Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – April 22, 2026
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER

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

ABSENT

Alan Gross

OTHERS PRESENT

Kai Kraemer with FACT TV, Cody Morrison, Victoria Ames, Scott Self, Todd Horner, Cathy Bergstrom, Eileen Longe, Stephon Mehu, Steven Tenney

MINUTES

The regular meeting minutes of April 15, 2026, were considered. A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to approve the minutes as amended. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 4-0.

The non-public session minutes of April 14, 2026, Sessions 1 and 2 and of April 15, 2026, were considered. A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to approve the minutes as presented. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 4-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Payroll Manifest
B. Accounts Payable Manifest
C. Current Use Application- M/256 L/35, M/231 L/25&26, M/257 L/3, M/233 L/44
D. Intent to Cut Application- M/106 L/62, M/106 L/59&60, M/205 L/02

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to approve the Consent Agenda. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 4-0.

PUBLIC INPUT

Scott Self, member of the Preservation Society, requested an update on the painting project for the Golden Rod Grange Hall. Lori Rautiola responded that she and Stephon Mehu met with the painter and will meet with the DPW Director soon to discuss repairs needed before and during the painting.

There was a discussion regarding submitting a Letter of Intent for an LCHIP grant by the deadline of April 29; Lori noted the subsequent grant application needs to be submitted by the middle of June. Stephon Mehu offered to submit the Letter of Intent and will assist those who will complete the application. Lori suggested they use the Grange Hall's Historic Building Assessment preservation plan to help with the application. Stephon clarified that the architectural plan does not address structural integrity and he has a contact the Grange Hall Building Committee could reach out to.

Eileen Longe asked that any reference on the Town's website regarding the 'Golden Rod Grange Hall Advisory Committee' to be replaced with the 'Golden Rod Grange Hall Building Committee'.

APPOINTMENTS

A. Todd Horner, SWRPC & Cody Morrison, MEDC – Presentation on Grant Opportunities

Todd Horner from Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) explained they work with member municipalities on a wide range of projects. They have appreciated a strong working relationship with the Town of Swanzey over the years. Cody Morrison explained that the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) is a non-profit 501(c)3 regional development corporation, working in the Monadnock Region concentrating efforts on business and development finance, real estate development, and technical advisory services. They bring an innovative perspective to solving development and financial questions for high impact projects. MEDC recently worked with the Town on the North Winchester/California Street project.

Mr. Horner asked the Board what areas they would be interested in hearing about. Bill Hutwelker explained the Board recognizes challenges that communities have for development, and they hoped to solicit information about the services they provide.

Mr. Horner explained they leverage contracts with funders to provide services such as on-call engineering for municipalities, as well as conceptual level services for exploring feasibility. Recently they completed a culvert inventory to map and assess the conditions of Swanzey's culverts and worked with the Swanzey Lake Association and the Town on a management plan for the lake. They also provide grant writing and administration. He pointed out that the Community Development Block Grant program is aimed at projects such as housing or job creation that benefit people with low-to-moderate income levels.

Bill Hutwelker noted that SWRPC has assisted with the emergency management plan; this year they will be working on an audit for the zoning ordinance for Swanzey, which he believes will be very helpful.

Cody Morrison attested to SWRPC's ability to help guide grant application and administration; they can assist from A to Z in the life of a project. He recommended the Town go to SWRPC first when looking for funding sources, even for supplemental income for an existing project.

Jay Ward mentioned the Town may have some projects coming up that might use their expertise. Mr. Morrison mentioned the Water Company project and suggested they might have more resources for federal funding.

Bill asked them to expand on the engineering services they provide and was informed that they engage the engineering firm to assist towns with transportation projects; SWRPC will handle the invoices from the firm and will invoice the town for the local match which reduces the administrative burden on the town.

Mr. Horner offered some examples of Timber and Transit projects that help towns with engineering for transportation projects that incorporate timber, adding if the Town has any diesel vehicles in need of upgrades, there are funds supported by the VW settlement to distribute for obtaining clean energy vehicles. The solution doesn't need to be electric; it just needs to emit less emissions than what it is replacing.

