Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – March 18, 2026
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair W. William Hutwelker at 4:30pm at Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey, NH. Other members present were Selectmen, James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, James Ward and Alan Gross. Also present was Town Administrator Lori Rautiola.

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 Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed**.** The Board entered the non-public session at 4:30pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, James Ward and Alan Gross. Also present was Town Administrator Lori Rautiola and Kyle Titus.

A motion was made by LaBelle to come out of the non-public session, seconded by Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed. The Non-public session ended at 5pm.

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; Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

Non-public session(s) per RSA 91-A:3, II (b) Hiring of a Public Employee

A motion was made by LaBelle to enter a nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (b) which was seconded by Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed**.** The Board entered the non-public session at 5pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, James Ward and Alan Gross. 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 Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed. The Non-public session ended at 5:13pm.

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; Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

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 (c) which was seconded by Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed**.** The Board entered the non-public session at 5:13pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, James Ward and Alan Gross. 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 Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed. The Non-public session ended at 5:21pm.

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; Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

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 Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed**.** The Board entered the non-public session at 5:21pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, James Ward and Alan Gross. 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 Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed. The Non-public session ended at 5:24pm.

A motion was made by Ward 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; Name seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

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 Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed**.** The Board entered the non-public session at 5:24pm. Present were W. William Hutwelker III, James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, James Ward and Alan Gross. 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 Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed. The Non-public session ended at 5:28pm.

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; Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

The Regular meeting was reopened at 5:32pm with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Stacey Goodale.

OTHERS PRESENT
Kai Kraemer with FACT TV, Stacey Goodale, Bob Audette, Mark Scalera

MINUTES
The regular meeting minutes of March 4, 2026, were considered. A motion was made by LaBelle to approve the minutes as amended. Tempesta seconded the motion; Ward and Gross abstained. The motion passed 3-0.

The regular meeting minutes of March 10, 2026, were considered. A motion was made by LaBelle to approve the minutes as amended. Tempesta seconded the motion; Ward and Gross abstained. The motion passed 3-0.

The non-public session minutes of March 3, 2026, March 4, 2026, #1, 2, and 3 and March 10, 2026 were considered. A motion was made by LaBelle to approve the minutes as presented; Tempesta seconded the motion; Ward and Gross abstained. The motion passed 3-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Payroll Manifest
B. Accounts Payable Manifest
C. Special Events Permit-Swanzey Easter Egg Hunt-Recreation Department
D. Open Container Permit-Whitcomb Hall 3/28/26

A motion was made by LaBelle to approve the Consent Agenda. Tempesta seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

NOMINATIONS

A. Annual nominations – Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary

Chair Bill Hutwelker made a motion to nominate James Tempesta as Chairman, Mark LaBelle for Vice Chairman and Jay Ward as Secretary for 2026. Ward seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion passed 5-0.

Bill Hutwelker turned the meeting over to Chair Tempesta.

B. Chairman's committee designations:

Chair Tempesta and Bill Hutwelker made the following recommendations for selectmen designation to the Town's committees; they all agreed to the suggestions.

- Capital Improvement Program Committee – Mark LaBelle
- Conservation Commission – Jay Ward
- Economic Development Advisory Committee: Jim Tempesta
- Energy Commission - Alan Gross
- Joint Loss Management Committee – Mark LaBelle
- Old Home Day Committee – Alan Gross
- Planning Board – Alan Gross, Bill Hutwelker, Jim Tempesta (4-month rotations – Alan: April -July; Bill: Aug – Nov; Jim: Dec – March) Mark Scalera expressed concern that Jim might have too much on his plate in December; Jim thanked for his concern, but he thinks he'll be fine with help as needed from the other members of the board.
- Rail Trail: Alan Gross
- Zoning Board of Adjustment: Jay Ward
- Governance Committee: Mark LaBelle
- Water & Sewer Committee: Jim Tempesta, Bill Hutwelker, Alan Gross
- 250th Anniversary Committee – Alan Gross

PUBLIC INPUT

Mark Scalera stated that he attended the coffee connection at the Grange Hall; they asked him to remind the Board that they were waiting for a letter from the Town to allow the exterior painting of the building. Lori Rautiola said she would provide a letter stating that the Board approved of the work at a previous meeting.

Mark Scalera went on to ask about the list of projects for this year and requested a watershed project for Wilson Pond to be added to the list. Jay Ward offered to investigate this.

Bob Audette, Chair of Energy Commission, reported that he has been working on funding to obtain solar panels and back-up batteries for the new fire station. He received news from Representative Goodlander's office that the funding would only be 35% of the cost of the project. He is disappointed because he was under

the impression that it would be 100% of the cost. He was asked to withdraw the application or promise the Town can come up with the extra funds. He added that 15% of the funding would come from Eversource, but the Town would still need to come up with about $200,000 and he is aware this would be difficult to obtain this year. He was told that the committee members were excited to help, and they told him that Swanzey's application was in the top 20 of 67 applications. Bob reported the solar project at the Wastewater Plant is exceeding expectations and is generating revenue for the Town. Hutwelker expressed his appreciation for the work that was done in order put the Town's application in the top 20. Bob suggested the Town start a Capital Reserve fund for energy projects; Bill suggested he put it on his calendar to approach the Capital Improvement committee in the fall.

LaBelle made a motion to withdraw the application for the grant; Ward seconded. With no further discussion the motion passed unanimously.

The Board thanked Bob and the Energy Commission for their hard work on behalf of the Town.

