Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – December 10, 2025
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair W. William Hutwelker III, at 4:28pm. 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

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 4:28pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola, Recording Secretary Susan Ells and HR Coordinator Meagan Kerris.

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 4:44pm.

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 4:44pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola, Recording Secretary Susan Ells and HR Coordinator Meagan Kerris.

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 4:49pm.

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.

The public meeting was reconvened at 4:50pm.

LaBelle made a motion to refund the fee for a recent rental for Whitcomb Hall. 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 4:51pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola, Recording Secretary Susan Ells and HR Coordinator Meagan Kerris.

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 4:55pm.

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 4:56pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola, Recording Secretary Susan Ells and HR Coordinator Meagan Kerris.

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 4:57pm.

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.
A motion was 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 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.

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 5:06pm.

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 *(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 5:06pm. 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 5:15pm.

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 5:15pm. 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 suspend the non-public session at 5:23pm, seconded by Tempesta. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed.

The public meeting was reconvened at 5:31pm.

OTHERS PRESENT

Kai Kraemer with FACT TV, Thomas Svoleantopoulos, Attorney James Fleming, members of the Swanzey Governance Committee (Ann Heffernon, Jay Ward, Scott Self, Richard Lane, Mark Scalera, Eric May, Lee Dunham, David Stinson, Dan LeClair, Michael York, Sylvester Karasinski, DPW Director Joe DiRusso and Finance Director Theresa Lounder.

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. Tax Collector's Warrant- Water and sewer
D. Tax Collector's Warrant – Water and sewer
E. Tax Collector's Warrant – Water and sewer
F. Tax Abatement- M/110 L/104
G. Tax Abatement- M/110/ L/114
H. Tax Abatement- M/110 L/48
I. Tax Abatement- M/219 L/3
J. Tax Abatement- M/219 L/4
K. Tax Abatement- M/224 L/20
L. Tax Abatement- M/226 L/15
M. Tax Abatement- M/233 L/59

PUBLIC INPUT

Jay Ward asked about the date change of the community block grant meeting and Chair Hutwelker said it was due to a timing issue.

Scott Self let the Board know that he noticed the fire sprinkler at Thompson bridge was frozen.

APPOINTMENTS

A. Governance Committee – Presentation of Recommendations for Board of Selectmen

Chair Ann Heffernon started her presentation by stating that Jessica Ramsey-Sanchez, who has been very active on the committee, was sorry not to be present, but she had a prior commitment she could not reschedule. Ann then went on to read the committee's recommendation, which is to return to the Traditional Open Town Meeting form of town government. The committee suggests adding as much communication as possible to inform the voters about Town issues to improve voter turnout, even if the Board ultimately decides to remain with SB2 form of government. David Stinson gave an example of a warrant article from the most recent ballot which could have benefited from more communication which was the West Swanzey Water Company warrant item.

The conversation continued about the need to better engage and inform the voters. Jay Ward described the vision for these meetings with an agenda published well ahead of time. Eric May said he has only participated in SB2 town meetings and had felt lost and didn't know the rules. He recommends more digital communication such as on Instagram which would further engage the voters. Ann said the videos they posted on Facebook got hundreds of hits. David told about how Lee Dunham had given a presentation about past town meetings and how much of a social community event the meetings were at that time. Richard Lane asked if the consensus of the board was to return to Town meeting and if they be voting on it this evening. Hutwelker said they would vote at this meeting. Lane then asked if the Governance Committee could stay active to help planning going forward; Hutwelker said it could and encouraged it to do so. Hutwelker explained the lack of time that the Town had to get the communication out regarding the Water Company warrant article and that the Town will be moving forward with a Water Committee and with a 250th anniversary celebration committee. He invited those interested to inform the Board or Town Administrator. Jay Ward reiterated that if the change to the Town Meeting will be on the warrant, that communication needs to start now. Michael York expressed appreciation for Ann Heffernon's leadership, and the members of the committee for their commitment.

LaBelle made a motion to add the Swanzey Governance Committee's recommendation to return to a Traditional Board of Selectmen/Open Town Meeting as a warrant article on the 2026 ballot; Tempesta seconded; all in favor; passed 3-0.

B. DPW Director – Joe DiRusso – Fire Station Project Change Order

Director DiRusso said a temporary heater is needed to continue the construction of the Fire Station to keep the concrete from freezing while it cures. He researched and found a portable heater to rent from Grayson Smith for $2,000/month for a minimum of 3 months, which is the amount of time it would be likely to be needed. Most of the commercial rentals were double that amount. The building should be closed up in the next week, so the heating is needed by then. The garage doors will be installed within about 3 weeks. The permanent heating system will probably be installed in February.

