Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – April 8, 2026
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

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

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

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to enter a nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (b) 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 4:33pm. Present were James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, W. William Hutwelker III, James Ward and Alan Gross. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola, HR Coordinator Meagen Kerris, and Fire Chief Eric Mattson.

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 5:00pm.

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 5:05pm. Present were James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, W. William Hutwelker III, James Ward and Alan Gross. Also present were Town Administrator Lori Rautiola, Town Planner Adam Paquette 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 5:30pm.

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.

The meeting was reconvened at 5:30pm. Members present were Chair James Tempesta, 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, Lee Dunham, Ashlee Crosby, Alyssa Hodgman, Shana Thompson, Gordie Ayotte and Michael Gomarlo

MINUTES

The regular meeting minutes of April 1, 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 April 1, 2026, Sessions 1, 2, and 3 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.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Payroll Manifest
B. Accounts Payable Manifest
C. 2026 Water/Sewer Supplemental Warrant – M/108 L/29
D. Special Events Permit – Recreation Department – Sweep Up Swanzey
E. Raffle Permit- Cheshire Fair Association
F. Intent to Excavate – M/239 L/69
G. Current Use Application – M/255 L/16

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

PUBLIC INPUT

None

APPOINTMENTS

A. Lee Dunham, Sexton – Update to Cemetery Fee Schedule

Lee Dunham presented to the Board the proposed 2026 Cemetery Department fee schedule that he and DPW Director Joe DiRusso were recommending. He explained that prices had not been adjusted since 2014 and suggested that it was time for the Town to increase the rates. They had reviewed fees charged by other towns in the area and devised a schedule that was comparable and would cover the cost of the DPW backhoe and crew.

Mark LaBelle made a motion to approve the Town of Swanzey Cemetery Fee Schedule as suggested by Lee Dunham; Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

Alan Gross asked how many spaces are available in the cemeteries; Lee explained that it depends on lot sizes (full or half) and provided a report that explained that in 1988, the voters agreed to spend $75,000 to buy 48 acres off Route 32 south of the current Mt View cemetery. There are some restrictions, such as keeping a natural buffer between the cemetery and the homes, no trees can be removed, and there is a waterway to be left unchanged. There would be an expense to prepare it for a cemetery. Mt View Cemetery was expanded in the 1990s and about three quarters of the property is available for lots. Mt Caesar Cemetery is nearly full but there are some lots available for cremation burials. Some of the land at Oak Hill Cemetery is still undeveloped, primarily the additional property the Town purchased in 1950 from the box shop. Homestead Cemetery is full.

The Board thanked Lee for his work and for attending the meeting.

B. Maureen Moeckel, Katherine Clark and Robert Clark Jr – The Stratton Free Library – Easements

Tabled

C. **Michael Gomarlo and Gordie Ayotte - The West Swanzey Sidewalk Committe**e

At a previous meeting, the Board had discussed a request to put in a sidewalk from the parking lot to the door of the church on Cobble Hill so the food pantry visitors would have a safer walkway. At the time, the Board thought the request was for the Town to cover the cost which would not be permissible on church property.

Michael Gomarlo and Gordie Ayotte explained that the West Swanzey Sidewalk Fund is a Trust that Frank Snow endowed for the sole benefit of roads and sidewalks in West Swanzey. The money is not taxpayer money and is overseen by the Trustees of the Trust Fund who have jurisdiction on how the money is spent. The normal process is for the committee to obtain a couple of bids; they are not asking the Town to do the work. They will update the Board with the decision of the trustees. The Board thanked them for coming to the meeting to educate them about this fund.

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

Chair Tempesta provided an update about the conversation the Board had with Neil Jeneral at last week's board meeting regarding Neil's concern about the changes planned to the back stop to reduce the likelihood of stray balls hitting cars in his nearby property.

Rec Director, Ashlee Crosby explained she obtained a quote of $2,800 from Monadnock Fence to extend the height of the backstop by an additional 10 feet. The Recreation Department has $7,500 in CIP Capital Reserves they can use for this purpose. Crosby recommended extending the height of the fence at a cost of $5,875 to limit the number of fly balls exiting the ball field on the Mill Lane side. There was a discussion to include the DPW Director, Joe DiRusso, on these decisions as he manages our facilities.

Ashlee suggested some of the remaining funds could be used for dog waste stations at a cost of $1000 for 4 stations with solar lights and a 1-year supply of bags. These would be used at Brown Field, AA Park, and 2 at South Road. There is an ongoing problem with the public letting their dogs on the fields and not cleaning up after them; her hope was that having the waste stations would keep the fields cleaner; dogs can't be banned because a field ordinance is needed to enforce this. She has been working on this with the Police Department for several years.

