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

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair James Tempesta at 4:36pm at the site visit at the new Fire Station on Route 32, Swanzey. Other members present were Selectmen Mark LaBelle, W William Hutwelker, James Ward and Alan Gross. Also present were Town Administrator, Lori Rautiola, Joe DiRusso, Eric Mattson, Mick Sanchez, Joe DiRusso and Ann Heffernon.

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to recess at 5:00pm. There was a second by Jay Ward. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was called back into session at 5:30pm by Chair Tempesta at Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey, NH. Other members present were Selectmen Mark LaBelle, W William Hutwelker, James Ward and Alan Gross. Also present were Town Administrator, Lori Rautiola and Recording Secretary, Susan Ells.

OTHERS PRESENT

Kai Kraemer with FACT TV, Ann Heffernon, Mark Scalera, Police Chief Joseph Gonsalves, Jeffery Crocker, Rabbi Aronson, DPW Director, Joe DiRusso, Jeremy Turner, Town Forester Finance Director, Theresa Lounder

MINUTES

The regular meeting minutes of March 18, 2026, were considered. A motion was made by LaBelle to approve the minutes as amended. Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

The non-public session minutes of March 6, 2026, 1, 2, 3, 4, were considered. A motion was made by LaBelle to approve the minutes as presented. Hutwelker seconded the motion; Ward and Gross abstained. The motion passed 3-0.

The non-public session minutes of March 18, 2026, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 were considered. A motion was made by LaBelle to approve the minutes as amended. Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Payroll Manifest
B. Accounts Payable Manifest
C. Elderly Exemption Tax Credit- M/204 L/44
D. Elderly Exemption Tax Credit-M/227 L/28
E. Solar Exemption Tax Credit-M/240 L/68
F. Veteran's Exemption Tax Credit-M/216 L/1-0-5-86
G. Yield Tax Levy- M/216 L/18
H. Intent to Cut -M/255 L/30
I. Intent to Cut-M/228 L/3
J. Intent to Cut-M/216 L/18
~~K. Abatement-M/244 L/11~~
~~L. Abatement-M/254 L/22~~
~~M. Abatement-M/248 L/3 & M/248 L/60~~

N. Abatement-Proration for Fire-M/109 L56
O. Current Use-M/256 L35
P. Raffle Permit-Monadnock Sportsmen's Association
Q. Special Events Permit-Recreation Department-Glow in the Dark Easter Egg Hunt
R. Special Events Permit-SC Monster Truck Madness

Bill Hutwelker questioned why the abatement application was not included in the packet; he stated the Board needs the rest of the information to review before making a motion. Lori responded she and the Chair had a conversation regarding the abatement applications being included in the agenda packet and how there is sensitive information that should not be made available to the public or within the agenda packets. She added moving forward, there will be a separate folder for assessing documents only and the Board should review those documents prior to the meeting. The Board discussed the process and concurred to remove them from the consent agenda.

A motion was made by LaBelle to approve the Consent Agenda items A-J and N - R. Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

PUBLIC INPUT

Chair Tempesta stated he would like to propose making a few changes to the procedures now that the Board has five members. He suggested that when Public Input is closed, that any other questions from the public wait until the next allotted Public Input; adding it would be less disruptive to the business of the board meeting and help the Board to stay on topic. Ward suggested the Chair ask for public input if there is a decision the Board may need to make in case there are opinions to be shared by the public that may inform the Board's decision. The Board agreed by consensus to try the new approach.

APPOINTMENTS

A. Jeffrey Crocker and Rabbi Aronson – Consideration of Proclamation

Jeffrey Crocker and Rabbi Aronson from Congregation Ahavas Achim were present to ask the Board to consider a Proclamation recognizing Daniel Mariaschin. Mr. Mariaschin was raised in Swanzey and graduated from MRHS, serves as Director of B'nai B'rith's International Center for Human Rights and Public Policy and will soon retire. Mr. Mariaschin has served the Jewish professional world for more than fifty years and has met with popes and presidents in his fight against antisemitism and hate. Rabbi Aronson provided a Monadnock Profile article from 2017 in which Mr. Mariaschin declared he was 'proud of his Monadnock Region roots'. The Board concurred Mr. Mariaschin was deserving of a proclamation.