LaBelle made a motion to authorize the DPW Director, Joe DiRusso, to sign a change order to pay for temporary heat of the building which will be approximately $8,000 to $9,000 a month through March of 2026 and to further authorize Swanzey Oil to deliver fuel. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

DiRusso reported that the paving proposal for Simoneau Lane and Cedar Street is $52,250. He had previously requested the Board to allow the remaining funds in the 2025 paving line to expend as a deposit for 2026. He would like to amend that previous authorization.

LaBelle made a motion to amend the prior authorization for All State Construction to pay $52,250 for the paving projects. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

C. Thomas Svoleantopoulos- Property at 3 North Winchester Street

Attorney James Fleming represents Thomas Svoleantopoulos who owns the property at 3 North Winchester Street. They believe there are severe restrictions on the property that was tantamount to a taking. Access to the 3-family property has been restricted because his client was told that the Town entered into an agreement with the State of NH regarding building of a boat ramp and that Joe DiRusso told him the access was cut off by the State. Joe DiRusso responded that the access was not cut off, but that it had never been authorized. The Town has researched the deeds and there has never been access granted. Fleming said it had been used for decades. His client paid to have the parking area elevated to meet code. DiRusso explained he has been involved in this since July and that the buyer was not made aware of the parking issue. The property owner has received a curb cut and has a Certificate of Occupancy. Fleming is asking for reimbursement to his client for $30K for the cost of the parking area that was built which they can now use.

LaBelle made a motion that Attorney James Fleming contact the Town Administrator and arrange a meeting with the Town Attorney. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Proposal for Whitcomb Hall Sound System

Kai Kraemer with FACT TV described the proposal for $1743.28 to provide a sound system for Whitcomb Hall. This system would connect the camera and the PA system and would use the current microphones. He also included the cost for cabling for the system and a handheld mike and stand which could be handed out to the audience. Hutwelker asked if more than one handheld could be added for larger meetings. This could be accomplished; Tempesta confirm the microphones could be used without the camera system. Scott Self asked how visible the cabling would be since esthetics was important when the building was being restored. Kai said there would be a cable between one speaker and the sound board; the other speaker would be wireless. Both speakers would have power cords. The sound board could go on the stage, or on a table on the side of the room. Ward suggested permanently installing the cabling, so it doesn't have to be moved. Hutwelker asked how long it would take once ordered and Kai said it could be installed in about 2 weeks.

LaBelle made a motion to spend up to $2,000 from the IT budget to purchase the sound system as proposed. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

B. Federal Aid Program Three Party Project Amended Agreement for City of Keene & Town of Swanzey

Rautiola shared that the project which was approved August 2021 is being amended due to inflation to increase by 4.4% for 6 years.

LaBelle made a motion to authorize the Select Board Chairman, Bill Hutwelker to sign the Federal Aid Program Three Party Project Amended Agreement for the City of Keene and the Town of Swanzey. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

C. Rescind CIP Authorization(s) – Tabled

D. Approval of Funds – Webber Hill Slope Stabilization (overage) from the Town Roads, Rehab & Reconstruction ETF

LaBelle made a motion to authorize the withdrawal of $8,700 from the Town Roads, Rehab and Reconstruction Expendable Trust Fund due to the Webber Hill Slope Stabilization Project overage expenditures. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

E. Approval of Town Hall Holiday Hours

Rautiola requested that in addition to Christmas and New Year's Day that the Town Hall be closed the day after Christmas. Several employees will be gone that day. It was the consensus of the Board to close Town Hall at 2pm on Christmas Eve, to close the day after Christmas, and to close at 4pm on New Year's Eve.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Proposed 2026 Budget Update

Theresa Lounder reported the recommended budget has been trimmed down to a 5.04% increase which is less than the default budget. This does not include any merit increases for 2026.

Hutwelker discussed adding a warrant article to close the TIF in 2026 since the bond will be paid in September. The additional revenue would go into the general fund.

The board reviewed the proposed budget to identify more areas to reduce wherever possible.

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

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 8:38pm. 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 8:42pm.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by LaBelle to adjourn the meeting; Tempesta seconded the motion and it passed 3-0. Adjournment occurred at 8:42pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Ells, Recording Secretary
Approved on December 17, 2025