Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – October 29, 2025
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair W. William Hutwelker III, at 5:35pm. 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

Kai Kraemer with FACT TV, Police Chief Joe Gonsalves, Town Planner Adam Paquette, Emergency Management Director and Tax Collector Kevin Westcott, Richard Lane, Michael York, Mark Scalera, Michael Gomarlo, Ann Heffernon, Jay Ward, John Traynor, Laurie Krebbs, and from Mt Caesar Library - Susan Armstrong, Mary Wood, and Richard Skeels.

MINUTES

- The regular meeting minutes of October 22, 2025, were considered. LaBelle made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.
- The non-public session minutes of October 22, 2025, #1, 2 and 3 were considered. LaBelle made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.
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CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Labelle to approve the Consent Agenda. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

A. Payroll Manifest
B. Accounts Payable Manifest
C. Intent to cut- M/204 L/14
D. Intent to cut- M/218 L/73 – M/218 L/88

PUBLIC INPUT

Michael Gomarlo explained the Gazebo across from Stratton Library, which has been moved twice before getting to its current location, needs braces for support. The door does not close properly, and the screening is damaged. He hopes braces can be installed, and requested the gazebo be repaired. The Board will refer this to DPW Director Joe DiRusso. The Board thanked Mr. Gomarlo for his interest.

Ann Heffernon provided an update regarding the Swanzey Governance Committee. They now have 12 people on the Committee, and they are working well together. They have a Facebook page and have posted about the activities they've done; a video has been posted with a couple more in the works; they were interviewed for a radio show, created a flyer which has been distributed, and they attended the Trunk or Treat and Coffee Connection. The Committee plans to put forth a recommendation to the Board by Thanksgiving. Tempesta asked if anyone could attend the meetings and Heffernon welcomes anyone to attend – meeting dates are posted on Facebook and on the Town's website. She said they are considering doing a survey. Hutwelker said Keene had a group that agreed to respond to surveys; perhaps Swanzey could try that process. Hutwelker will give Heffernon the contact information. The Board thanked Ms. Heffernon and the committee for their work.

Laurie Krebbs asked about the status of the washout on the rail trail near her home. Hutwelker stated the Board discussed this at last week's meeting and they intend to send a letter to the State that requests that the Town and the homeowners are informed the next time the State will be there. He mentioned some concerns being the potential liability of trespassers on their property, the State's 2026 plan to mitigate it, and the potential of adding jersey barriers if the trail is not being repaired. Ms. Krebbs said they have many trespassers, some who are unkind, and one that threatened to sue them if they were injured; she will send an email to Rautiola to follow up. The Board thanked her for coming to the meeting.

Lori reported that the Trustees of the Trust Fund are looking to combine several accounts to make it simpler and more cost effective to administer. The accounts are the *J. Edward Bouvier Carpenter Home Fund and George E Whitcomb Jr Carpenter Home Fund*, the *Charles E Carlton East Swanzey Community House Fund and Samuel A Read East Swanzey Community House Fund*, and the *Nettie M Stone Swanzey Lake Pavilion (Richardson Park) Fund*.

A motion was made by Labelle to authorize the Chair of the Trust Fund to sign the documents in reference to the funds. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

APPOINTMENTS

A. Police Chief, Joe Gonsalves – 2026 Budget Proposal

Chief Gonsalves gave an overview of the budget for the Police Department. Hutwelker questioned if the amount of overtime was enough based on what has been used thus far and the fact that they are not fully staffed and suggested increasing from $80K to $95K. Hutwelker asked about the bonus incentive program; about half of budget has been spent year to date; Chief Gonsalves clarified the amount is enough. Chief Gonsalves added safety vests are replaced every 5 years; they replace 1 or 2 per year.

Chief Gonsalves presented his recommendations for staff retention and recruitment.

- The yearly education bonus for full time officers was discussed – currently 4 officers have degrees: 2 have associates and 2 have bachelors. The group discussed whether it should be a law enforcement degree; they decided it could be any subject. The bonus amounts agreed upon are $1000 for an associate's degree; $1500 for a bachelor's degree, and $2000 for a master's degree.
- Tuition reimbursement for full-time officers. To be determined.
- Gym – Rautiola will investigate adding equipment in the new fire station; and is working with HR Coordinator to acquire a group membership at a local gym. To be determined.
- Sick and vacation hours – officers are reaching the cap; some officers are at the point where they may lose earned hours due to the lack of officers to cover shifts. Chief Gonsalves asked for a way to compensate the employee for not being able to use it. There was a discussion on sick and personal time. Hutwelker stated this will be a subject for policy review soon.
- Annual longevity bonus for full time officers – the Board agreed with Chief Gonsalves proposal of Two to Four Years - $1000; Five to Nine Years - $1500; Ten to Fourteen Years - $2000; Fifteen to Nineteen Years - $2500; Twenty Years and beyond - $3000 or on an increasing percentage based on years of service.
- Chief Gonsalves requested offering current officers a one-time end of year bonus just for this year with funding to come from the 2025 budget. The officers are working very hard due to understaffing. The Board agreed with the suggestion.

