Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – February 25, 2026
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER
The meeting was called to order by Chair W. William Hutwelker III, at 5:32pm at Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey, NH. Other members present were Selectmen James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present was Recording Secretary Susan Ells.

OTHERS PRESENT
Kai Kraemer with FACT TV, Michael York, Alan Gross, Adam Paquette, Bob Audette, Barbara Skuly, Martin Lund

MINUTES
The regular meeting minutes of January 26, 2026 were considered. Chair Hutwelker made a correction to the attendees who were listed at the meeting. A motion was made by LaBelle to approve the minutes as amended. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

The regular meeting minutes of February 17, 2026 were considered. A motion was made by LaBelle to approve the minutes as presented. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 3-0.

The non-public session minutes of January 28, 2026 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. Payroll Manifest
B. Accounts Payable Manifest
C. Tax Exemption-Veteran's-M/261 L/14
D. Tax Exemption- Veteran's-M/250 L/26
E. Yield Tax Levy-M/204 L/14
F. Yield Tax Levy-M/218 L/73 & M/218 L/88
G. Raffle Permit-Northern Lights
H. Raffle Permit-Cheshire County Forest Fire Warden's Association
I. License to Sell Pistols and Revolvers- Lawrence Racine
J. Intent to Excavate-M/244 L/4

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

PUBLIC INPUT
None

APPOINTMENTS
A. Zoning Audit Agreement- Town Planner
Adam Paquette would like to hire Southwest Region Planning Commission for a zoning audit project and requested a waiver from Section 5 of the Town of Swanzey's purchasing policy which states that an RFP and RFQ must be used for procurement of professional services. He said that SWRPC is local and infinitely more

familiar with Cheshire County and with Swanzey. Chair Hutwelker pointed out that the Town is a member and pays dues. Paquette also said they are priced lower than others he spoke with.

SWCPC would assist the Town by providing recommendations for aligning the zoning ordinance with Master Plan goals; improving clarity and ease of use for land use boards and the general public; addressing novel and emerging issues; and ensuring compliance with applicable state statutes.

If approved, there would be a kick-off meeting with the Planning Board to discuss work scope, gather input on aspects of zoning that have caused confusion/difficulties among the Planning Board and the public at large; and set goals/expectations regarding revised ordinance. There would be meetings with Town staff and joint meetings with the Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Zoning Board of Adjustment as well as with public at large.

Chair Hutwelker agreed it would be useful for it to be more user-friendly. Paquette wants to have more public outreach and education such as Facebook, You Tube, etc. He said that after changes are recommended, it could take more than one year to finalize.

Final approval would be early January 2027 in order to get the articles on the ballot for 2027. Chair Hutwelker asked if this project will be enough or is more needed. Paquette said that if a rewrite is determined to be needed, it would be a much bigger project and would take more years to accomplish but this project should help discern whether that is needed.

LaBelle made a motion to forgo an RFQ or RFP for reasons stated by the Town Planner, and to further authorize the Town Administrator to enter into the agreement with Southwest Region Planning Commission for the purpose of a zoning audit with up to $15,000 coming from the Planning Department budget. Tempesta seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion passed 3-0.

B. Energy Committee Chair, Bob Audette – Congressional Direct Spending Application

Bob Audette and Barbara Skuly represent the Energy Committee. They informed the Board that there is a letter the Town can sign to support a proposed extension of net metering to municipalities. They explained that when solar panels produce more energy than is needed, net metering allows the energy to be sent to the energy grid to be used by Eversource who then provides credit to the owner of the solar panels. Currently, the net metering is slated to end in 2040; this proposed extension would move that to 2060 which would encourage more people to invest in solar energy. Bob Audette said he would send the letter to the Board to review. Chair Hutwelker said they would read the letter will discuss it at the next Board of Selectmen meeting.

