Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – October 1, 2025
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair W. William Hutwelker III, at 5:04pm. 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 5:04pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola, Recording Secretary Susan Ells and Ashlee Crosby, Director of Recreation.

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 5:29pm.

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.

The Chair called the regular meeting to order at 5:34pm.

OTHERS PRESENT

Kai Kraemer with FACT TV. Margaret Blank, Desmond Kaeger, Michael York, John Traynor, Eileen Longe, Rob Kenney, Alan Gross, Lillian Chirichelle, Jane Johnson, Jim Jarzabek, Chief Eric Mattson, Deputy Chief Michael Burke and Asst Chief Vincent Sanchez.

MINUTES

- The regular meeting minutes of 9/16/2025 were considered. There was a motion by LaBelle to approve the minutes as presented which was seconded by Tempesta; Chair Hutwelker pointed out a correction to the minutes; there was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

- The non-public session minutes of 9/16/2025 #1 and #2 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.

A.) Payroll Manifest
B.) Accounts Payable Manifest
C.) Open Container-Whitcomb Hall

D.) Permanent application for property tax credit/exemption Map 216 Lot 6

PUBLIC INPUT

John Traynor spoke regarding the Christian Hill Bridge. He had been at a Select Board meeting in July and had asked questions regarding why the bridge had been put up for sale but now the plan is to move it instead. He said that Article #8 on the ballot in 2020 was to approve the Town receiving money from the State for the new bridge. At the time it was not known that the bridge had value as a historic landmark. To take federal money, the bridge could not be torn down since it was eligible to be a historic landmark. This was realized last fall so in November 2024 the Town put the bridge for sale for $1; no one bought it, so they had to find another use. It was determined that it could be moved down to the rail trail where there was a wash out. He said the Town never voted to tear down a historic landmark but that it was decided by the board. He is suggesting having the town vote officially to tear it down. Chair Hutwelker said he would reach out to the town attorney. Rautiola said that while the former Town Administrator was here, there were a lot of meetings and communications regarding the historical aspect; she has not had the time to review it all yet. Traynor would like the Board to consider that it has potential to be a historic landmark either as a bridge or as part of the Town. Chair Hutwelker will ask Josif Bicja from Hoyle & Tanner to attend a meeting to discuss the subject.

APPOINTMENTS

1. Margaret Blank and Desmond Kaeger from Underwood Engineers

Underwood Engineers introduced themselves and then gave a presentation regarding the Asset Management Program (AMP). The Town received a grant of $30,000 through the American Rescue Plan Act provided by the NH Dept of Environmental Services. Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC) completed field work funded by a DOT grant. The AMP was completed by Underwood Engineers in cooperation with the Town of Swanzey and the SWRPC. Desmond presented Vision Statement and Level of Service Goals. They provided goals for the next year and reviewed ongoing Stormwater System Projects. Next, they discussed the Stormwater System Inventory and Condition Assessment. The assessment identified 8 trouble spots where the Town has experienced serious flooding incidents of stormwater-related damage on Talbot Hill, California Brook, Winch Hill, Pebble Hill, Atkinson Hill, Dunn Hill, Cobble Hill and Swanzey Lake. 150 assets were listed in Poor condition for various reasons such as being blocked or clogged, damaged or broken, or inaccessible. They provided Prioritization of Assets based on the criticality matrix that rates criteria such as probability of failure and impact of failure. She provided an example of areas of high impact of failure.

If all items that were identified were repaired, The Financial Overview estimated the cost would be $31,496,996. Margaret described Stormwater AMP Deliverables: The inventory files have been uploaded to the ArcGIS Online account so staff can review it. Also, they created a Story Map on Swanzey's ArcGIS Online account; ArcGIS Pro project was set up on Swanzey's ArcGIS workstation. The Python tools are saved to Swanzey's workstation. The Financial Planning Spreadsheet can be updated as the water system inventory changes. The LOS Matrix is in Excel and goals can be deleted as they are achieved; new ones can be added, or existing ones can be revised. A tab was provided to list goals beyond the current year. The Board thanked them for the presentation and the work they've done.

