Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – April 1, 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 new Fire Station on Route 321 Old Homestead Highway, 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, Ann Heffernon and Mark and Victoria Ames.

Bill Wheeler, employee of Gordon Services, gave a tour of the new Station. DPW Director, Joe DiRusso asked the Board for authorization to allow Steve Bowls from Process Energy - to do a case study on the West Swanzey Wastewater Treatment facility and highlight the Wastewater solar array project, as well as to apply for the NH Energy Efficiency Award. The Board concurred and gave the authorization.

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 reconvened at 5:30pm at Whitcomb Hall. Other members present were Selectmen James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, W William Hutwelker, James Ward and Alan Gross. Also present were Town Administrator, Lori Rautiola and Recording Secretary, Susan Ells.

OTHERS PRESENT

Galen Robinson and Alex Stradling with FACT TV, Neil Jeneral, Stephon Mehu, Scott Self, Mark Scalera, Eileen Longe, Rob Kenney, Lillan Chirichella were also present.

MINUTES

The regular meeting minutes of March 25, 2026, were considered. A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to approve the minutes as amended. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

The non-public session minutes of March 25, 2026, 1 and 2 were considered. A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to approve the minutes as presented. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Payroll Manifest
B. Accounts Payable Manifest
C. Assessing Tax Levy M/239 L/69

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

PUBLIC INPUT

Mark Scalera referred to the discussion in the March 25th meeting regarding the proposed installation of a digital sign at the Town Hall and suggested a digital sign could be placed at the new fire station and leave the current sign at the Town Hall. Alan Gross suggested if this gets approved, a trench should be done early before landscaping, etc. Lori Rautiola was asked by the Board to obtain quotes and Alan Gross suggested contacting

local vendors. Lori agreed, adding as soon as she obtains this information, she will place it on the agenda for discussion.

NOMINATIONS

A. Barbara Skully – Reappointment to Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee

Mark LaBelle made a motion to appoint Barbara Skully to the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee. The motion was seconded by Jay Ward; Alan commented on the great work she has done for the committee. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

B. Ashley Guion – Trustee of the Trust Fund, Alternate

Mark LaBelle made a motion to appoint Ashley Guion to the Trustees of the Trust Fund as an Alternate member as recommended by the Trustees of the Trust Fund for a 3-year term until 2029. The motion was seconded by Jay Ward; all were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Schedule for Grange Hall Paint Proposal

Stephon Mehu updated the Board regarding the Grange Hall Building exterior painting. The Preservation Society received an 'in kind' donation from a local painting contractor for the exterior painting of the building. Lori noted the previous Board authorized the work. Lori and Stephon requested a delay in the painting to consider the donation on the LCHIP grant application they hoped to work with the Grange Committee on. Scott Self mentioned that strategy might work if the grant was guaranteed, but the Town is not guaranteed to receive a grant award.

After some discussion it was decided that Lori would provide a letter to the donor and let the project begin as soon as the painter can start; the Town would need proof of insurance and a copy of their lead paint certification. Lori should communicate this with the painter. Stephon recommended fixing and restoring the windows now and coordinating it with the painting work. According to Bill, Joe DiRusso had requested holding off on working on the windows due to potential movement when the foundation is repaired. Eileen Longe said the windows will cost $1100 each and might be covered by a moose plate grant. Scott Self agreed that delaying might be wise since they might have storm windows installed which could protect the interior of the building when the windows were removed. He also explained the process of lifting the building and doesn't feel that the windows would be at risk. Mark Scalera asked Lori about the LCHIP grant and asked if it would pay for foundation work. Lori stated it was unclear if the building needed a new foundation or if it needed repointing/structural work, adding the first step in the process would be to hire a structural engineer to determine the status of the foundation. Jay Ward asked if the LCHIP would cover the structural engineer and Lori stated she did not have an answer but did not think it would cover that. She added the fee for that would generally be about $2500, adding there is money in the CIP Capital Reserve that could be used for that purpose.

Mark LaBelle made a motion to authorize the painting project to move forward. Jay Ward seconded the motion; all were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Bill Hutwelker explained there are potentially three proposals for the foundation: One solution is to seal the foundation for about $25,000 by Hunter Foundations. The second was estimated by a local contractor who toured the building with Joe DiRusso; that estimate was $150,000 and included jacking building. His concern in this situation is whether jacking the building jeopardizes the historical significance of the building. The third estimate was from Dubois & King which was a modified replacement of the foundation. Bill suggested the

Town hire a third-party structural engineer, such as Steve Tarbox, who would inspect the structure with Joe DiRusso and provide a professional impartial report for $2500.

Scott Self suggested the Board establish a building committee and the Committee could do the investigative work for the Board.

B. Consideration of establishment of a Grange Hall [Building] Sub-committee

Eileen Longe provided the Board with a request to form a Town-appointed Grange Hall Building with a recommendation to appoint Alan Gross, Scott Self, Mark Scalera, Rob Kenney, Lillian Chirichella, Linda Minickiello and Elieen Longe, who were also on the prior advisory committee. She added the committee would make recommendations on priorities to the Board of Selectmen. Chair Tempesta asked Scott Self if this committee would then research the needed repairs for the foundation, conduct interviews, etc., to which Scott concurred and that they would look for other committee members. Lori suggested Town staff be on the committee, such as herself and Joe DiRusso, adding it would be important to have oversight for both the financial and structural sides of the project. Mark Scalera mentioned the volunteer positions would need to be posted for 10 days to see who else is interested. Jay asked if there was anyone with grant experience and Elieen replied that the committee has been working with Lori on grants. Jay pointed out that actively seeking funding should be part of the purpose of the committee. Tempesta asked the Board's opinion about having Lori, Joe and Stephon included. Bill Hutwelker cautioned about having too large a group because it needs to be focused. He encouraged them to recruit people with a construction background and fundraising experience. Lori to post the open seats for a committee.

