Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Joint Meeting of the Swanzey Board of Selectmen,
Planning Board, Zoning Board, Conservation Commission
and Economic Development Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – June 4, 2026
Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey, NH

Note: Draft Minutes are subject to review, correction and approval by the Board. Review and approval of Minutes generally takes place at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board.

CALL TO ORDER:
The meeting of the Joint Boards was called to order at 6:00 pm by Selectboard Chair Jimmy Tempesta. He thanked all the members of these important boards for the work they do for the Town.

Other Selectboard members present: Jay Ward, Bill Hutwelker, and Alan Gross (Absent Mark LaBelle)

Zoning Board: Chair Adam Mulhearn, Vice Chair Ann Karasinski, Jay Ward, Wayne Lechlider and Joe Parisi and Alternates Peter Delaney and Jessica Ramsey-Sanchez.

Planning Board: Chair Victoria Ames, Vice Chair Scott Self, Michael York, Richard Lane, Mark Scalera, Brandon Self, and Alternate Stacey Goodale (Absent: Alternates Jane Johnson and Charlie Harbeck)

Conservation Commission: Chair Cheri Domina, Bud Winsor, Mark Scalera, and Jay Ward (Absent: Bonnie Hart, Robert Goodrich, Alternates Roberta Visser, Jane Johnson and Nancy Karlson)

EDAC: Cathy Bergstrom, Skip DiBernardo, Greg Johnson, Jessica Ramsey-Sanchez, and Hannah Maynard (Absent: Gus Lerandeau and Jarod Coughlin)

Also present were Town Planner Adam Paquette and Recording Secretary Susan Ells, and Sarah Bollinger and Chloe Gross from Southwest Region Planning Commission.

Public Meeting
Swanzey Zoning Ordinance Audit –
Southwest Region Planning Commission has been hired to conduct an audit of the Town of Swanzey's Zoning Ordinance. The audit is intended to improve the clarity, usability, statutory compliance, and internal consistency of the Town's Zoning Ordinance.

This meeting is the first joint discussion among the Town's land use boards and staff. The purpose of the meeting is to confirm whether the proposed organizational direction makes sense for the people who regularly use, administer, and interpret the ordinance and will focus on organization and usability; how the ordinance is arranged and whether users can easily find and understand the standards that apply.

Sarah Bollinger asked if the group had any questions before reviewing the document.

- Scott asked who the audience of the document would be; Sarah replied that she envisions it to be useful to a wide audience, from homeowners to building contractors.

- Jay asked if there would be a link to the zoning map; Sarah replied that it would not be in the ordinance, but an overlay might work with instructions to access the map.
- Ann asked if SWRPC had done this type of project for other towns and was told SWRPC has not.
- Joe stated that he hopes the average citizen will be able to understand the ordinance and Sarah agreed; that is the goal.

Sarah led the group through the rough outline;

1. She suggested the discussion start with reorganization and recommends moving *Authority, Purpose, Administration and Enforcement* to the beginning. Adam P agreed with that suggestion.
2. Scott asked about the Use Table and Jay suggested referring to Table 2 from Table 3. Adam said it is standard to have dimensional tables with paragraphs below, and there would be hyperlinks within the ordinance. Mark concurred that the use of tables is helpful. Sarah told the group that it's easy to reorganize the document before it goes before the public. She asked if there was anything in Section 2 not wanted there. Scott clarified that Item C describes construction on existing lots of record.
3. Current Section 3 should be dissected and should include use and permitted uses. Scott suggested a table of contents for paper copies. Jess asked if there would be a search option and learned that the document would be a PDF so it could be searched. Bill asked if conditional use permit is part of this document; Adam P replied that it is only for the wetlands district and while there is an argument to be made to be put in this section, it should remain in wetlands district for now. Bill asked if there is a difference between 'not permitted' and 'expressly prohibited' because they seem the same. Adam P said it would take a warrant to reword it, but the terms are redundant. Adam P asked the group if they felt there is merit to list if a use is 'permitted' versus 'not permitted'. Ann said she would like to see a value there. Richard asked if it would be possible to create a glossary for that section and reference a page number to get the meaning. Sarah said the use table will have a column to direct to other sections, and when a word is defined will be underlined and be in blue font as a link; Sarah cautioned against adding page numbers because when additions are made, it messes the page numbers. Adam M is asking about organizing the sub sections in a logical manner. Sarah confirmed they will be organized more logically. Each section is meant to be more logical and will be pulled from Section 3.
4. The Specific Use Standards table will direct users to this section. Hannah said it makes sense to have it in the order of the articles likely to be looked at first. Ann asked about electric vehicle stations and was told that this will be on the Use table. Scott asked if the Use table could direct the user to Section 4; for instance, for a multi-family dwelling, it would state whether permitted or not, and where to go for more information. Adam P said the density standards will be listed in a paragraph instead of under the individual zone districts. Jay said if before using the ordinance, should the user first find out what zone they are in and then determine what uses are permitted? Jessica asked if there is a way to look by zone or by use? Sarah said the table directs the user by what they want to do. Adam said the current ordinance doesn't say what zone the property is in but the users can look that up on the GIS. Jay suggested a link to the zoning maps and Sarah agreed there would be a way. Adam P said they will be in the same place on the website and he envisions a one-page handout and a video to give instructions on how to use it. Sarah let the group know that prior to the next meeting there will be samples to test.