Scalera asked Bob if the commission had considered wind turbines; Bob replied that there are micro turbines which the commission could investigate. The Energy Commission meets on the second Monday of every month at 1pm at Whitcomb Hall.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Change Order for Fire Station Project

- Item #1 is to change from an 80 KW generator to 100 KW
- Item #2 is for IT/low voltage wire and labor that was not listed on plans
- Item #3 was a change Eversource required for the connection to the building

Lori Rautiola explained to the Board the need for the change items for the new fire station.

LaBelle made a motion to authorize the change order for the Fire Station project as mentioned in Items 1-3, for a total cost of $35,040. Ward seconded. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

B. Withdrawal from Recycling Center CRF – Repair Main Water Line

Lori Rautiola explained that Josh Whipple needed to make an emergency repair to the main water line at the Recycling Center. The repair included wrapping the pipes with heat tape. Due to Josh's budget being a bit tight, he would like to use funds from the Recycling Capital Reserve fund instead.

LaBelle made a motion to authorize the withdrawal of $4,049.10 from the Recycling Center Capital Reserve Fund for the repair of the main water line at the Recycling Center. Ward seconded. There was discussion about the cost of the heat tape; it was a cost-effective solution. All were in favor and the motion carried.

C. PSNH Settlement Payout

Chair Tempesta gave a brief overview of the PSNH litigation that has been ongoing prior to 2018. He mentioned while the Town was successful in court a few years ago, the Town knew we may still be liable to pay some. Lori added that the Court found that the Town over-assessed the property values as follows: TY 2017: $3,117,840.20 and TY 2018: $3,619,214.50

This significantly reduced the Town's exposure, but the Town was still liable to pay a refund. Unfortunately, the Court has denied the Town's motion to reconsider. Therefore, the Town's attorney's recommendation at this time is that the Town pay the refund owed as quickly as possible. The amount for the

2017 and 2018 abatement is $263,373.05 and this money was expected to come out of the Town's fund balance. The Board felt it was prudent to pay this immediately so that interest does not accrue.

LaBelle made a motion to authorize payment of $263,373.05 to Public Service Company of NH from the Town's fund balance; Ward seconded. All in favor and the motion carried.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

Rautiola asked the Board to entertain a motion to authorize her to submit a letter of support to the Granite State Wheelers Grant committee in support of the Monadnock Region Rail Trail Collaboratives' proposal to install a three-panel informational kiosk along the rail trail in Swanzey.

Gross made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator to submit a letter of support to the Granite State Wheelers Grant committee in support of the Monadnock Region Rail Trail Collaboratives' proposal to install a three-panel informational kiosk along the rail trail in Swanzey; LaBelle seconded; all were in favor and the motion carried.

Bill Hutwelker reported that the Town received a new estimate for the rail trail repair which has increased from $1.8million to $2.9 million. 20% was to be matched by the Town, so that portion has increased from $360,000 to $580,000. The rationale is that the State is requiring the Town to upgrade the entire section of the trail and not just the washout areas. Lori reported that the Town is looking for more funding and will check with the State for additional help.

Bill also reported that he learned there was an announcement from the State about a meeting with the NH DOT and Executive Council on March 24th at 10am in the NH DOT office in Concord to discuss the replacement of the bridge on Route 32 and Blake Road over Martin Brook. The State has scheduled a public hearing on March 31st at Whitcomb Hall at 6pm; the doors will open at 5:30pm.

Jay Ward reported that he was approached by Nathan Jacobs from Wilson Pond Road who suggested the Town install sidewalks on Safford Drive from the new development to Route 12; he questioned why the Town didn't use the TIF funds; Ward told him he would discuss this with Joe DiRusso who will be at the Select Board meeting on March 25th.

Ward went on to report that Mike Gomarlo asked if the West Swanzey sidewalk fund could be used by the church on Cobble Hill Road. They hold a food pantry there and he said it's dangerous for the people when they are picking up their food. The sidewalk committee has a reserve fund that the Board must authorize the use of the funds. Ward felt more detail is needed from Mike and with Joe DiRusso present. Bill said Mike Gomarlo is on the sidewalk committee and suggested that they work with Joe who would then bring a request to the Board.

Bill brought up the subject of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence this summer. Keene Mayor Jay Kahn has invited Swanzey to participate in a county-wide event. On Friday, July 3rd there will be fireworks following the Swamp Bats game; on Saturday, July 4th a parade through downtown Keene along with other activities is planned from 10am to 3pm. If the Town decides to join, Keene encourages a float and Bill suggests the Old Homestead theme. There was a discussion to coordinate the anniversary with Swanzey Old Home Day. Bill said there is a 25-minute silent film from 1950 which could be included with a reading of the Declaration of Independence at Whitcomb Hall and there is another movie from 1922 which could perhaps be shown in the HS auditorium for a larger audience; Ward added that there is also a documentary regarding The Old Homestead which could be shown.

Scalera suggested showing the films at the Grange Hall throughout the day, which would also highlight the Hall and said that there is a 2016 presentation on You Tube of the final production of The Old Homestead. Alan Gross suggested having a crossing guard for the area of Grange Hall.

The consensus of the Board was to join Keene's celebration and have the Town's celebration during Old Home Day.

PUBLIC INPUT
None

NON-PUBLIC SESSIONS
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A motion was made by LaBelle to enter a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (c) which was seconded by Ward. 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, Mark LaBelle, James Ward and Alan Gross. 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 Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed. The Non-public session ended at 7:01pm.

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; Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT
A motion was made by Tempesta to adjourn the meeting; Hutwelker seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:20pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on March 25, 2026