Mark LaBelle made a motion to approve the formation of the Grange Hall Building Committee; Bill Hutwelker seconded the motion with the purpose of this committee being: to research, prioritize work, explore options, obtain estimates, seek funding, and support construction-related activities of the Golden Rod Grange Hall. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Bill asked if they would prefer the Board to appoint the Chair of the committee, but the majority of the Board mentioned the Committee should appoint their own. Scalera thanked the board.

APPOINTMENTS

A. Ashlee Crosby- Recreation Director- Back Stop for South Road Field

Lori noted Ashlee could not attend. Neil Jeneral, who lives near South Road Field, spoke to the Board to inquire about the work that is planned for the back stop. In the past, he has expressed his concern to the Town regarding balls that have hit and damaged his vehicles, and he had suggested a solution then for the back stop. Mr. Jeneral stated he isn't complaining about the balls coming into the yard and how he often helps the kids find the stray balls, but he doesn't want the balls to damage his cars as they have in the past and he has borne the cost.

Mr. Jeneral went on to say that he doesn't want the Town to spend money unnecessarily on changes that he doesn't feel would solve the problem. He feels there are engineering solutions and has done some 3D modeling and feels he knows how high the back stop should be. Lori Rautiola responded they are planning to raise the back stop height but did not know if funding was available for anything extra. Lori and the Board concurred to wait for Ashlee to be present. The discussion was tabled.

NEW BUSINESS - Continued

C. Consideration of Revised Fee Schedule for Whitcomb Hall Rental Agreement

Bill Hutwelker asked Lori Rautiola for clarification on the types of meetings that would not include a cleaning fee. There was also discussion regarding use of the kitchen and when insurance would be required. Jay Ward suggested the Town staff could have authorization to make the determination when the extra fees would be charged based on the intended use of the hall. Lori will have Katie Collins make some edits and will bring the new version back to the Board for review.

D. Assessing Tax Abatements

a. M/244 L/11
b. M/254 L/22
c. M/248 L/3, M/248 L60
d. M/109 L/56

Mark LaBelle made a motion to approve the slate of Abatements as recommended by the Town's contracted assessor, Bernaiche Consultants. The motion was seconded by Jay Ward; all were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

E. BOS Schedule of Meetings – tabled

OLD BUSINESS

A. Consideration of adoption Addendum to Personnel Policy

The Board discussed the addendum with Lori Rautiola.

Mark LaBelle made a motion to approve the Addendum to Personnel Policy as written with the effective date April 1, 2026. The motion was seconded by Jay Ward. After some discussion, Chair Tempesta, Alan Gross and Mark LaBelle were in favor; Jay Ward and Bill Hutwelker voted against; the motion passed 3-2.

Bill Hutwelker reported that the net metering extension bill is coming in front of committee next week and the Town has been asked by the energy committee to reaffirm net metering by extending it an additional 20 years. If successful, there will be a public hearing, and the Town will be asked again to reaffirm; it was suggested that the Town provide testimony regarding the benefits to the Town. Bill asked for and received the Board's census. He will send an email and will copy the Board.

Bill then went on to say that he and Jim Tempesta have been working with the Swanzey Water and Sewer Advisory Committee, and he thinks they are ready to proceed and would like to appoint a chair and vice chair or to ask the committee to appoint them. Chair Tempesta recommended appointing Scott Self for Chair, Pat Ambrosio for Vice Chair, and Steve Bittle for Finance. He said there is a meeting tomorrow at 10am.

Jay Ward moved to appoint Scott Self as Chair, Pat Ambrosio for Vice Chair, and Steve Bittle for Finance for the Swanzey Water and Sewer Advisory Committee. Mark Labelle seconded. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Lori noted she learned after the Board asked to post for an Alternate Position for CIP, that the Committee was established by Town vote and she was unsure if the Board could appoint another member since it was established with a number of positions stated on the ballot; adding, she was going to confirm with legal before posting the vacant position on the website.

PUBLIC INPUT

None

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 Mark LaBelle to enter a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (c) which was seconded by Bill Hutwelker. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed**.** The Board entered the non-public session at 7:12pm. 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 Mark LaBelle to come out of the non-public session, seconded by Jay Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed. The non-public session ended at 7:18pm.

A motion was made by Mark 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; Jay 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

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A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to come out of the non-public session, seconded by Jay Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed. The non-public session ended at 7:26pm.

A motion was made by Mark 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; Jay 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 Mark LaBelle to enter a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (c) which was seconded by Jay 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 Mark LaBelle to come out of the non-public session, seconded by Jay Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed. The non-public session ended at 8:03pm.

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

OTHER BUSINESS

Bill Hutwelker gave an update regarding the Stratton Library property line. The neighbors have approved providing an easement along the back of the building in exchange for the Town providing an easement on the

east side extending into the driveway. The plan is to sign the easements on April 6 at the Selectboard meeting. Bill's next step is to work with Ken and Sharon Greatbatch for an easement on the corner of the lot where the library's mini split will be located. He has already spoken with them, and they are in favor of this arrangement.

Bill next expressed his reservations regarding the newly formed Grange Hall Building committee nominating their own chair and suggested that the Selectboard make that nomination.

Mark Labelle made a motion to appoint Scott Self as the chair of the Grange Hall Building Committee. The motion was seconded by Jay Ward. With no further discussion, the motion was passed unanimously.

Lori Rautiola announced to the Board that she made an offer for the Whitcomb Hall caretaker position which was accepted at the rate offered.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Adjournment occurred at 8:10pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on April 8, 2026