelle to approve the minutes as presented which was seconded by Tempesta and there was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

- The non-public session minutes #1 and #2 of September 3, 2025 were considered. There was a motion by LaBelle to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Tempesta and there was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

- Payroll Manifest
- Accounts Payable Manifest
- Raffle Permit-Monadnock Football
- Event Permit-Motorcycle Swap

PUBLIC INPUT

As Rautiola was leaving, Mark Scalera asked for a moment to discuss the e-coli test result that the Wilson Pond Association received on Friday, 9/12. They are very concerned about the result and want to protect the public and the community and would like assistance with more testing. Rautiola said that the Town's Health Officer, Stephon Mehu, had told her about this issue and is looking into it. Scalera and Jay Ward are concerned that there might be sewage leaking and need funding for more testing and for signage to keep people from the water. Hutwelker said he had responded to their email and assured them that the Town would help. Ward felt that Nelson Labs doesn't think it's an acute issue. He feels more testing is needed to discern if there was an anomaly or if there is a bigger issue. Ward took a water sample to Concord today, but they are backlogged. Hutwelker reassured them that the Town would help, and Scalera and Ward offered their assistance as needed. Scalera said test results should go to Rautiola's email going forward.

Jane Kennedy thanked whoever was responsible for the signs at the end of Matthews' Road that are reflective now. Hutwelker said he would tell Joe DiRusso because he worked with the State.

APPOINTMENTS

A. NH House Rep - Barry Faulkner

Representative Faulkner came to talk about legislation that might come up. Hutwelker would like to reestablish local control. He said the Towns know what they are doing; he would appreciate Rep Faulkner's help; Swanzey has improved zoning ordinances. Faulkner said not all towns do as well, so the State felt they needed to take control. Hutwelker said Swanzey has added a lot of housing; the State is not providing funding to fill the void. He appreciates Faulkner's efforts on the Town's behalf. Rep Faulkner said he helped with Covered Bridges protection; the State has legislation in place to address that now. Towns could apply fines for damage done or could establish enterprise funding. Hutwelker asked for more information – Rep Faulkner said it is special revenue funds set aside for bridge repair and the Town would apply any fines and insurance payments to be used for bridge repair. A trust fund would be similar but would need to go through an appropriate process to remove the funds. Tempesta said a lot of towns are done with fixing the bridges, they've given up. Hutwelker told Rep Faulkner that the Town has a new committee looking into how to keep

the damage from happening. Tempesta agreed that fines are needed. Faulkner said Sawyers Crossing has the highest amount of traffic of covered bridges in the State. Hutwelker appreciated the work that was done to allow the Town to install cameras and said that Sawyers Crossing has a camera; he asked if the law could be broadened for vehicles in tow which cause vibrational damage. Faulkner suggested he could come back in November. Hutwelker said he was welcome any time and reiterated that he appreciated his service.

B. County Administrator - Chris Coates

Chris Coates introduced County Commissioners and the Finance Director. He complimented the work that Swanzey has done on housing and said that Swanzey is a role model community by being aggressive at a time when others are unsure. The roundabout by the high school has transformed the area; Mt Caesar's addition and the revival of Whitcomb Hall are great examples. He wanted to recognize the courage and work that was required.

The County wants to tell the story of what they are doing. They have podcasts, radio, media, and press releases to show what they are doing in the community. He handed out a document they developed to use as a tool to explain, and they have gone to multiple towns with this tool. There are 20 departments in the County, and they discussed a few:

- **Maplewood Nursing home**'s census is lower than it could be due to staffing. He reported that there are 20 apartments for assisted living attached to the nursing home. The County is responsible for any individual that is Medicaid-eligible that needs nursing home or home care. If there wasn't a nursing home here, the people would need to be farther away.
- **Dept of Corrections** – census 100 -110 including 40-60 locals; the County has a federal contract for federal inmates from surrounding states. The majority coming from Vermont; this generates revenue to offset taxes.
- **EMS** – they have 5 ambulances and partner with SmartRide wheelchair service instead of using ambulances; they have grown to 30-50 runs/day versus that many per week last year. They have been running in the black in the past 2 quarters.
- **Connected Families** – a grant program to work with kids who are at risk in school and to help support the family, so kids have the best chance to stay in the community. Out of district placement is very costly (from $200-500K per student). This grant gives a daily rate so there is no direct cost to the county to keep the child in the family. It is a continuum of care to keep kids out of incarceration.
- **Sheriff's dispatch** – this is evolving; they are policing in 4 towns in the county; they also will have an option of providing a Safety Resource Officer in MRHS; a deputy handles truancy at Middle school in Keene;

