Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire

Water and Sewer Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes – July 30, 2026
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 take place at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Scott Self at 10:00 am at Whitcomb Hall.

Members present: Steven Bittel, Scott Self, Ken Greatbatch, Larry Crowder, Sylvester Karasinski, Selectman Bill Hutwelker, Cathy Bergstrom and Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Joe DiRusso.

Absent: Stacey Goodale, Pat Ambrosio

Others Present: Stephon Mehu, Assistant Planner

MINUTES

Bittel **moved** to approve the minutes from July 9, 2026. Second made by Crowder. Self pointed to an error on page 2 where the figure should be $12,000 instead of $1,200. Bernard said she would fix the error. There was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Self **moved** to approve the June 24th minutes of the Engineering Sub-Committee, second by Karasinski. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Self **moved** to approve the July 8th minutes of the Rate Sub-committee minutes, second by Karaskinski. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Sewer Rates Discussion

Bittel passed out data to be considered. Metered rates increase revenue about $12,000. Rate for each family unit comes to $109.20 for single-family use. $24 increase is 28.5%. That increase is due to increase in capital reserve.

The campground has meters; and about 112,000 gallons used per year. Currently they are only being billed for one meter out of the two meters. There will be an increase, but it will not be as substantial as was thought originally. There will be a letter sent to them. Rate will be based on 112,000 total flow gallons of sewage.

Discussion on the West Swanzey Water Company

Self passed out an engineering report for the members to consider. He said the water company has three wells; one is not being used. He noted the rates for the pumps, and he passed out data for pumps, which are providing about 300 gallons per minute. He said they are decent pumps.

Self provided information on where the water pipelines run. He noted Southwest Region Planning Commission owns a line that goes to their housing units to the east of the river.

76 residential users and 3 commercial users and 1 industrial user.

Total assets and total income were noted for the private water company. It is not a money maker for the owners. Bittel noted that with Town ownership, rates could be raised.

Discussion continued on the size of the system. Self noted that study stated that fire protection part of flow was tested in the past. 80 lbs of pressure is current system flow. He noted the engineering study noted a head loss graph when putting in a proposed water tank. The study showed 65 lbs of pressure. There was a discussion about pounds of pressure, and its impact on flow. Self said he has a question about sufficient pressure for commercial use.

Self noted the report from the State made in 2023. It showed the system was in pretty good shape.

There was a brief discussion about curb stops in the pipes on West Street.

There was a discussion about the ownership of the water company and the possible selling price. Bittel spoke about options to acquire the water system. DiRusso said you can forget about development if you don't provide fire protection. Bittel spoke about enhancing grant application success. Bittel spoke about calculating costs such that you could begin to learn what the water rate would be for future users.

DiRusso spoke about grant award funding and Bittel noted interest is not paid until construction is completed. Crowder said a past study showed the rates would go up substantially. Bittel said once we have overall costs, we can begin to calculate required rates from users.

Yearly cost of contracted services was asked about by DiRusso. He said we need to look at someone running the system, and he doesn't have someone who could do that now. It's about needing a water licensed operator. DiRusso said part of the transition with the current owners of the system should be to include discussion about a licensed operator.

Self said he believes this committee is still in agreement to plan to purchase the system. DiRusso said there are voters who would not be in favor of development for the town. Bittel said it is important to reach those voters to show them that they would not be impacted by taxes; users pay the costs. Hutwelker noted the perception is that the value of owning the water company is limited to West Swanzey. The rest of the town residents see no value.

DiRusso said it is an immediate need to evaluate repair needs when buying the company. Bittel said it is important to consider value of commercial development. Crowder said you have to have enough funds to keep up the system in addition to the cost of purchase. Mehu said the more numbers you can provide, the more positive the response to a grant application.

There was a discussion about how to obtain numbers for costs such as installing valves. DiRusso said his concern is that we buy something and haven't planned for operating costs. He said planning for these kinds of repairs need to be included in any cost estimate.

Possible Warrant Articles were discussed; one for purchase of the water company and one for operating costs. Karasinski said operations could be supported in the budget rather than in a separate Warrant Article. DiRusso said the budget being raised may be a problem for voters. DiRusso noted other items that will be on the Warrant that are costly to voters.

There was a discussion about possible locations for a water storage tank.

Enterprise zones were briefly discussed and how they impact taxpayers. Their costs are separated from the overall Town budgeted costs.

Self suggested next step is negotiating with the owners of the water company. And the Town should consider what we would be willing to pay for it. Mehu noted two separate projects for water and sewer and two separate grant applications. Self suggested consideration of Northern Borders application for the water company acquisition. There was further discussion about the kinds of grants available and how to use a combination of grants to cover costs. With sufficient grant funding, there will be limited impact on taxpayers. Self said you could create a Warrant Article stating that purchase of the water company is contingent upon being awarded grant funding.

It was agreed that the Town waits for owners to come up with a number before the Town makes an offer.

NEXT MEETING: August 13, 10 am Thursday at W. H.

ADJOURNMENT
Bittel **moved** to adjourn, and Crowder seconded the motion without further discussion. All were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 11:43 am.

Respectfully Submitted,



Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary