Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Swanzey Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA)
Meeting Minutes – **July 21, 2025**
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:

Chair Adam Mulhearn called to order the meeting at Whitcomb Hall at 7:00 p.m. Other members present were Vice Chair Jay Ward, Ann Karasinski, Bryan Rudgers, and Alternates Jessica Ramsey-Sanchez and Joe Parisi. Also present were Town Planner, Adam Paquette and Recording Secretary, Susan Ells.

ABSENT: Lisa Thorne, Alternates Pete Delaney and Wayne Lechlider

OTHERS PRESENT:
Megan Ulin - Revision Energy, Dave Hickling – Airport Manager, Carol McIntyre-Peale, Jim Peale, Judy Boufford, Linda Farina, Bea Boufford, Elizabeth Olliver - Normandeau Associates, Joe Hoebeke, Jeremy Fennell - Eversource, Adrian Wood, Gregory Curry, Kim Curry, Mark Scalera, Sharon Adams, Bob Audette, Robert McMahon

SEATING ALTERNATES:

- The chair seated Jessica Ramsey-Sancez for Lisa Thorne for ZBA 25-013
- The chair seated Joe Parisi for Lisa Thorne for ZBA 25-011 and ZBA 25-012

MINUTES:
The meeting minutes of **June 16, 2025** were considered. **Motion** was made by Mulhearn to approve the minutes as presented. There was a second made by Ward. Rudger abstained. All others were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

REGIONAL IMPACT:
Paquette read the guidelines regarding the regional impact. Parisi said he thought this meeting could have a regional impact. Paquette has sent the information to the impacted parties so they can participate if they wish. The board discussed. Karasinski originally made a motion that there was regional impact by all 3 hearings but based on the information heard, she rescinded the motion. ***Motion*** made by Ward that there is no regional impact. There was a second by Karasinski. All were in favor. With no further discussion, ***Motion passed***.

PUBLIC HEARING:

1) **ZBA 25-010: Variance -** Ryan Belanger-Saleh has requested a Variance pursuant to Section IV, Article B.3 of the Town of Swanzey Zoning Ordinance to construct a roof and deck within the front setback of 3 Pitcher Point. The subject property is shown at Tax Map 104, Lot 71 and is located in the Residence District. – Withdrawn by applicant.

2) **ZBA 25-013: Special Exception -** Eversource Energy, through its consultant Normandeau Associates, Inc., has submitted a Special Exception application pursuant to Section IX of the Town of Swanzey Zoning Ordinance to allow development within the Flood Plain District. The proposed work is part of the Eversource T198 Transmission Line Structure Replacement Project, which spans approximately 11 miles through Keene, Swanzey, Marlborough, and Troy.

Paquette read the application. He said that staff do not have concerns; he read aloud the concerns of the Conservation Commission and the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC) which are in the packet.

Elizabeth Olliver from Normandeau Associates spoke about the project and the request for a special exception permit. Part of the lines and structures being replaced by Eversource – the structures have reached the end of the life expectancy. The buried posts of the old structures typically won't be removed since that would further disturb the wetlands.

Jeremy Fennell from Eversource estimated the new material will last 50 years longer. Using metal will be less conducive to pests. The gravel that will be placed as temporary workspace will be removed except for what is needed for maintenance pads and the driveways to get into the area. They are taking advantage of existing roads where they can.

Ward asked when extensive work had last been done. **Fennell** said there was some done in 2022.

Karasinski asked if they had seen evidence of littering and partying. **Olliver** said she did not see any; there currently are gates, but they can't force the landowners to install more gates.

Karasinski asked about whether the work would disrupt wildlife mating seasons; **Olliver** said the work should happen in fall and winter.

Parisi asked who supervises to be sure the work is done as proposed. **Olliver** said the EPA General Construction permit requires weekly inspections by a consultant. **Ward** asked if EPA does inspections – **Olliver** said she has not seen that in the past. **Fennell** said DES has inspected in the past – the Town could also come inspect. **Ward** asked what permits have been requested and Olliver read an extensive list.

Olliver then read her answers to the questions in the application. These are in the packet.

The chair asked for public input.

Robert McMahon of 53 Centerview Drive asked about the possible impact on his street. Olliver said there was a large range of abutters so chances are his wouldn't be impacted. Paquette said the project was 1000 feet from Centerview Drive.

Mulhearn said he felt this was the most feasible plan – **Olliver** agreed. **Fennell** said they are using existing right of ways and replacing existing structures.

Mulhearn lives on Matthews Road which abuts the property and said when they had worked on it in the past, he said even as close as he was, even though he could hear the work, he said the impact was minimal.