They have several programs they offer:

- **Cheshire County Community Power** – the first county in the state to create a community power coalition.
- **HandyMan program** – when a person has a health crisis and needs work done to get back to their home and has limited income, this provides funds that are not derived from taxes. They partner with ServiceLink and SWCS; they use Cheshire Medical Center as referral agent; this provides a continuum of care; they do have a limited amount per year and have already spent it this year; they have done multiple homes in Swanzey.

The County has 465 employees but should be 500; it is hard to staff the nursing home. The County has been recognized as the first county to run an EMS service and to support the ability to stay at home. There is a restorative justice program for the lawbreakers to hear about the damage they've done in a therapeutic way.

The back side of the document shows the taxes to be raised to fund the County. The average for the past 7 years is .97%. They work hard to understand the fiscal needs of the community. Hutwelker said one challenge

for Swanzey is general welfare; is there anyone to reach out to talk about programs to put in place. Coates said to reach out to him. Food insecurity is a huge issue; people are making choices between Rx and food. The Community Kitchen served 200 more people in the first week of September.

Tempesta thanked Coates for the work they are doing, especially the EMS who cared for his mother; he asked for more information about the SRO; Coates said that instead of taking a police officer out of the force they use a retired officer or deputy for just the hours/days the school is open.

Sheryl Trombly said that many people who don't know what the County Government does; most of the departments are statutorily required; the County is responsible for the cost to care for Medicaid assistance which is one of their largest expenses – over $8 million for costs not covered by Medicaid. The real estate tax bill shows the County portion is ~~$19.06~~ (correction $2.27). She explained the equalization process the state makes because each town must reevaluate property every 5 years. DOR does the process so that what must be collected to be equally shared based on the market. Then the equalized amounts are totaled based on the property values per town. She sends a letter that compares the past 3 years to show the apportionment to the county. Chris said the County has challenges and the BBB has items that can hurt the County such as not getting revenue until the State makes their decision on if someone is qualified for Medicaid and the State's resources are so thin they aren't approving people in a timely manner.

The document lists the projects that were completed without utilizing taxes. They learned the County has been entered in a contest for the example of how best to do energy efficiency and are in the top 4 in the country.

The County has a grants program and grants director who is more than happy to help towns with writing grants but will also teach how to write grants which will help the towns.

The Board thanked them for their good work. The group departed the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS - continued

B. Emergency Management – Proposal for New Radios (2)

LaBelle made a motion to authorize the purchase of two (2) radios in the amount of $5,651.00 for the Emergency Management Department, with the funds to come from the Emergency Management Facilities & Equipment Expendable Trust Fund (ETF) and to further authorize the Emergency Management Director to sign all documents pertaining to the purchase. There was a second by Tempesta. There was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

C. **Request for Proposal – IT Management Services**

Lori is preparing RFP for IT management services as the town's current contract expires at the end of year and the owner is retiring.

LaBelle made a motion to approve the RFP for IT Management Services. There was a second by Tempesta. There was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

D. **Signing of the Kathy A Nicholson Living Trust Deed**

A property line adjustment was done in 2018 between the property and the Police Department, but the deed didn't get updated and the property is being sold and needs a clean title.

LaBelle made a motion to approve and sign the Quitclaim Deed for the Town of Swanzey for consideration paid, grants to Kathy A. Nicholson, Trustee of the Kathy A. Nicholson Living Trust dated March 24, 2022, of

Eaton Road, Swanzey NH. There was a second by Tempesta. There was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT

There was a motion by LaBelle to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Tempesta; there was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed. Adjournment occurred at 7:04pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on October 1, 2025