LaBelle made a motion that the Board of Selectmen approve the proclamation recognizing Dan Mariaschin, a former resident who grew up in the Town of Swanzey, in acknowledgment of his achievements and contributions. Ward seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The Board Members signed the proclamation**.**

B. Town Forester, Jeremy Turner – Update on Harvest Preparation

The Tracy Lot is being evaluated for harvesting due to the age of the pine trees which are roughly 100 years old. Jeremy Turner met with UNH Cooperation Extension Forester State Specialist, Matt Tarr, for objective input. Both Mr. Tarr and Jeremy concurred the best approach would be to implement the harvest work to remove all overstory pine to release the native hardwood understory, as this is best for habitat and forest health. Tempesta asked if it makes sense to wait until the price of lumber increases. Jeremy responded that he would like to get it prepared by marking trees, flagging resource concerns, creating access, etc. He would

prepare a public bid prospectus which once awarded, would then set the clock for a year for payment for the lumber. Jeremy would let Joe DiRusso know when it's time to harvest due to market prices. He added there are several homes adjacent to the work, and he had spoken to some of the homeowners. He offered to have a pre-harvest workshop open to the public to be able to ask questions prior to, but closer to the actual project start. It would be sponsored by the UNH Cooperative Extension. Hutwelker asked about the slash (limbs, etc.) that are left behind with a cut such as this. Jeremy responded that slash is good biologically for the forest, but to keep it aesthetically pleasing he most likely would chip the slash on this project. DiRusso added chips would also make it easier to make trails etc. The Board thanked Jeremy for his work on the project.

C. Chief Gonsalves- Recommendation & Purchase Approval of New Police Cruiser

Chief Gonsalves reported that he would like to purchase a cruiser and had provided quotes to the Board; he gave a brief overview of the vehicle which would be a leftover 2025 model and overall, it was the best price.

LaBelle made a motion to authorize the purchase and expenditure of funds up to $75,000 from the Police Cruisers Capital Reserve Fund for a 2025 Chevy Tahoe 4WD in the amount of $58,172.72 and for the purchase of emergency equipment to outfit the new cruiser in the amount of $15,255. Ward seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion passed.

Chief Gonsalves mentioned he would like the Board's approval to pursue two grants. One would be for a basic mounted radar unit with a grant through the State. The Town's portion would be 20-30% ($1200-$1500) which he noted he should have that amount within his budget.

LaBelle made a motion to authorize Chief Gonsalves to purchase a new radar unit with up to $1500 coming from the department's operating budget. Ward seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion passed.

The second grant is also a fully funded state grant. The State has been mandating the department provide the State with electronic information about tickets, accidents and court complaints. The system in the cars would require tablets, printers, and scanners. He would like a couple of new tablets, printers and scanners.

LaBelle made a motion to authorize Chief Gonsalves to apply for the grant. Ward seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion passed.

Bill Hutwelker inquired about staffing; Chief Gonsalves responded there have been a few certified officers interested in the open positions. Alan Gross asked about officer wages and the Chief responded the Board has been supportive of the effort to offer higher wages and the Department is now competitive. Chair Tempesta added the Town's benefits and incentives they offer, such as a sign-on bonus, are very good. Gross thanked Chief Gonsalves for researching the grants.

D. Consideration of Reappointment of Conservation Commission Member - Cheri Domina

LaBelle made a motion to appoint Cheri Domina to the Conservation Commission as recommended by the Energy Committee. Ward seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion passed.

E. Consideration of Reappointment of Conservation Commission Members - Nancy Karlson & Arthur Winsor

LaBelle made a motion to appoint Nancy Karlson and Arthur Winsor to the Conservation Commission as recommended by the Conservation Commission. Ward seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion passed.

