Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – October 22, 2025
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair W. William Hutwelker III, at 4:27pm. 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 4:27pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola, Recording Secretary Susan Ells, Athletic Director Ashlee Crosby, Ashley Nash, Kyle Hodgman, Shana Thompson, and DPW Joe DiRusso.

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 5:28pm.

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 reopened the regular meeting to order at 5:32pm.

OTHERS PRESENT

Mike York, Mark Scalara, Stephon Mehu, Eric Mattson, Josh Whipple, Joe Gonsalves

MINUTES

- The regular meeting minutes of the following dates were considered:
    - March 19, 2025
    - April 9, 2025
    - April 16, 2025
    - May 19, 2025
    - May 21, 2025
    - June 11, 2025
    - October 1, 2025

    There was a motion by LaBelle to approve the minutes as amended which was seconded by Tempesta and there was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

- The non-public session minutes of the following dates were considered:
    - March 19 #1, 2, 3 and 4, 2025
    - May 7 #1, 2, and 3, 2025
    - June 23, 2025
    - July 9, 2025

- July 23 #1, 2, and 3, 2025
- October 1 #1, 2, and 3, 2025

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. Junkyard License – Buffum's
D. Open Container Permit -Whitcomb Hall
E. Event Permit-Halloween Block Party
F. Event Permit-Trunk or Treat
G. Raffle Permit-Northern Lights- 2
H. Tax Abatement- M/248 L/43
I. Yield Tax Levy-M/220 L/176
J. Yield Tax Levy-M/220 L/181

PUBLIC INPUT

None

APPOINTMENTS

A. Governance committee update:

The committee's task is to gather information and explore the pros and cons of different forms of town governance in addition to the possible return of a town meeting format. The committee wants to meet with and hear from the town residents as well as submit a proposal to the Select Board and the town by late November for eventual inclusion on the 2026 Warrant.

LaBelle reported that the group has met several times, and the current consensus is to return to town meeting format, but the group wants more public input. Mark Scalera said there were about 30 people at the Coffee group at Grange Hall and there was a good discussion; they shot short videos which will be on committee's Facebook page; there was a radio show that can be heard on town' website. The goal is to get more of the voters informed about town issues. He feels either method of governance is good, but the engagement is important. Hutwelker said SB2 doesn't get as much engagement as the Town meetings provide.

B. CIPC update:

Tempesta reported that the meetings have been going well; they have met with several departments and he's enjoying learning the budgeting process. York said a concern of the committee is the expense of the Grange Hall and Brown Field. Hutwelker discussed the investment so far and is concerned that having an item on the ballot might not be enough for the voters to understand the scope of the project. Scalera said the building has a lot of potential, but the voters need to be informed.

C. Fire Chief, Eric Mattson – 2026 Budget Proposal

Chief Mattson reviewed the line items in the proposed budget.

- Physicals/Infection Control is higher because there will be mandatory in-depth health screening.
- Protective clothing budget stayed the same but only about 1/3 has been spent so far this year so Hutwelker would like more detail on this at the next meeting.

- There is a similar issue with tires, but Chief Mattson said they will need more next year.
- Oxygen is currently over budget for this year, but he didn't raise the budget much since they won't need to purchase more bottles.
- Non-Disposable medical equipment is over budget this year; they made the final buyout for the cardiac monitors so won't need more next year.
- Vehicle maintenance – There is a large repair coming up. Hutwelker asked for more information at the next meeting.
- Tools and Equipment – well under budget this year but looking at more equipment for other trucks. Hutwelker would like him to meet with Rautiola about that.
- Department supplies budget increased due to the trend of this year.
- Radios are over budget this year; they bought 8 pagers this year; they will need to upgrade the ones in the trucks as needed when trucks are replaced, but that is not in the budget.
- Cell, mobile, and internet cost this year is higher than he is budgeting for next year because they removed a phone.
- Heating oil; only 1/3 spent so far, not likely to need $12K next year; Hutwelker suggested reducing the line to $9K.
- Office supplies – only spent $646 so far; budget is $3,000; perhaps some items were charged to department supplies; he will reduce it to $1500.
- IT Equipment and Service contracts: nothing has been spent so far this year. Hutwelker would like more information at the next meeting.

Regarding CIP – the Chief will be providing the committee with 2 quotes for a potential fire truck to replace Engine 2 with a commercial cab style truck.

Hutwelker asked if there is a map for fire ponds, if not could one be made? Chief Mattson said one could be made. Tempesta asked if any private ones are inspected; they are not. The Chief will try to get one done by the end of the year.

LaBelle asked about employees who take home vehicles which is not in the Town's vehicle policy. Chief Mattson said he wasn't aware of the policy. Those employees are covering on-call nights. Hutwelker asked him to meet with Rautiola to review the policy. Rautiola said there are a lot of policies that will be reviewed.

The Board thanked Chief Mattson for his work.

D. Recycling Center Manager, Josh Whipple – 2026 Budget Proposal

Whipple provided handouts to explain the increases and decreases in his budget and reviewed the line items.

Increases:

- Solid Waste Disposal up due to contract rate increase from Waste Management. Whipple feels the weight next year will be less than this year due to diversion efforts. The pilot program of #3-7 plastics only brings in 1 penny/pound or $7/bale, but it saves $65/bale in waste charges. Whipple hopes to have a sorting window for #3-7 by Spring.
- There will be a solid waste surcharge starting the first of the year which targets out of state and commercial vendors, so municipalities will be reimbursed quarterly (but are not exempt).
- Universal Waste Disposal – increase due to vendor costs.
- Construction and Demo Disposal – Increase driven by contract rates.