Ward asked once the structures are in place what kind of maintenance is needed. **Fennell** said it would be brush clearing, tree limb clearing, or unplanned repairs for damage from a severe storm.

With no more questions, the public hearing was closed.

Rudgers said we all use electricity; we should support this. **Ward** agreed.

The Board deliberated the checklist for granting a variance.

1. **The proposed use is similar to one or more of the uses already authorized in the district and is an appropriate location for such a use.**
- Rudgers – Yes – by ordinance already a permitted use. Structures are already there. They do good clean up.
- Karasinski – Yes – same as Rudgers.
- Ward – Yes – same
- Ramsey-Sanchez - Yes
- Mulhearn – Yes

2. **Such approval would not reduce the value of any property within the district, not otherwise injurious, obnoxious, or offensive to the neighborhood.**
- Karasinski – Yes
- Ward - Yes
- Ramsey-Sanchez – Yes – more
- Rudgers Yes – no evidence to contrary
- Mulhearn – Yes

3. **There will be no nuisance or serious hazard to vehicles or pedestrians.**
- Ward -Yes
- Ramsey-Sanchez – Yes
- Karasinski - Yes
- Rudgers - Yes
- Mulhearn - yes

4. **Adequate and appropriate facilities will be provided for the proper operations of the proposed use.**
- Rudgers – Yes
- Karasinski – Yes
- Ward – Yes
- Mulhearn -Yes
- Ramsey-Sanchez - Yes

Motion was made by Ward to grant the special exception, Karasinski seconded – all in favor. ***Motion passed*** unanimously.

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3) **ZBA 25-011: Variance -** ReVision Energy, representing the City of Keene, is seeking a variance under Section IV, Article A.1 of the Town of Swanzey Zoning Ordinance to install a ground-mounted solar energy system on undeveloped land at the Keene Dillant–Hopkins Airport (Tax Map 205, Lot 1). The proposed project is located within the Rural/Agricultural District, where the intended use is not currently permitted.

Paquette read the application and read the comments from the staff and the Conservation Commission, which are in the packet.
Megan Ulin (Revision Energy) explained the company background. Revision has been working with the City of Keene to reduce their reliance on electricity by 2030.
Mulhearn asked about wildlife impact. Ulin stated habitat will be converted back to the wildlife and vegetation replanted– there are no concrete footings.
Ward asked will area be mowed – Ulin stated vegetation would be maintained/mowed at least once a year. He asked if the photos are accurate and questioned how much space is at the lower edge? Ulin said it is typically 3 feet off the ground.
Mulhearn asked what type of maintenance would be done. **Ulin** said a lot is remotely done. Controlled access is with the airport's existing access driveway. It is still very early in planning so does not have an exact location currently. **David Hickling** (Airport Manager) said the approach equipment is maintained there now.
Ward asked about life span; **Ulin** replied 25 – 40 years. **Ward** asked if the efficiency decreases over time. **Ulin** replied that it does
Rudgers confirmed the array will be fenced even though they are within the airport fencing. Concern of residents in the area – deer do get in there. **Hickling** commented there will be a fence like the fence at the current wastewater treatment plant.
Rudgers asked if it would only be serving Keene? **Ulin** confirmed the power goes to the grid which will be directed to Keene's municipal accounts.
Ward – how far is the array from the Ashuelot River. **Ulin** said it is over 250 feet, so it is not shown on the site plan. It is not in the shoreland district.
Parisi asked what percentage of land will be used. **Ulin** said it is a very small footprint – 15'x30'.
Ramsey-Sanchez – susceptible to any kind of damage? **Ulin** said it is a very strong design. If damaged – it would be replaced by warranty.
Parisi asked Paquette – if approved, would it still be subject to Planning board. Paquette confirmed that it would.
Adrian Wood – owner of a hangar – concern of the arrays blinding the pilots. The newer panels do not reflect according to **Hickling**.
Karasinski – in the past, glare had not come up as a subject and **Ulin** said this is new technology. These have anti reflective surface. Less than 2%.
Nathan Jacobs – abutter and a pilot; he is on the airport economic advisory committee as an alternate. Opposes the variance applications which seek to allow solar development, which is zoned rural, agricultural and residential. He stated he is not anti-renewal initiatives. This is not what this is. It is a

zoning issue and an environmental issue which would cost lasting harm to the Town, residents and future of airport. He continued to read his objections to the project which he provided for the record.