F. Consideration of Appointment of Joshua Guion to the Governance Committee and Capital Improvement Committee.

Bill Hutwelker reported that an alternate member is needed for the Capital Improvement Committee because they sometimes have trouble getting a quorum. He suggested that Joshua Guion could be appointed as an alternate member. Lori explained the process of appointing members to committees which is to post the opening to provide opportunities for individuals such as Joshua to express their interest. The Board agreed to post the opening on the website as an alternate member.

LaBelle made a motion to post the opening for an alternate member of the Capital Improvement committee. Ward seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion passed.

Lori Rautiola noted Ann Heffernon will be working on a new name and mission for the Governance Committee; when that's ready, they will bring it to the Board.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Approval of Repairs to Town Hall Sign

Joe DiRusso reported to the Board the sign in front of the Town Hall is falling apart. The DPW carpenter estimates it will cost between $350-$600 for materials; he would use DPW labor. He went on to say that Code Enforcement Officer Chris Levy is working on quotes for a digital sign that would fit on the current wooden sign. There would be one on each side. DiRusso would like to repair the sign first, then a decision could be made regarding the digital sign. Levy received a quote for $5470 for 2 signs with an upgrade for a wireless connection to a computer for remote operation. In order to get electricity to the sign, they could attempt to drill under the driveway, otherwise a trench across the parking lot would be needed and a culvert installed. Lori reminded the Board, according to Town policies, we should get three quotes. She suggested using local vendors. The Board agreed by consensus to repair the sign first and then revisit the subject of adding the electronic sign.

B. Purchase Approval and Authorization of Funds – Lawn Mower

Joe DiRusso reported he received a quote for the lawn mower, and it is slightly less than what he budgeted for, adding he went through the municipal bid system, which the policy allows the Town to forego the requirement for getting three quotes. He noted he would be purchasing it from Ronnie's Small Engine in Jaffrey.

LaBelle made a motion to authorize the withdrawal of $12,495 from the Highway & Cemetery Capital Reserve Fund for the purchase of a mower as recommended by DPW Director, Joe DiRusso. Ward seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion passed.

Joe DiRusso reported the State has recommended the Town do away with "slip lanes" due to the safety concerns and the difficulty when plowing. The process would be to narrow the road and create a hammerhead at the intersection. Carlton Road would be first on the list, followed by Rabbit Hollow Road, which is a dirt road off Swanzey Lake Road. There was consensus among the Board. DiRusso will start completing the DOT applications.

C. Discussion on Sidewalks

Jay Ward had mentioned at a previous meeting that a resident had requested that the Town construct a sidewalk for the church on Cobble Hill Road. Joe DiRusso informed the Board that he was advised by Gordon Ayotte from the West Swanzey Sidewalk Committee that the sidewalk is on the church's property, so the Town cannot provide funding, nor is work permitted on private property.

Jay Ward mentioned a second sidewalk inquiry, this request came from a resident requesting one be constructed on Safford Drive. Joe replied that the first part of the road, coming from Route 32, would be relatively easy and that the new apartment complex might even help. He added, going up the hill from Wilson Pond Road to Route 12 would be more complicated and would require an engineer. DiRusso suggested working with Stephon for grants and if none are available, perhaps working with CIP to start a fund. Joe also suggested using Page Court instead of making a sidewalk.

Gross complimented Joe on the work on the sidewalk on Sawyers Crossing. Joe noted the Town is seeking grant funding to create sidewalks heading towards Talbot Hill Road.

D. Town Hall Vehicle Fleet

Lori Rautiola gave an update on the maintenance needed on the Rec Vehicle and the quote to fix it for $3300. She, DiRusso and Westcott agreed it would be best to dispose of the white Ford Explorer (Rec Vehicle) and give one of the black Ford Explorers to the Rec Department to use; Town hall would keep one explorer for Assessing and Code Enforcement and also keep the Ford Taurus for training, etc. The Board agreed with the recommendation from staff.

