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

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair W. William Hutwelker III, at 5:33pm 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, Bruce Bohannon, Mike Kowalczyk, Michael York, Jay Ward, Mark Scalera. Steve Bittel, Finance Director Theresa Lounder, Stephon Mahu, DPW Director Joe DiRusso

MINUTES

The regular meeting minutes of November 14, December 3, and December 10, 2025 were considered. A motion was made by LaBelle to approve the minutes as amended. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

The non-public session minutes of December 3 #1 and 2 and December 10 #1, 2, 4- 8, 2025 were considered. A motion was made by LaBelle to approve the minutes as presented. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

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 Abatement – M/248 L/43
D. Tax Exemption-M/249 L/12
E. Tax Exemption-M/239 L/22
F. Tax Exemption-M/235 L/75
G. Tax Exemption-M/219 L/53
H. Tax Exemption-M/249 L/52
I. Tax Exemption-M/243 L/55
J. Tax Exemption-M/227 L/28
K. Warrant Yield Tax Levy-M/246 L/42-M/247 L/17
L. Open Container Permit -Whitcomb Hall-12/20/25
M. Open Container Permit-Whitcomb Hall-12/28/25
N. Open Container Permit-Whitcomb Hall-01/04/25

PUBLIC INPUT

Mike Kowalczyk gave updates regarding the rail trail projects. He said that he met with Joe DiRusso, the DPW crew and Stephon Mehu regarding Cheshire Rail trail where 3 miles of the trail have been graded and had fill and hard pack applied; he said it turned out beautifully. He expressed his appreciation for their work. On the Ashuelot trail there were 3 culverts in a row near the utility lines

that were rusted out and now have been replaced. There is a plan for a culvert at the Eversource and Christian Hill Bridge area and a plan is in place to move pieces of the historical bridge for use on the rail trial. The remaining 2 areas are being covered by a TAP grant in 2027. He asked for an update on the Holbrook Road crossings; The Board and Town Administrator has encouraged the State to install jersey barriers since the State is responsible for that trail. There was a discussion about the scope of the work; Rautiola said there would be an article on the warrant which will reimburse all but about $320K; the rest will be covered by a grant.

APPOINTMENTS

A. CIP Chair Steve Bittel- Presentation of 2026 CIP Recommendations and Discuss closure of SRDD TIF

Steve Bittel provided the committee's Recommendations for 2026 Capital Funding Summary and Detail Schedules and explained the reason to fund the town hall renovation over 2 years instead of bonding the cost which will greatly reduce the overall cost.

Bittel advised the Board that when looking at large capital expenses, such as the West Swanzey Water and Sewer, it's important to look at how that will fit into the debt pattern and how it impacts that, and investigate what revenues will be generated - look at an economic plan as well as an engineering plan. Bittel praised Joe DiRusso and DPW; the 3 major projects (Webber Hill, N Winchester Street, and the Fire Station) are all on budget. He went on to say that although road maintenance is not a direct responsibility of CIP, he cautioned that if road maintenance budgets go down, then road rehab budgets will go up. As an example, crack filling is critical and it had been removed from the previous year's budget. The committee suggests using trust funds instead of the Town's money whenever possible.

LaBelle made a motion to accept the Capital Improvement Recommendations and to place them on the warrant as presented. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

Bittel then made a recommendation to close the SRDD TIF; it is due to be paid off by September but if it is able to be paid off sooner, it would add money to the tax base. Attorney Johnston has approved the wording of the warrant article. The DRA still must review the article. This would be included with the Budget hearing. Rautiola reviewed some concerns she had; pros and cons were discussed. Ward suggested there be a statement on the article explaining that it will not be a burden but a benefit to the taxpayers.

LaBelle made a motion to place the warrant article on the March 2026 ballot to ask the voters to allow the Town to dissolve the Swanzey Revenue Development District TIF. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

B. Building Inspector, Chris Levy - Proposal for Building/Code Enforcement Software

Chris Levy could not attend so Rautiola explained that reasons behind changing to the proposed software for the building permit process. Jay Ward asked if it would help property owners to understand the need for a permit; Rautiola said it would be a good resource.

LaBelle made a motion to accept the proposal from GoGov for Code Enforcement, Online Permitting and Licensing in the annual amount of $14,364 with a starting contract date of April 1, 2026. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

C. Town Treasurer, Sue Ells – Annual Review of Investment Policy
No changes were recommended for the Investment Policy

LaBelle made a motion to accept the Investment Policy as recommended by Town Treasurer Susan Ells. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Rescind CIP Authorization(s)
The purpose of rescinding is to make funds available that were either leftover or not used for specific projects and remove the restrictions in the fund where it had been earmarked for use. This will make the funds available for other projects within those funds.

LaBelle made a motion to rescind prior years' authorization as outlined by the Finance Director in her memo dated December 15, 2025. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

B. Consideration of Year End Encumbrances
None currently.

C. Review of Board of Selectmen Rules of Procedure
Provided for the Board to review. No action needed.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Budget Update
Finance Director Theresa Lounder explained that there were many changes made to the budget last week; the overall draft budget increase is now at 5.77%; the default is 6.23%. Theresa provided a spreadsheet which displayed different options of merit increases. The model for 2% above the 2.5% COLA would bring the increase to 6.52%; with 2.5% it would change the increase to 6.72%. The group will discuss this again at the next meeting.

Chair Hutwelker thanked Theresa for all her work and her presence at the meetings.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

Schedule for January; continue with weekly meetings in January.

PUBLIC INPUT

Jay Ward thanked the board for their work.

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 7:35pm. 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 7:47pm.

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 7:50pm. 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 7:58pm.

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 8:01pm. 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 8:12pm.

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 8:13pm. 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 8:14pm.

Public session reopened at 8:14pm.

The Board discussed the possibility of adding an Administrative Assistant for the Fire Station and Code Enforcement.

The non-public session minutes December 10, 2025 #3 were considered. A motion was made by LaBelle to approve the minutes as amended. 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 8:42pm. 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 8:59pm.

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 9:01pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on December 23, 2025