Bob Audette spoke of how successful the solar array at the Wastewater Plant is, and it's only been online since October. DPW Director Joe DiRusso had reported that there has been a 50-70% decrease in the electricity bill so far. During the winter months, the array is generating 6000 to 8000 KWH, and the plant is using approximately a third of this. The surplus energy that is not used by the plant gets exported to the grid for credit (net metering). These numbers are expected to increase as spring approaches.

Bob Audette next discussed the *Congressional Direct Spending Application* which is due March 6th. This could provide money for purchasing more solar panels or for backup batteries. Bob said he looked into the battery program and said that Eversource has a shelter program which would provide 50% of the cost if it is used for an emergency shelter. He said that Eversource is excited about the prospect. He said that there is a 30% tax rebate available on solar arrays and that the Town could apply money from Shaheen's office; he was told they have money to invest in SW NH. He said there are no guarantees the Town would get the money and it would

take 2 years, but the Town could establish an Emergency Project. He suggested that if the proposed DPW building project gets approved, solar panels could be installed on the new building and the excess energy could power the recycling center across the street.

There was a discussion about using the new fire station's second floor as an emergency shelter for conditions such as extreme cold or heat. If so, it could qualify for the incentives. Chair Hutwelker suggested Bob talk with Fire Chief Mattson since this wasn't part of the original plan. Martin Lund is an electrician and spoke up to say the batteries could be mounted outside the building; a transfer switch would automatically work in a power outage.

Tempesta asked if the building designs would handle solar panels and was told that the fire station would be able to and the proposed DPW building could be designed to support the load, and that Joe DiRusso is in support of adding solar. Lund suggested the positioning ground mount that moves with the sun.

Tempesta asked about the end of life for the panels. Bob said that when solar arrays are installed, a decommissioning plan needs to be set up; he said there is an emerging market in recycling panels and that currently there is a law they can't be sent out of the US.

Bob and Barbara said they are looking for approval from the Board of Selectmen for the Energy Commission to apply for the funds so they can complete the application. The consensus was that the Board appreciates the work and asked them to continue with the application process.

PUBLIC INPUT

Martin Lund said a friend completed an application to rent Whitcomb Hall on Sunday for a baby shower. They were told that they needed another application, and he was asking on their behalf why they'd need another. Tempesta said he will investigate it and will contact Lund.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Review of Board of Selectmen Rules of Procedure

Chair Hutwelker suggested some changes he felt were needed to the *Board of Selectmen Rules of Procedure*. He pointed out that Section 2.1 needs to be changed to 5 members; 5.1 needs the quorum changed to 3; he also suggests 2.3 be changed to have 1-year rotating terms. Town Administrator Lori Rautiola has provided some suggestions such as having the rules encompass a 'handbook' to provide as much information to new Board members as possible. She also would like to add a section for '*Conduct with other Board Members and Employees'* which will include an explanation of non-public sessions under RSA 91A.

The Board agreed by consensus to hold a public hearing next Wednesday to discuss the proposed changes.

B. Update on new WW Plant Solar Array

As discussed earlier in the meeting, the Solar array at the Wastewater Treatment plant is exceeding expectations.

C. Discussion of Select Board Training

Chair Hutwelker suggested that prior to the first session after the elections when there will be 2 more board members, there be training by Town Attorney Cordell Johnston on March 16 or 17 (before the March 18 first meeting). He said there is also a 1-day conference on April 22 and a 6-week training course on Wednesdays in the fall. There will be potentially 3 new board members with no experience. He said that Lori wants to have HR

provide onboarding to review the *Rules of Procedures* with the new members. Alan Gross spoke up to say he felt it was a great idea. Michael York said there is a manual and he can provide a copy.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

The Voter's Guide is on the website and will be sent out to the residents this weekend.

The Town Report is being printed and will be on the website soon and will be available to pick up at the Town Hall on March 3rd.

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 6:48pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta and Mark LaBelle. Also present was 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 6:54pm.

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.

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ADJOURNMENT

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

Adjournment occurred at 7:12pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary
Approved on March 4, 2026