5. Cheri requested that the future Groundwater protection district be included in the Overlay and Special Districts.
6. No comments
7. Sarah told the group that the section she is proposing 'Amendment, Validity, Effective Date, and Adoption History' is currently scattered throughout the ordinance and emphasized it is important to track the changes but feels it should be in a separate section near the end. Jay asked the meaning of severability/validity and Victoria defined it as 'If one part is not legal, then the rest is not legal'. Sarah said that future amendments would be added at the end of the list. When questioned about how it can be clear what was amended, Adam P said the Town's lawyer said the notes are not needed if there are historical town reports. Sarah suggested that these could be listed in a different spot and will look for other solutions. Adam M said that the fact there was an amendment doesn't matter as much as the note as to why it was amended. Ann asked if the history of it could be in a separate document or database; Adam agreed that he would love to digitize the old documents but has no staff for that. The Town has everything printed but not all are digitized. Adam P likes the idea of a separate document; Sarah was concerned that having the obsolete information readily available might cause confusion. Joe feels the changes in history are important. Adam P explained how someone can track a change currently; call Planning to ask what changed, and staff will pull out the ordinance and minutes of each meeting when it had been changed; it can also be seen on the warrants. Adam P felt there is merit to discussing this more at the next meeting when there is more information.
8. Last section would be Definitions, followed by the temporary crosswalk.

Next the group reviewed some of the remaining questions listed on Page 9.

Question 2 – Are there sections difficult to interpret?
Joe said when there is a difference between town and state; Ann said the shoreline is one of those with different standards; also homeowners understanding their property line and the difference between set back and property lines; Adam P said setback has been defined but it needs to be more clear with the property line and the structures on the property. Jay gave a couple of examples of how the meaning is different in different zones which highlights the need for users to have a meeting with Staff since it can't all be captured. Adam P suggested that sizes of sheds, setbacks and number of sheds could be described better. Ann questioned RV units set up for months to which Sarah replied that Staff has already flagged that issue. Jay said rules regarding non-conforming housing – what are the limits? Need that cleared up especially considering cubic footage; Scott explained that prevented increasing the height of a building. Scott said he felt that in Section 11, 'non-conforming use' should be a variance. Adam said that would need to go on a town warrant. Joe said this is to be a tool and it should be in the preamble. Scott said they refer to the master plan. Bill said the Select Board tried to deal with trash properties but feels it should be with the Planning Board; Sarah said there are RSAs that allow the Select Board to address the trashy yards; Jimmy said this is one of his missions; he visited all the properties when he was first elected and has been working with the code officer documenting everything and would like a way to identify the specific trash, cars, couches, etc. as garbage. Adam P said there is language, but it could use work as there is room for improvement. Adam P suggested asking the code officer to the next meeting, but Sarah suggested waiting to where we are then. There will be a section on penalties. Stacey suggested mentioning shipping containers; Adam P said they are treated as structures and must meet IBC standards; Hannah asked about

the temporary pods and Adam P said they would still be treated as structures. Ann said sometimes when they grant variances or exceptions, conditions are added and wondered what happens if the conditions are not met? Adam P replied that the code officer does enforce them.

Question 5 – Are there topics that could be easier to find in the ordinance?
Scott mentioned oddball things like sheds. Adam P feels the organization will be helpful. Bud said shoreline exceptions are confusing. Sarah suggested they add some diagrams.

Question 6 – Are there provisions that appear outdated, unused, or inconsistent with current Town practice?
Cherie asked if there should be a reference to the Conservation Commission in the ordinance and wondered if the applicant knows they will be reviewed. Adam P said the applicants for site plans that communicate with Staff are most successful because all the notification requirements are explained. Scott referred to Letter O he felt should be removed. Jay suggested the language preceding and following deleted items should be reviewed; Adam P said Page 10, 3D relates with developments and should be flagged for review and Sarah said it will land in the dimensional table; Scott said the frontage needs to be described. Adam P suggested instead of 'town-maintained road' it should be clearer regarding frontage on another town's road. Ann also wondered if there are other properties with two towns on the same property.

Sarah reminded the group that if they think of other items, send them to Adam and he will communicate with her. Before the next meeting, she will be receiving a lot from Adam P so she can provide samples and examples to react to and makes suggestions about; she suggested they look at substantive policy and prioritize the list.

Sarah asked for last comments; Scott said Section 9 – flood plain district – needs some work. Victoria said the reference to class 6 roads is hard to find. They would still need a variance, according to Adam P. Hannah asked about Home based businesses and cottage industry. Cherie said there was a questionable part of the agricultural section that could be reviewed.

September 17th is planned for the next joint meeting. Victoria suggested a side-by-side version of the document to show the before and after versions. Adam P confirmed this could be done where possible.

Adjournment
A motion to adjourn was made by Jay Ward. There was a second to the motion by Alan Gross with no further discussion. All were in favor and the m*otion passed.* Adjournment occurred at 8:02 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

Approved on

DRAFT