Ulin responded that solar arrays are quiet, clean-energy neighbors. The property is unique and is surrounded by commercial property; 460 acres of 900 that is commercial; can be compatible with rural areas. They don't produce any noxious effects. She pointed out that there are other types of development that could go there that would be bad for the area. Lake effects are not documented as regular occurrences. As far as long-term land use – the Town is not responsible for any of the system. The project owner is responsible for all of that and is common to issue a bond for decommissioning. The material is largely recyclable. These are not composed of toxic materials. Even in the case of a cracked panel, there is not a risk of material leaching. The taxpayers will not incur any penalties and no tax burden. There may be a tax benefit to the Town. It is early in the process so that has not been brought up to the Town yet.
Hickling said this still must go through the FAA approval which will look at safety issues. Regarding the airport land – this land is height restricted so nothing else could be built there. It would not affect future development opportunities.
Rudgers asked if the FAA had given any indication they would approve. **Ulin** said they need to get through this process first.
Ulin stated it is important for the board to know there are opportunities for any issues to be addressed.
Mulhearn said he understands the 'cart before the horse' – is it a leap for this board to approve this before knowing some if the safety issues.
Karasinski stated the board doesn't have guidance on solar zoning.
Rudgers asked which way the panels face, and **Ulin** replied they face south for the best exposure. He asked if there are future builds planned? **Hickling** said there is a possibility, but the other land that the airport owns could be for hangars.
Parisi read the description of the rural agricultural district. As stated in the ordinance, it reads "This district is designed to accommodate residences and agricultural uses in what is commonly recognized as being a rural atmosphere. The property included within this district will generally be agriculture and forestry, low-density housing, open space protection, water supply protection, and recreation. This district is the potential future growth area for the town and is carefully controlled with monitoring, planning and re-zoning to prevent scattered and premature development. (Amended March 14, 2006)"
Ramsey-Sanchez clarified the land cannot be used for any other development. **Hickling** said that area is not compatible for any other building due to height restrictions.
Jacobs said it could be used for other things, such as drones. These panels would take away other opportunities. He asked how many acres have been taken away from the airport and given back to the FAA.
Hickling said the airport sold that property to the FAA so the airspace was protected and something tall could not be built. It went with an easement.
Bob Audette asked if it would increase the tax revenue. **Mulhearn** stated that the board is not required to consider that when approving the request unless the project places a burden on the town, but that

the planning board would consider that question. **Ward** said he knows the FW Webb property benefits the town. He feels the project would add value to the property. **Parisi** asked about other experiences of Revision; **Ulin** said generally, it does improve the value. It depends on the capacity of the system. **Parisi** asked how much it will save Keene **Ulin** said it depends on whether they lease or own – it hasn't been agreed upon yet.
Rudgers would like to know the assessment of the airport. **Paquette** said it was assessed in 2025 at $7.8 million; it has some exemptions so it could be about $5million.
Ramsey-Sanchez - Clarified potential $10-$15,000 tax benefits to Swanzey.
Paquette – read the language of the ordinance – try not to stray from the purpose.
Mark Scalera – is there any idea of putting the panels in the parking lot and creating covered parking spaces? **Ulin** – property does not work for this. **Hickling** – have looked at it in some areas of the airport but it is very expensive.

When asked, Paquette explained the process to table this for another meeting. The board has 90 days to decide on the application. The board can attach conditions to their approval.

Ulin requested a continuance of the matter. Ward asked what would be brought to the next meeting. She said that glare concerns would be resolved. Ward asked for more information on the decommissioning fund.

A ***motion*** was made by Rudgers to accept the request for a continuance until the next regular meeting. Ward seconded. All approved. ***Motion carried*.**

4) **ZBA 25-012: Variance -** ReVision Energy, representing the City of Keene, is seeking a variance under Section IV, Article B.1 of the Town of Swanzey Zoning Ordinance to install a ground-mounted solar energy system on undeveloped land at the Keene Dillant–Hopkins Airport (Tax Map 205, Lot 1). The proposed project is located within the Residence District, where the intended use is not currently permitted.

   Rudgers asked for clarification on continuance for both meetings. Paquette they would both need to be voted separately to be continued.

   Ulin requested a continuance of the matter.

A ***motion*** was made by Ward to accept the request for a continuation until the next regular meeting. Parisi seconded. All approved. ***Motion carried*.**

OTHER DISCUSSIONS
Ward asked Paquette about a permit that was issued incorrectly to a Waters Edge property for a shed; how does the board handle this? By appeal or by a variance request. Paquette explained the situation – this will be on the agenda for the next zoning board meeting. Complaints should be made by citizens, not as members of the zoning board.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by **Parisi** and seconded by **Ramsey-Sanchez** and all were in favor. ***Motion passed.*** Adjournment occurred at 9:32 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Ells, Recording Secretary

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