Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire

Sewer Committee

Meeting Minutes – April 23, 2026
Sewer Treatment Plant, Denman Thompson Highway
and
Whitcomb Hall, 17 Main Street
Swanzey, NH

CALL TO ORDER
The meeting was called to order by Chair Scott Self at 10:00 am at the Sewer Treatment Plant.

Members present: Also present were Committee members Steven Bittel, Scott Self, Larry Crowder, Stacey Goodale, Cathy Bergstrom, Ken Greatbatch, Pat Ambrosio. Also present was Selectman Bill Hutwelker and Selectman Jim Tempesta.

Absent: Sylvester Karasinski

Others present: Recording Secretary Beverly Bernard, Department of Public Works Director Joe DiRusso, Town Administrator Lori Rautiola, Sewer Operator Rob Riendeau, and Assistant Planner Stephon Mehu.

MINUTES
Self **motioned** to table the minutes from April 2, 2026. Second made by Goodale with no further discussion. All were in favor, **motion passed.**

TOUR OF SEWER PLANT
Meeting at the Sewer Treatment Plant
Sewer Operator Rob Riendeau provided a tour of the facility. Self noted the original facility was built in 1981 and upgraded in 2001. The group looked at the grinder, the lagoons, and the distribution shed which sends the sanitized water to the Ashuelot River. DiRusso said some basic maintenance will need to be done before moving ahead with any plan. Riendeau spoke about testing of chemicals in the lab versus how the chemicals react in the environment. He spoke about the difficulty in getting the chemicals to reduce the level of contaminants to the limits required by New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). The solar array was noted as an energy source for the plant, and any extra electricity produced goes out to the grid. This is a benefit to the Town as it reduces costs.

MEETING CONTINUED AT Whitcomb Hall at 10:45 am
DISCUSSION
Riendeau spoke about dry testing for different chemicals. Chloride helped with the copper but did not help with the phosphorous. Another chemical helped with phosphorous. So far, they haven't found a chemical what works for both. Probably won't have a solution until summer. He said the State is okay with process that Riendeau is going through to find a solution which will reduce both copper and phosphorous. There was a discussion about levels of chemicals in various towns as compared to Swanzey. Tempesta said it doesn't make sense why Winchester is allowed contaminant limits higher than Swanzey's. Riendeau noted the amount of chemical already in the river has impact on what a sewer plant empties into the river. DiRusso said before the Town does an upgrade to the plant, there is a need to determine a chemical solution.

Riendeau spoke about doing a sludge assessment. There was a discussion about the pump station. Self asked for questions for Riendeau and there were none.

DiRusso said Josh Whipple and one of his assistants are training to be Sewer Operators.

Self said the committee has to consider the options and make a recommendation to the Selectmen. He asked each member of the committee for input:

> Crowder spoke about the Keene plant. He said he prefers to send sewage to Keene. He noted they are looking for new inflow. DiRusso said he agrees with Crowder but grant funds have to come through and NHDES seems to be in favor of expansion of Keene plant and Swanzey tying into that plant. DiRusso suggested that Keene would help with grants as well. Self continued to pole the members. Greatbatch and Goodale said they are in favor of connecting up to Keene, Bergstrom agreed. Hutwelker agreed; he said there are many unknowns if we go alone. Self said Keene has the capacity; Tempesta said there are some unknowns with Keene also, but the obvious solution is to go with Keene for now. DiRusso said there would have to be another pump station, but it would not be an exorbitant cost for that. He noted solar power helps with costs. Rautiola agreed with the others. Bittel said the numbers are overwhelming, a pipe sending outflow to the Keene sewer plant is a better option than Swanzey going alone. He said we don't know what the State will require and we will need 80-85% grant funding. He said he believes the money will be found since the State and Federal government want this kind of improvement. Ambrosio agreed that working with Keene is preferred but he said he is not familiar with contracting with them. DiRusso said renegotiations could be made.

The Chair asked for a motion.

> **Motion** was made by Crowder that Swanzey work with the City of Keene to accept the option of pumping outflow from the Swanzey sewer plant to City of Keene sewer plant, second by Pat Ambrosio, all were in favor. **Motion passed.**

FINANCIALS

Bittel provided some financial numbers. The West Swanzey plant ran at a loss. Deficit of $35,000 for the year. The annual contribution to capital reserves has been $30,000. There is $300,000 balance in the capital reserve account. He noted the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Committee can work on numbers for a new pump station. Maybe $150,000 is required.

Rates need to be looked at. He said one way to make comparisons is to look at the average billing. The average monthly bill for West Swanzey is about $30 for an individual house. Bittel spoke about monthly rates for other towns. Troy charges over $100 per month. Winchester $55 and they have 1100 users. Walpole average is $60. Peterborough $60 with 1700 users.

Bittel said the question is how much to raise rates; if an increase in rates is sufficient to cover operating loss of $5,000, and contribute $100,000 a year to the capital reserve, then you would need to increase the rates by 48%. Bittel said this also sets the stage for increases from the City of Keene. He suggested raising the rates by 50% to build capital and to cover operating costs. He noted that once Keene picked up the work, the yearly cap reserve would go to zero. Crowder said there will be a spike in the rates once with Keene. Self said we could anticipate the rate needed for sending outflow to Keene and set that now

so there is no jump in rates when connected to the Keene plant. Riendeau said he could calculate the number.

Bittel said in order to sell the idea to the voters, they need to be convinced that West Swanzey sewer is not part of the general fund. Enterprise Fund would be better a name for West Swanzey, to clarify in the voters' minds that the users will be paying for improvements to the system. Self said a definition for Enterprise is needed. Bittel said raising the rates now reinforces the idea that the rest of town voters would not be paying for the system. DiRusso said he would do research on the process of raising rates, including talking to NHDES. He will report at next meeting.

Self asked about cost of a bond. The bond would be calculated after grant awards were known. Self suggested several scenarios for different levels of funding. Bittel said we need two costs, one to cover costs and increase capital reserves. The second would be a later detailed cost study for grant and bond financing.

Development of the former Homestead Woolen mill was briefly discussed. Self noted we could use standard costs for the number of units being developed.

Mehu will provide a list of members and their email addresses.

Next: May 7, 2026 at 10 am.

ADJOURNMENT
Bittel **motioned** to adjourn, and DiRusso seconded the motion without further discussion. All were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 11:55 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary