Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Board of Selectmen
Meeting – April 29, 2026
Whitcomb Hall
17 Main Street, Swanzey, NH

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

ABSENT
Chair James Tempesta

OTHERS PRESENT
Kai Kraemer with FACT TV, Mark Scalera, Cathy Bergstrom - EDAC Committee Chair, JB Mack – SWRPC, Adam Paquette – Town Planner, Scott Self, Joe Parisi

MINUTES
The regular meeting minutes of April 14, 2026 and April 22, 2026 were considered. A motion was made by Jay Ward to approve the minutes as presented. Bill Hutwelker seconded the motion, Alan Gross abstained and it passed 3-0.

The non-public session minutes of April 22, 2026 Session 1 and 2 were considered. A motion was made by Jay Ward to approve the minutes as presented. Bill Hutwelker seconded the motion, Alan Gross abstained and it passed 3-0.

CONSENT AGENDA
A. Payroll Manifest
B. Accounts Payable Manifest
C. Intent to Excavate - M/224 L/26
D. Gravel Tax Levy - M/239 L/69
E. Yield Tax Levy – M/255 L/24, M/227 L/8, M/232 L/39

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

PUBLIC INPUT
Scott Self, Chair of the Water and Sewage Advisory Committee, explained that the committee has met a few times to review the engineer's report for the West Swanzey portion of the sewer system. The report provided options to comply with the new mandates by the EPA. One solution is to upgrade, which would require building a new plant; the other is to pump the sewage to Keene via Route 10. The committee supports the second option, feeling it was the better solution and would be a lower cost. Scott asked the Board to make a recommendation for the committee to move forward now because there is a significant amount of planning that needs to be done, such as reviewing current rates, obtaining more engineering, and seeking grants. He added that Steve Bittel informed him that there are funds in the Sewer Capital Reserve fund to obtain more extensive engineering. They would like to have this option ready for the 2027 ballot, adding that the project

would not be done for about 3 years because it will need to coincide with Keene's project to reconstruct lower Winchester Street.

Scott explained that the EPA has issued a regional permit and went on to explain in detail the requirements which will make it difficult, if not impossible, for the Town to comply with the new mandates.

Proposals for a mechanized new plant are likely to be around 26 million dollars; piping to Keene would be around 16 million dollars. While both are very expensive, a benefit to pumping to Keene is that most ongoing operating costs would be eliminated or reduced, such as money spent on lab work, chemicals, and electricity. There would be no use for the lagoons once the pumping to Keene commenced. The Town would plan to decommission the lagoons in later years. The current plant would be used as a pump station. A secondary pump station would be needed between West Swanzey and Keene. The connection would be near Market Basket and would involve installing a larger pipe for Keene's system to receive our influent of about 60-70,000 gallons/day. He noted that this amount has remained steady over the years due to low flow toilets and other water saving measures employed by the residents. The cost would be borne by those that use the service, not all taxpayers. He added that the Town has not raised rates in the 40 years since the plant was built. A bond would be paid by rate payers but would need to be approved by the voters. They are hoping for a 70% grant.

Scott felt the Town would be more likely to receive support for grants to become connected to Keene's regional plant, adding that Swanzey paid for some of the upgrades to the Keene plant because it is used by North Swanzey.

Alan mentioned that he toured the Keene Wastewater Treatment plant and was impressed with how well it is run and how efficient it is.

Scott went on to explain that the proposed pumping system is pressurized and cannot take any inlets. Sewage systems for new developments would need to be routed to the pump station and then be pumped to Keene. He added that Larry Crowder suggested that a second pump station might have gravity feed which could allow inlets, thereby providing easier access for new development. Swanzey's Sewer ordinance only allows for domestic waste, not commercial, and because Keene's allows for commercial waste, pumping to Keene would open the opportunity for commercial development along Route 10.

If Swanzey is not ready to complete the job when Keene is working on their project, Keene could be paid to install the pipe and then it would be ready when the Town could move forward.

Jay Ward made a motion to approve the recommendation from the Water and Sewer Advisory Committee. Alan Gross seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion passed 4-0.