Shana Thompson represents the Cal Ripkin Association and stated that she wasn't aware there was an issue with the O'Brien field, and while she thought it would be good to have a fence, they don't have it in their budget, and it is not a high priority. She asked why Ashlee didn't get more than one quote; Ashlee replied that Monadnock Fence installed the current fence and were available to quote and to install before opening day. Chair Tempesta asked her to get two more quotes to see if they are in the price range.

Bill Hutwelker asked what the status was with the field ordinance; Ashlee responded she gave it to the Town in November. Bill replied that they would look into it.

Chair Tempesta asked her to get more bids, to notify Mr. Jeneral, to involve Joe DiRusso, and to come back to next Wednesday's meeting to discuss and to obtain a decision. Ashlee was asked to notify Lori Rautiola if there are any concerns about the timeframe.

Ashlee notified the Board of the aging score board tower behind home plate at Brown Field was in disarray and hasn't been used in years, was broken and vandalized multiple times. She asked if it could be removed altogether, which would cost $600 from their operating budget. The Board approved her having a discussion with Joe DiRusso and devising a plan to give to Lori if it is to be taken down.

Ashlee added there is $35,000 in CIP Capital Reserves to replace the deck at Richardson Park. Joe DiRusso estimates the DPW could replace it for $12,000 - $14,000 and he suggested using some of the cost savings to respray the parking spaces in the parking lot. They received a quote from Minkler for $1,850. She said the original quote for the deck didn't include DPW doing any of the work. Chair Tempesta reiterated that Joe DiRusso needs to be involved in any facility work.

Ashlee will send Lori a list of the projects that are needed, what funds would be required, and where the funds would come from, and Lori will add to the agenda for next week.

Lastly, Ashlee provided a report that this year's Easter Egg event grew from 184 kids last year to 267 this year.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Assessing Tax Abatement - M/228 L/8

Mark LaBelle made a motion to approve the Abatement for Map 228 Lot 8 as recommended by the Town's contracted assessor, Bernaiche Consultants. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

B. Assessing – Elderly and Veteran's Tax Credit/Exemption

a. M/104 L/61
b. M/227 L/28/0/BG0/22
c. M/246 L/11
d. M/243 L/55/0/MH0/30
e. M/246 L/83
f. M/235 L/61
g. M/254 L/41
h. M/232 L/59
i. M/219 L/49

Mark LaBelle made a motion to approve the slate of Elderly and Veteran's Tax Exemptions 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.

OLD BUSINESS

A. GoGov Building Permit Software – Invoice Approval

This purchase was approved in December for the building permit software, but the company allowed the Town to wait until after the budget was approved before paying the invoice.

Mark LaBelle made a motion to authorize the withdrawal of $14,364.00 from the Town Hall Information Management Systems Expendable Trust Fund for the building permit software from GoGov, that was approved at the December 17, 2025 meeting. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

Bill Hutwelker asked Lori for an update regarding the TAP grant funding. Lori stated there was not much to update other than the last meeting with the State about bridge work and the Town was waiting for the State to schedule a meeting to discuss the rail trail project, mainly the extreme overage of the project's budget. It was suggested Mike Kowalczyk, as Chair of the Rail Trail Committee, be on the call.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

A. BOS 2026 Schedule of Meetings

There was a discussion on a summer schedule of board meetings. No decision was made and the discussion ended.

CORRESPONDENCE

A. City of Keene Wastewater Treatment Plant Open House, Thursday April 16th 10 am -6 pm

Bill recommended the board attend the open house at the City of Keene's Wastewater Treatment Plant at the airport which is open to the public. He was very impressed with the operation of that facility.

PUBLIC INPUT

Jay Ward reported that he had learned at a recent Conservation Commission meeting, they had a visitor from the Old Homestead Garden Club who told them that there is a master gardener in town. He learned that master gardeners are required to do community service and could design a garden for the Town, such as by the new fire station. Jay suggested that when there is a project being planned, the Board should encourage those involved to contact a master gardener.

Jay explained he tried calling Fish and Game last year regarding the boat launch on Wilson Pond which is classified as 'limited access'. He had been told by DES when he inquired about assistance cleaning the pond of invasive growth - that the pond was considered a private pond because limited access means private. He could not get the information he needed to determine how to reclassify the launches because the pond is not private. He asked the Board if members had any issues with him researching the pond. The Board agreed by consensus to authorize Jay to research this matter.

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 Jay Ward. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed**.** The Board entered the non-public session at 7:24pm. 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 7:29pm.

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 7:31pm. 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 7:52pm.

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.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Adjournment occurred at 7:54pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on April 15, 2026