- Whipple will be trying to find areas to divert more to recycling and making sure items aren't coming from out of town. He might change color of recycling stickers annually to catch vehicles whose owners might have moved but still come to Swanzey.
- Heat for the main building – ran out of propane end of February and had to use electric heat. They have now installed a waste oil burner.
- Water cooler – increased consumption to hydrate staff.

Decreases:
- Equipment rental: now they have a second skid steer – not likely to need to rent other equipment.
- Tires – better vendor pricing.
- Electronics disposal – negotiation with vendor on contract.
- Freight and transportation – decrease due to watching the markets and holding on to material until the haul charges drop.
- Training and education – more online trainings available versus in-person training.
- Gas (Vehicle and equipment) decrease due to no longer doing VT deposit trips. Storage is also an issue and a lot of labor for a small return. Hutwelker asked if there was someone that would do it for us. Whipple will investigate that.
- New Equipment – slowly purchasing equipment each year.

Tempesta complimented Whipple for the detail and preparation he provided.

E. Police Chief, Joe Gonsalves – Officer Retention Strategies

Chief Gonsalves is attending the meeting to address staffing issues; 1 officer is leaving on Saturday. 2 are on leave. The department is struggling to maintain 24/7 shifts. Everyone is working overtime. The Chief would like to implement on-call hours overnight from 3am – 6am. 2 officers would break it up with 1.5 hours on call each. It would be permanent every week until 2 more officers are hired. Chief Gonsalves proposed the hourly rate on call at $8/hour on call and 2 hours minimum if called in. The board agreed; this would be implemented on Sunday.

Initiatives – Chief Gonzales proposed sign on bonus for certified officers to increase from $10,000 to $15,000 and offer out-of-state/non-certified officers $10,000. The bonuses would be paid out in 3-4 segments over 18 months. The Chief suggested an agreement to have it paid back to the Town if the officer doesn't stay for 3 years. The Board agreed.

Chief Gonsalves would like to increase starting rate from $29 to $30/hour. The board agreed.

Chief Gonsalves would like to attract part-time officers; he is proposing an hourly rate of $34/hour certified officers (part-time no benefits). The board agreed.

The Chief proposed a relocation bonus to attract someone to move from 60 or more miles away in the amount of $2000. The board agreed.

Another suggestion the Chief made was to reach out to the owners of the rental properties that are currently being built to offer a discount to EMS employees. He said HR Coordinator Meagan Kerris will investigate it.

Offering yearly education benefits is another suggestion the Chief made. These would be recurring annual payout of $1000 for an associate's degree; $1500 for a bachelor's degree; $2000 for a master's degree. He said

that Jaffrey offers similar amounts. The board will consider this and request that the Chief submit a proposal to Rautiola.

The group also discussed increasing the fitness bonus – A proposal should go to Rautiola.

Chief Gonsalves suggested the possibility of providing a gym membership benefit. Rautiola suggested applying for a grant to install a gym on the second floor of the new fire station. This will be under consideration. Stephon Mehu said that Meagan Kerris had investigated this so the Chief could check in with her.

The Chief is concerned because some officers are likely to lose out on using vacation or sick time because they haven't used it and have reached their cap. He suggested the cap could be increased, which is currently 160 hours of vacation and 240 of sick time. He suggested buying it back at year end. Hutwelker requested a proposal to consider.

The board thanked Chief Gonsalves for all he's doing.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Funding for Police Cruiser

LaBelle made a motion to expend up to $70,000 from the Police Cruise Capital Reserve fund for the purchase of a police cruiser and its outfitting. The motion was seconded by Tempesta. With no further discussion, the motion passed.

B. Update to Welfare Guidelines – tabled to next meeting.

C. Communication with regard to the Rail Trail Washout

Hutwelker said he was contacted by Robert Krebbs about the washout; Jennifer Rhodes was contacted as well. Hutwelker would like a letter to the State recommending they put 3 jersey barriers there. Need input by Attorney Cordell. Mehu suggested contacting Shawn Violette who works for the Bureau of Trails.

D. Health Officer Appointment

Stephon Mehu has been working as the Interim Health Officer; he has a little more training to do and is enjoying the position. Hutwelker asked what his duties entail: septic approvals including reviewing the setbacks, receiving approvals from State, can force eviction from properties when there are septic problems, point of contact for local public health emergency, any discrepancies of the water connections when there are water safety issues. Hutwelker asked about when a property has issues of garbage-filled lots, chemicals leeching. Hutwelker asked for an outline of how to deal with these issues. Rautiola asked for a spreadsheet report of what activities he is doing so they can plan the budget.

LaBelle made a motion in accordance with RSA 128:1, to appoint Stephon Mehu as Health Officer to ~~resume~~ continue the duties as the Town's Health Officer as stated in RSA 128:5. The motion was seconded by Tempesta. With no further discussion, the motion passed.

Mehu asked about the valuation of the properties in relation to permitting fees; The Town had $93 Million in development but building permit fees were only $218,000. Rautiola said the Town has been considering changing the fee schedule and will take his comments into consideration.

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

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 8:09pm. 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 8:16pm.

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 *(a) the dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee.*

There was a motion made by LaBelle to enter a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a) which was seconded by Tempesta. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed**.** The Board entered the non-public session at 8:17pm. 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 8:27pm.

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PUBLIC INPUT

- Chair Hutwelker asked the other members to consider who wanted to be on the board for Cal Ripkin.
- Hutwelker gave an update regarding his conversation with Tammy Wesson from NHMA and Steve Bittel.
- Hutwelker discussed ideas to increase revenue for the Town. The suggestion was made to meet with the Zoning and Planning boards to discuss considerations they might make when making decisions.

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 29, 2025