Scott then explained next steps the committee will take. Mark Scalera suggested the Communication Committee's assistance would be useful for publicizing the project. Scott replied that they will be inviting the Swanzey Governance committee to a meeting to bring them up to speed.

The Board thanked Scott for his work on the committee.

NOMINATIONS

A. Roberta Visser - Reappointment to Conservation Commission

A motion was made by Jay Ward to appoint Roberta Visser as an alternate to the Conservation Commission. Alan Gross seconded the motion, and it passed 4-0.

APPOINTMENTS

A. JB Mack – SWRPC

JB Mack, Assistant Director of Southwest Region Planning Commission, provided information regarding their Transportation Planning Program which provides engineering services to towns for transportation projects. This program was started because most towns don't have engineers on staff. Typically, this resource is used for addressing the 10-year planning process, such as the West Swanzey area on Route 10 that, until recently, had been on the State's plan for speed reduction and pedestrian safety. Town staff were also interested in pursuing the Transportation Alternatives Program grant for pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements on Route 12 and Route 32.

After the flood in 2023, SWRPC was approached by members of the Swanzey Lake Association who asked JB to meet with DPW Director Joe DiRusso and Lori Rautiola to discuss this resource to work with the engineers to preserve East Shore Road and develop concepts about what to do with Talbot Hill.

He added that it is considered conceptual or light engineering, costing generally between $10 - $20K, which provides a planning level analysis of scenarios of approaches to take, and rough cost estimates regarding what budget would be needed for East Shore Road erosion from Talbot Hill Road. While the money is not generally for Class 6 roads, because it would be protecting East Shore Road, it would qualify as a project they could do.

They have a small budget for 34 towns and want to be sure that everyone has access so they ask for local match on a step-by-step basis; so, a $10K-$15K engineering cost would have a 20% match; $15K-$20K would be 25%, and so on.

SWRPC needs to provide notice to the towns they support. The projects are generally on a first come first serve basis. He recommended the Board meet with the Swanzey Lake Association because they are requesting support from the Board to pursue this option. The project is not defined yet, but it would be to prevent further damage and erosion to East Shore Road from Talbot Hill Road. The Board could do a site walk; the engineering project would provide some ideas and rough estimates since this service is limited to conceptual, but he felt it was a good first step.

Lori said it is important for the Board to determine what should be done with the road; Bill is in favor of taking the initial steps. Joe Parisi said a lot of work has already been done by property owners, particularly in drainage by Talbot Hill Road, adding the next priorities would be the drainage at Richardson Park and the potential breech at Swanzey Lake dam. JB replied that it would be important to get NHDOT to sign off, so be sure to speak of the park as it relates to a transportation engineering project. Cathy Bergstrom said if the Town engages for a preliminary plan and decides to move forward, the Town would be positioned better for another grant. She provided a report for VLAP program which reported that the latest water test shows Swanzey Lake is stable at this point; the Association is invested in the protection of the lake and is asking the Town to be invested as well.

JB next explained that the Brownfields Program helps properties that are having trouble advancing development due to contamination, or perceived contamination. The program helps clarify what the issues are, if any, and has been helpful in moving redevelopment opportunities which are suspected of potential contamination, such as former gas stations, mill buildings, and railroad tracks. This service is available free to the 34 towns in the region.

JB went on to say that he knows there is a need for transit service in this area, including some parts of Swanzey. They are proposing an expansion of what HCS in Keene provides with the City Express and Friendly

Bus in order to serve the aging population, those with no vehicles, folks with disabilities, and those with low income, to get to medical appointments, jobs, training opportunities, etc. SWRPC is currently looking for vendors and grant opportunities. Bill said Swanzey is one of the communities with the highest percentage of people without vehicles.

Lastly, JB described the Critical Access to Care program that uses volunteer drivers but stated that about 10% of the needed rides go unmet. They are proposing a backup service focusing on helping people get to their medical appointments.

The Board thanked him for meeting with them.

Joe Parisi mentioned the match portion of the engineering study would be $3K-$5K, and while the Swanzey Lake Association does not have huge resources, they are committed, and as a statement of commitment they have discussed contributing to the match to defray the cost. He hoped that would encourage the Town to consider engaging with SWRPC.