2. **Fire Chief, Eric Mattson – Department Update**:

Chief Eric Mattson, Deputy Chief Michael Burke and Asst Chief Vincent Sanchez met with the Board to give an update on the Fire Department and to present any necessary recommendations to the Board. Chief reported that they responded to 106 calls for service in June (21 fire, 85 EMS); July had 90 calls (17 fire, 73 EMS); August had 121 (32 fire and 89 for EMS). They are on track for 1100 calls for the year. They gave examples of activities they have participated in; they invited Troy Fire, Richmond Fire and Cheshire County EMS to tour Mt Caesar School, created an Operations and Safety plan for the Northlands music festival; had a helicopter crash (no

injuries). There were 3 days for the music festival, a 'touch a truck' event for Cheshire County, 2 vehicles were in the Jumanji parade; Cheshire Fair Op and Safety plan; Auto extrication training exercise, Monadnock area chiefs' meetings for collaboration.

Currently the department has 32 employees; this number has increased greatly since last year. There are 4 recent hires now in training. Working with the new HR coordinator has cut the time down from application to hiring so candidates are not lost waiting to be hired.

The Chief is proposing providing an ambulance service for the Town. Tempesta asked about the $20 hourly rate being offered for new hires; Chief stated that Keene is offering $24; Brattleboro is offering $15-$18/hour, so Swanzey is in the middle. Asst Chief Sanchez described the teambuilding training they participated in and said that call response numbers increase, and communications improve after these training events. Chair Hutwelker said it would be helpful to hear from a financial aspect regarding adding an ambulance and what the benefit is to the Town. A budget is needed for 2 ambulances: 1 for the current year and 1 for the next year. Chief said they are hiring firefighters who are cross trained in EMS, not hiring ambulance drivers. The Board thanked the group for attending the meeting and praised the work they are doing.

NEW BUSINESS

A. **Status of Grange Hall Committee** - Eileen Longe, Rob Kenney, Alan Gross, Lillian Chirichelle

The group attended at the request of the board for a discussion on the status of the Golden Road Grange Hall. Chair Hutwelker explained the concern about justifying the cost to restore the building which exceeds $1,000,000. He's heard from taxpayers who are concerned about putting money into 'wants' and not 'needs'. He asked for their vision of the use of the building that would generate the revenue needed to support the renovation and upkeep of the building. $110,000 has been spent to replace the roof and stabilize the building. There is a quote for $165,000 for the foundation. Lillian Chirichelle said it is on the national register and was built in 1916. They have a goal of saving the historic structure which ties to the agricultural culture of the town. They envision a community center with a portion for seniors. They have been successful in holding Senior coffee connections. Ashlee Crosby had talked with them about a connection with the rec center. Lillian felt that the taxpayers' approval of the roof supports the interest of the residents. Rob Kenney said he didn't think it would be that expensive and asked about the quote for the foundation. Chair Hutwelker said that DPW director Joe DiRusso had a contractor inspect the foundation and gave a quote of $165,000. Kenney said he had someone inspect the foundation and quoted $22,000; he asked who he could speak with at the town and Hutwelker told him to reach out to Joe DiRusso. Rautiola said that a Request For Proposal would need to go out before going on a ballot for the voters. Certain standards are required on the historic buildings, and the contractor needs to be qualified to work on Historic buildings. Lillian said the taxpayers are invested since they voted for the roof repair. Hutwelker said normally one would start with the foundation but since there was so much stabilization needed and water damage repaired, they started with the roof. He is sure that $1,000,000 would be easy to spend on it. Gross said that 22 people came to the Senior connection; a lot of activities could take place there such as after-school activities. Tempesta said he often hears about the comparison of the Whitcomb Hall which had a lot of fund-raising activities before the taxpayers were asked to spend money on it. Lillian said they applied for a CDFA grant twice but have been denied. The feedback was that the building didn't have any type of programming so they added an outhouse so that they could start utilizing the building. They have been designated by NH Preservation Alliance as a building worthy of being renovated. Tempesta reiterated that more fund-raising is needed to pay for the foundation repair. Rautiola suggested having goals such as other cultural uses so that funders are more likely to want to support them. The painting contractor who volunteered to paint the building is delayed until next Spring. Hutwelker suggested they contact the people who worked on the Whitcomb Hall renovation to get their advice and suggestions. He recommended

they contact the Cheshire County Grant writer who is willing to help towns apply for grants. Grant funding is critical. The Board thanked the group for coming and for their work on behalf of the Grange.