The Board thanked Chief Gonsalves for his time.

B. Town Planner, Adam Paquette – 2026 Budget Proposal and Department Update

Paquette gave an overview of the Planning and Economic development budget. There was an increase in the PCD development consulting budget line of $10, 250. This was due to combining the Economic Development consulting line, so there is no increase to the overall budget in that line. Printing and advertising lines decreased. There was a discussion on the code enforcement budget and Rautiola and Paquette concurred this should be its own budget, not under Planning.

Paquette has budgeted to conduct a comprehensive review of the Town's ordinances by a third party to give guidance to modernize and improve the ordinances. He would like to send more Board members to training courses as well as attend more training for himself and the Assistant Town Planner. The Department Supplies line has increased due to the need for a table, a desk, more storage, and a printer.

Paquette also provided a department update: In 2026 the department is planning to re-evaluate application and permit fees; they will also be researching impact fees that would need to go on the ballot for 2027. Planning wants to do a series of round table sessions to engage the community to see what they want in Swanzey and to encourage more volunteers on the Boards. There is 8 years before the master plan is needed to be renewed. He wants to engage joint meetings between the Planning and Zoning Boards to help them understand the economic impact of the decisions they make and how those decisions affect the Town. The Board thanked Paquette for his work.

C. Emergency Management Director, Kevin Westcott – 2026 Budget Proposal

Wescott reviewed the budget proposal with the Board. The budget will remain flat.

D. Tax Collector, Kevin Westcott – Department Update

Wescott gave an update on town-owned properties that the Town owns due to unpaid taxes and believes a few properties might have been forgotten. He reported he had spoken with an attorney at NH Tax Deed & Property Auctions who can help them clean up the titles and sell those properties. Hutwelker asked him to provide a list of properties so that Joe DiRusso can review them for possible uses. The Board thanked Wescott for his work

E. Mt Caesar Library, Mary Wood, Susan Armstrong and Richard Skeels – 2026 Budget Proposal

Richard Skeels thanked the Town for supporting the library over the years. They are asking for an increase for employee wages, insurance, electricity, and books; downloadable books subscription increases every year based on usage. This provides more options for the patrons. There has been an increase in the children's programs the library has provided this year which have been popular. The Board thanked the group for their work for the library.

NEW BUSINESS

A. 2026 Proposed budgets for: Health Officer, Health Agencies & General Assistance – Town Administrator

Rautiola stated there is a slight reduction in the Health Officer budget. The Health Agencies budget will remain flat; the General Assistance budget decreased due to new town Welfare guidelines that will be in place in the coming weeks. Rautiola reduced the amount of housing assistance to $150,000. The Board suggested raising it slightly to $175,000

B. Mark Scalera –Appointment of CIP Member

Mark Scalera said he attends many of the Town meetings and is interested in joining the Capital Improvement Committee. A motion was made by LaBelle to appoint Mark Scalera as a full member of the Capital Improvement Committee. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

C. Update to Welfare Guidelines – tabled for a future meeting

D. HealthTrust Benefits and Renewal Package & HealthTrust Medical Advantage with Prescription Drug Plan Package - Approval and Authorization to Sign

Rautiola reported that the Health Insurance rates have increased by 11.3%; Dental by 4.4% and Short-Term Disability rates by 5%. LaBelle made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator, Lori Rautiola, to sign the renewal package documents as presented by HealthTrust. The motion was seconded by Tempesta and there was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

E. Community Power Rates

Rautiola reported that the new Swanzey Community Power rates will take effect in December and will be locked in for two years at a rate of 11.58 %. Rautiola also noted residents can opt for other options, other than the Swanzey Standard, or opt out if they choose to. Direct Energy (the supplier) will be sending a mailer to all residents starting October 30. The information can be found on the Town's website and on Facebook.

F. Discussion on Proposed Class VI Road Regulations – The discussion was tabled.

CORRESPONDENCE

Rautiola discussed a letter requesting relief for abutters of a property where a shed was placed within the front setback of the road. After reviewing with the Zoning Officer and Town Planner, she asked the Board for some guidance. This case was reviewed by Town Counsel who said they could not revoke a building permit. It was noted homeowners have 30 days to appeal the permit; it was not appealed. The case had started the process for a variance with the Zoning Board; however, the case was withdrawn. Hutwelker explained the permit could have been appealed and it was not and did not see another way around it. Rautiola explained there may be an issue with the line of sight for abutting properties. There was no further discussion.

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.*

A motion was 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 8:05pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola and Recording Secretary Susan Ells.

A motion was 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 8:31pm.

- A 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; Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

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

A motion was 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 8:32pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola and Recording Secretary Susan Ells.

A motion was 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 8:49pm.

- A 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: Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

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
A motion was 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 8:51pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola and Recording Secretary Susan Ells.

A motion was 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 8:56pm.

A 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; Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

ADJOURNMENT

- A motion was made by LaBelle to adjourn the meeting; Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

Adjournment occurred at 8:56pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on November 4, 2025