E. Consideration of adoption of (2024) addendum to Personnel Policy

Lori provided hard copies for the board to review, and she will add this to the April 1 meeting agenda.

F. February Revenue & Expenditure Report

Finance Director, Theresa Lounder, explained the process of invoice approval to the new board members. The expenditure report was given to the Board. Some questions were asked on items already over budget and Theresa responded accordingly. Theresa noted Board members could reach out by email if needed.

Theresa gave a report on the new Fire Station project, explaining the Town is on track to stay within the budget and has expended about $2,000,000; there are still a few invoices to be paid. Chair Tempesta suggested a site visit to the Fire Station. Lori will connect with Joe DiRusso to schedule a site visit.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

Lori explained the process of uploading documents to the Department of Revenue (DRA). She handed the MS 232 Form (as voted figures) for the Board to sign and stated they would see many MS forms throughout the year and that these are uploaded to the portal for the DRA.

Lori received a $400 invoice from Twin Bridges for the first annual renewal for cloud-based services for the Town's covered bridges. She sought clarification from Twin Bridges, that this charge is for cloud storage for video from the cameras at the bridges and whether or not the Town's new IT vendor should manage this. Lori asked for the Board's authorization to pay the invoice if she determines that is the best route, but she will put it on agenda for next meeting if a different decision is needed.

CORRESPONDENCE

A. NHDOT Public Hearing Notice- Swanzey Project #27692

Lori stated the Town received the notice from NHDOT for a public hearing on Tuesday, March 31st at 5:30 p.m. in regard to the NH project 27692 NH Route 32 over Martin Brook.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Tempesta expressed a desire to clear up some expectations of him and his role as Chair. He explained he had several requests over the weekend, and he was told by a board member the Chair was supposed to receive requests for agenda items which he would then send to Lori. He asked that the Board work as a team and that anyone should be able to request an agenda item through Lori, who would then mention to the Chair if she had questions. Lori responded that the Board should refer to the BOS Rules of Procedure so that everyone can understand the processes in place. She referenced the Agenda Management section within the guidelines. There was a brief discussion. Ward mentioned he liked the idea of bringing up agenda requests at the meeting prior. Lori noted that it was a good process and that there are times where items would need to be added at last minute. The Board understood this process.

Bill Hutwelker asked for the Board's input regarding the electronic sign for the Town Hall. Alan would prefer the current sign in order to keep the character of the Town. Jay stated he needed a visual and liked the idea of the convenience of changing the signs and the opportunity to provide more timely information. Lori suggested working with a vendor to find something electronic but also keep the historic look. Mark stated he had conflicting thoughts; he feels timeliness is important, but the look is a problem. Bill stated it is a safety risk for someone to change the sign, and it can be changed easily on the computer; adding, it could be a revenue source to provide local advertising. Chair Tempesta asked for public input on the subject.

Mark Scalera stated that he felt the lighting aspect ruins the historical look. Ann Heffernon felt that if the sign was done well, it would be fine in the long run. Theresa suggested asking Monadnock High School to change theirs to black and white for a day to see how it looks.

PUBLIC INPUT

Ann Heffernon supplied a handout regarding Community Conversation which is a program from NH Community Development Finance Authority. These are facilitated conversations to help develop community-building projects. Ann said it is a simple request and would like the Board's support to apply. The Board supports this idea.

NON-PUBLIC SESSIONS

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 7:51pm. Present were James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, W. William Hutwelker III, 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 8:10pm.

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 (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

8:21pm. Present were James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, W. William Hutwelker III, James Ward and Alan Gross. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola and Recording Secretary Susan Ells.

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

The Board discussed the Tax Abatement requests that were deferred from earlier in the meeting. Going forward, the abatement applications will be in the emailed packet as well as at the Town Hall to review before the meeting so that the Board can have the information needed to vote.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by LaBelle to adjourn the meeting; Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

Adjournment occurred at 9:09pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on April 1, 2026