Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Swanzey Governance Committee
Meeting – 10.1.25
Whitcomb Hall
17 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 was called to order by Chair Ann Heffernon, at 3:02 pm. at Whitcomb Hall, Main Street, Swanzey, NH. Other members present were Michael York, Vice Chair, Richard Lane, Jessica Ramsey-Sanchez, Scott Self, Eric May,Cathy Bergstrom, Frances Faulkner, Selectmen Mark LaBelle, Lee Dunham, Bruce Tatro, Ben Tilton

OTHERS PRESENT

Steven Bittel

MINUTES

The regular meeting minutes of 9.22.25 were considered. There was a motion by York to approve the minutes as presented; the motion was seconded by Self and there was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

Motion to approve Bruce Tatro as committee member by Heffernon, York seconded. All in favor, no nays motion approved
Motion to approve Ben Tilton as committee member by-Heffernon, ????????? seconded. All in favor, no nays motion approved.

CIPC Presentation by Steven Bittel.
How close is budget committee to CIPC. Different function. Please see attached sheet provided by Bittel
CIPC filled a void in town. Swanzey was missing a robust effort on managing the capitol costs of the town they filled this void and created a checkmark with the state government by creating CIPC.
Discussion at end of presentation. Concerns that those who run for the budget committee would not be qualified. (CIPC members are appointed)
Lane – if someone were to run for Budget Com should they provide a resume. No, we canot ask this of elected official.

Heffernon reminds all members with social media to share posts.
Discussion of postings on social media. Tatro feels that we did not vote on this and postings should not have been made. Discussion and explanation that these were approved.

Bergstrom shares the upcoming posts that she has written. We want to get people used to seeing interesting info and have people expect them on a regular basis. Then we can post information about the discussions we're having and possible recommendations. Comments/questions on upcoming posts which will start tomorrow AM.
Ramsey-Sanchez change to traditional form of town meeting? Might be more clear?

May – good job, this was our intention to generate interest. These are facts. Something to build on. The copy above the slides has contact info for Heffernon, the town website and the SGC committee.
Tatro – Should there be something on the posting about process of SB2 vs. town meeting We have the deliberative session why go back
Lane it gives everyone and opportunity to better understand the warrant
Ramsey-Sanchez- SB2 was discussed in the first posting You can skip the deliberative and vote on things on which you have no understanding. We want to better inform people. Everyone can be present We have a better chance of informing people
Self one of the reasons for the change was people feel intimidated voted on big ticket items with police etc.present
Tilton – What are pros and cons. Discussion of why the town switched to SB2 See previous notes from committee.
Ramsey-Sanchez -We did discuss pros and cons at our first meeting. We could not come up with many pros for SB2. If people are too intimidated to speak up in person, this is not a good reason to have SB2.
York – For example the recent warrant article on water company people had no knowledge of it and refused to vote for it.
We would craft together this kind of information
Tatro – Zoning Board and planning board have four pages of items regarding warrants and had no public hearings.
Self- They hold at least one public hearing on this by law. It has always been this way. The meetings are always posted. Discussion on this is what we are facing, new people, long time citizens who do not understand this process, As a committee we are trying to create the best form of government by getting people involved Heffernon suggests a list of all hearings being posted every week. This could be something that is a part of our overall recommendation.
Lane – Can we enquire with HS History Dept if they are studying local history and explain to the classes civics. (Ann follow up on this).
Self- Mock town meeting. It's a good idea with a lot to do, but is it too much for no benefit if people do not show up? May thinks it would be wise to have a script before we publish a date. We need to put out group script and give people time to be a part of it.
If we used Kristen Reynolds (guest at 9/25 meeting) idea of a short video and had two or three people reminisce about town meeting? How long should a video be, two minutes? Explain it, toss out a question its easy to share. May says we should tie it to facebook/Instargram.
Are there any seniors at the high school looking at politics? Could we get some younger people interested in getting involved? Informative? Funny? Eagle scout kids?
Could we create our own Instagram account? LaBell will check on that and if we need to have permission to check with the high school first. May says it would be better to get it through the town. The kids are our target group. Ashley Crosby could post as well on her town Instagram.
For continuity purposes it should come through the town.
Heffernon makes a motion to go towards the video presentation as opposed to the mock town meeting, seconded ????? No discussion all in favor. So moved.
May may have resources for taping, Heffernon will talk to town as well. Those who are saavy on this subject of videos agree that they should be short.
We need to figure out what we want to discuss, then formulate some thoughts. Goals is to recommend traditional town meetings so everything should be based on that goal. All postings follow a focus. We need to discuss pros and cons and why it is still better. Once you get a following let them know this is the best idea.
May We-should we start putting thoughts to paper. Let's start an outline and how we came to this decision.
Should we have an outline? Or submit to someone a general outline that could be broadened with the group?
Take points out of the previous minutes

We have, as a group, discussed how we can improve communication throughout the town; perhaps if we can, as a group improve both communication and engagement efforts the choice of Town Meeting or SB2 will not matter.

Ramsey-Sanchez pros and cons on outline. Biggest con will be you need to be present to vote.Discussion of new voting law.
Tilton State municipal association has lists of pros and cons Heffernon to share.
Can we get info on what transpired on the absentee ballot from our rep? Scott reminds us that this is two votes, regular ballot and municipal.
Can we do a more humerous meme?
May Are we trying to get the youth more involved? Is it a lack of communication. (People only make noise when they are upset) Can we do a facebook poll along these lines? Just about communication? Results are anonymous. Even if we recommend a vote and it does not pass we are that much further ahead in getting people informed. Does the town automatically go to a paper vote if they have an overflow? That is up to the moderator. Two rooms, two monitors. Tatro if a vote is made that can be determinded yay or no, a regular vote is done, then they can do a ballot vote. Meeting pauses for count. We discussed approval using a town meeting of SB2 perhaps it wouldn't matter if communication is approved.r

OLD BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

There was a motion by LaBelle to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by May; there was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed. Adjournment occurred at 4:48 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann Heffernon, Chair

Approved on 10.6.25