B. Swanzey Lake Dam Engineer Award

Rautiola reported the process used to determine the company to award the engineering project to and reviewed the costs with the Board.

A motion was made by LaBelle to award the Proposal for Engineering Services to Fuss & O'Neill for the Swanzey Lake Dam Analysis and Remedial Repair Design. (NH Dam ID # D23007). The motion was seconded by Tempesta and there was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

C. 2026 Winter Heating Bid Award (Oil & Propane)

A motion was made by LaBelle to award the 2025-26 Winter Fuel Bid to Swanzey Oil for Oil for $2.46, and to L&G Propane for Propane for $1.389. The motion was seconded by Tempesta. There was some discussion; Tempesta supported using the local oil company of Swanzey Oil. All were in favor and the motion passed.

	Oil	**Propane**
Cota & Cota	2.94	1.97
Davis Oil	2.59	
Dead River		2.41
Discount Oil	2.44	
L & G Propane		1.389
Swanzey Oil	2.46	

D. Carpenter Home Roof Estimate

A motion was made by LaBelle to approve the quote from GDS Landmark Group in the amount of $9,750 for the partial roof replacement on the Carpenter Home, with the funding to come from the George Whitcomb Common Fund. The motion was seconded by Tempesta and there was no further discussion. Hutwelker abstained. Labelle and Tempesta were in favor and the motion passed.

E. Forestry Service Agreement – Tracey Lot Forest – Map 219 Lot 1

A motion was made by LaBelle to authorize Joe DiRusso as the primary Contact for the Forestry Services Agreement between The Meadowsend Consulting Company for the Tracey Lot Forest (Map 219 Lot 1). The motion was seconded by Tempesta and there was no further discussion. Tempesta asked for clarification on the purpose. All were in favor and the motion passed.

F. Memo from Planning Department: 10 Year Plan - Budget Shortfalls

Hutwelker reported that the Route 10 project was taken off the State of NH 10-year plan due to State budget cuts. Michael York reported that this is a very dangerous area due to traffic speeding through and using the turn lanes as passing lanes.

OLD BUSINESS

None

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

A. Vehicle Inventory Update – The Town purchased 1 new police cruiser. The plan is to repurpose the oldest vehicle, which is the Chief's vehicle if worth repairing (estimating $4,000) and is recommending that it be used by the Solid Waste department and DPW. There are 3 cars in the Town Hall parking lot that aren't used very often and are taking up space, so Rautiola suggested tracking to see how often they are used and possibly selling ones that are not needed.
B. Webber Hill Guard Rail - NH DOT permit was approved for the right of way and Gordon Services will install the guard rail.
C. Update on Bridge Committee & Signs - Received the second quote for the addition of bridge signs. The Committee will meet later this month to discuss it.
D. The West Swanzey Wastewater Plant solar array is completed and we are just waiting for the paperwork to be completed.
E. Next Meeting October 22, 2025. Weekly thereafter.

CORRESPONDENCE

None

PUBLIC INPUT

Michael York asked if we could ask the State to reduce the speed limit along the Route 10 section; Mark LaBelle stated that the lowest they will reduce it is to 40mph which is what the limit is now.

NON-PUBLIC SESSIONS

Non-public session(s) per RSA 91-A:3, II *(e)* Consideration or negotiation of pending claims or litigation threatened in writing or filed by or against the public body, or by or against any member because of his or her membership in such body.

There was a motion made by LaBelle to enter a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (e) which was seconded by Tempesta. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed**.** The Board entered the non-public session at 8:07pm. 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 8:25pm.

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 8:26pm. 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 8:41pm.

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.

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 8:46pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on October 22, 2025