The Board thanked Mr. Horner and Mr. Morrison for coming to the meeting.

B. Victoria Ames, Planning Chair - Commercial/industrial growth and property tax burden

Victoria Ames presented to the Board the results of research she has been compiling since February regarding various statistics from 2014 to 2026 that pertained to the Town of Swanzey in relation to other towns in Cheshire County.

The research included demographics such as Swanzey's population, median age, density, growth in housing valuation, commercial/industrial growth, tax rate over time and number of acres in current use.

Ms. Ames concluded the Town could focus on bringing in more businesses to provide more jobs versus stating that the development would lower taxes, adding in her opinion the Town should consider not undermining the rural character and should be more selective in what is allowed, and more conscientious about protecting natural resources. Victoria offered to do further research if the Board had any requests.

Jay Ward suggested she might consider reporting the total tax burden not just the tax rate. Scott Self suggested showing what the industrial taxes are paying toward the school tax which he stated was helping the taxpayers.

Chair Tempesta thanked Victoria for the incredible amount of work that she put into this project.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Home Based Business Application- M/218 L/27

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to approve the Home-Based Business Application for map 218 Lot 27 as presented. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 4-0.

B. Consideration of Update to Home Based Business Application

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to amend page 5 of the Home-Based Business application to remove the Board of Selectmen as a review authority, establishing the Planning Board as the sole review authority effective April 23, 2026. Jay Ward seconded the motion. Scott Self offered his opinion as to why the Planning Board should not be the authority for this decision. He recommended that it should be the Zoning Board's role. The vote was tabled to discuss further with the Town Planner.

C. Transfer of Title – Recreation Vehicle (Ford Explorer)

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the title over to Dwayne Ronczkowsky, the highest bidder on the sale of the 2015 White Ford Explorer, as noted on the Bill of Sale. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 4-0.

D. Release Elderly and Disable Tax Deferral Lien – M/218 L/109

Tabled to a future meeting.

E. Tax Abatement- M/240 L/10

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to accept the slate of Abatement recommendation from the Town's contracted assessor, Bernaiche Consultants. Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 4-0.

F. Upcoming End of EMS Contract

Chair Tempesta discussed with the Board the need to put out a Request for Proposal for the EMS Contract. Lori will work to produce an RFP to bring to the Board.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Approval of Invoice for Richardson Park

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to authorize the withdrawal of $1200 from the Recreation Facilities Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) to pay the invoice from GDS for the removal of brush from Richardson Park. Jay

Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 4-0.

CORRESPONDENCE

A. Letter from NHDOT - SWANZEY, X-A004(883), Project #42511 Ashuelot Rail Trail

Lori reported that she has a Teams meeting scheduled for Tuesday at 2pm to discuss the budget increase on the project. The Chair suggested a board member attend the meeting. Jay offered to attend the meeting.

PUBLIC INPUT

Jay let the Board know that he talked with someone who wants to leave his property to the Town in his will. He explained there is a house on the property that the owner currently rents out, and he suggested using it for a residence for a town official. The current tenant is leaving in May; if the Town doesn't want it, he will tear it down because he doesn't want to pay taxes on it. Jay thought if the Town leases the property, it might be able to be used to store the archives instead of the building on Pine Street. The building is located on Partridgeberry Lane and backs up to the Mt Caesar trails. The owner doesn't want it developed so he'd like to leave it to the Town. The Board agreed that Jay will let him know that the Board is very interested and would like to view the property after the tenants move out.

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 7:43pm. Present were James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, W. William Hutwelker III, and James Ward. 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 7:58pm.

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 7:58pm. Present were James Tempesta, Mark LaBelle, W. William Hutwelker III, and James Ward. 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 8:30pm.

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 4-0.

There was a discussion regarding the technology for Dispatch Communications to the Police Department.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mark LaBelle to adjourn the meeting; Jay Ward seconded the motion, and it passed 4-0.

Adjournment occurred at 8:33pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on April 29, 2026