B. Adam Paquette, Town Planner - Consideration of Update to Home Based Business Application

Adam discussed the home-based business applications which the selectboard currently reviews. His primary concern is that selectman review is not codified in the ordinance, and it creates an administrative hurdle for applicants. He asked what criteria the Board is reviewing and how does it differ from planning board review.

Bill admitted that there has been confusion between Home-based businesses and Home Occupations. Adam explained that the Home Occupation applications are reviewed by the Town Planner and Assistant Planner. He added that this topic will be addressed in the ordinance audit project that is being conducted.

Discussion ensued; ultimately the Board members all agreed by consensus that the Selectboard does not to be involved in the process of approving the Home-Based Business Application.

Adam invited the selectmen to attend the joint meeting with Zoning, Planning, Conservation Commission and EDAC on June 4th at 6pm.

C. Cathy Bergstrom, EDAC Committee Chair – Committee Mission

Cathy announced that EDAC will be sponsoring a booth at Old Home Days; Cheshire Children's Museum will provide a 'make your own jump rope' activity. They are currently designing a T-shirt to sell with the EDAC logo and tag line 'Bridging Heritage with Opportunity'. She added that they are establishing a presence on social media and have a Facebook page named 'Friends of Swanzey Economic Development'. They are in the early stages of working with the Planning Board application to make that less cumbersome and have submitted suggestions for hyperlinks on Town's website. They are considering coordinating town-wide activities such as concerts and outdoor films, perhaps working with the Recreation department; and holding them at different venues in Swanzey to help build a sense of community. They have begun working with local businesses to be able to provide a welcome gift to new homeowners in Swanzey. They are also available to work with small businesses as a resource to provide help creating or editing business plans. They would like to host events to coordinate volunteers with non-profit boards who need members. Lastly, she saw a mention on the Swanzey Community FB page regarding the vacant lot next to Dollar General; the post suggested a farmers' market and the comment had many positive responses. Adam said the organizer could reach out to him to discuss what permits would be needed. Cathy then handed out a draft of the initiatives to be placed on the town website.

The board thanked her for the work done by her and the committee.

NEW BUSINESS

A. March Revenue & Expenditure Report

The Board reviewed the finance report and Lori answered questions.

B. Town Administrator – Update on Fire Station Budget

Lori and the Board reviewed the current expenses of the $2.8 budget.

C. Consideration of Group Net Metering Account

Lori asked if the Board had questions to ask the City of Keene regarding the Group Net Metering and will arrange a meeting with the City of Keene.

D. Assessing – Elderly Exemption Tax Credit/Exemption

a. M/227 L/28
b. M/218 L/2

Jay Ward made a motion to approve the slate of Elderly Tax Exemptions. The motion was seconded by Alan Gross; with no further discussion, the motion passed 4-0.

OLD BUSINESS

None

CORRESPONDENCE

A. Letter of Appreciation From Resident Regarding Fire Chief's Service

Mark LaBelle read a letter the Town received appreciating Fire Chief Mattson.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

Lori, Jay, Stephon Mehu and Mike Kowalczyk met with Hoyle & Tanner and the DOT via a video call regarding the added costs to the rail trail project as mandated by the State. They are trying to reduce the costs but there will be some tough decisions to find a way to make it work. The Board is committed to not stop midstream and lose the money invested so far. Voters approved spending $364,000; but now, with the mandated changes, the project will be short by about $200,000. She and Jay explained some of the changes driving the increases.

PUBLIC INPUT

Bill said received proposal contract from Cheshire EMS which is $46/per Swanzey resident. The fire department leadership asked to review the proposal. Bill inquired about the process of an RFP; Lori replied that she is not halfway through; and explained the timeline.

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 Jay Ward to enter a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (c) which was seconded by Alan Gross. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed**.** The Board entered the non-public session at 7:44pm. 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 Jay Ward to come out of the non-public session, seconded by Alan Gross. All were in favor by Roll Call and the motion passed. The non-public session ended at 7:53pm.

A motion was made by Jay 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; Alan Gross seconded the motion, and it passed 4-0.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Adjournment occurred at 7:53pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on May 6, 2026