



Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 17, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

Belmont Mill

Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Ruth Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Claude Patten, Jr., TA Alicia Jipson, Police Chief Mark Lewandoski, Building & Grounds Supervisor Patrick Golden, Fire Chief Mike Newhall, Assistant Fire Chief Deb Black, Lieutenant Stephen Akerstrom, and Code Enforcement Officer Mark Ekberg. Via Zoom were Finance Director Katherine Davis and Acting Town Planner Karen Santoro.

Those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

Selectman Claude Patten moved the minutes of the public meeting held on January 3, 2023, as written; seconded by Selectman Jon Pike and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Hearing #1 – Ambulance Long-Term Lease:

This public hearing was held in accordance with RSA 33: 8-a II, to accept public comment on a proposed long-term lease agreement in an amount up to \$575,000 payable over a term of 60 months; for the purchase of an ambulance for the Fire Department. Withdrawal of said amount to come from the Fire/Ambulance Equipment and Apparatus Special Revenue Fund previously established in accordance with RSA 31: 95-c. (Created 1994 /Amended 1999.)

Chairman Ruth Mooney opened the public hearing at 10:01 am. There being no public comment, the public hearing was closed at 10:01 am.

Public Hearing #2 – Rescinded:

Previously advertised public hearing to accept unanticipated funds in the amount of \$125,888 from the State of New Hampshire's Special One-Time Municipally Owned Allocation payment has been rescinded.

TA Alicia Jipson stated that NHMA and the State and DRA and Legal have all weighed in on this and because the Town is going to let the Bridge Aid funds lapse, and there is a warrant article to move the funds from the unexpended fund balance to the Bridge Capital Reserve Account, the public hearing is not required.

New Business

Community Power Information:

TA Jipson noted there was no representative present for this agenda item.

Chairman Mooney explained this is for communities to join together to form a power company to buy power wholesale and then sell it to their customers. TA Jipson stated this would require a warrant article on the Town ballot. The Board can review and discuss this during the year for consideration on next year's Town ballot.

Fire Department New Hire:

Chief Newhall reported that Maddie Hebert is a candidate selected to fill one of the open positions at the Fire Department. She was a call firefighter in Loudon and has almost all of her certifications. That will increase her probation from 6 months to a year.

Selectman Pike moved to hire Maddison Hebert as a Firefighter/EMT for the Fire Department; seconded by Selectman Patten, and the motion passed unanimously.

Police Department New Hire:

Police Chief Mark Lewandoski reported Judy Estes from the Belknap County Sheriff's Department has applied to fill the vacant Patrol position and would be assigned to the Detectives where a third position is needed. She has a lot of experience and previously worked here for six years. She knows the area and the people.

Finance Director Katherine Davis asked if this is a union position. Chief Lewandoski confirmed that it is.

Selectman Patten moved to hire Judy Estes as a police officer detective for the Police Department with a start date of 01/29/2023; seconded by Selectman Pike, and the motion passed unanimously.

Fire Department Resignation:

TA Jipson stated Jennifer Sole submitted her resignation and her last day was January 23rd however she elected to take the rest of her scheduled vacation. The position has already been posted. She was only with the department for 7 months and was still on probation.

Conservation Commission Appointment:

Selectman Pike moved to appoint Richard Moreau as an Alternate to the Conservation Commission with a term to expire 03/31/2026; seconded by Chairman Mooney, and the motion passed unanimously.

Draft 2023 Default Budget, Draft 2023 MS 737 and Warrant Article Order Review and Approve:

TA Jipson stated the Board has received a copy of the Default Budget and a draft of the warrant article in their packets, along with the draft proposed budget. The warrant revisions have not been returned by NHDRA yet. They have been vetted by legal, and by consultant and former TA Jeanne Beaudin. The Budget Committee will be voting on these tonight. The difference between the Default and proposed budgets is about \$333,000. Chairman Mooney commented most of that difference is due to new contracts and payroll adjustments. TA Jipson said the increases would be from non-union wages and increases to contracted services and medical and dental costs. Department Heads did a good job of keeping their budgets flat or with minimal increases. TA Jipson highlighted the breakdown of the 49 articles on the warrant including 8 zoning amendments, 6 for union contracts and the call for special meeting, if necessary, plus 3 petitioned articles. One petitioned article is to rescind SB-2 and revert back to traditional Town meeting. Another petitioned article was to impose a term limit of 3 consecutive terms for Selectmen, which is not legally binding and therefore not enforceable. The third is to increase the Cemetery Trustees from 3 to 5 members.

Another article is to separate the Town Clerk and Tax Collector functions. This was put forward by Town Clerk/Tax Collector Cynthia DeRoy as a way to increase the candidate pool for the Town Clerk position because it would no longer be limited to a Belmont resident. The Tax Collector is an elected position and will always need to be a Belmont resident. That will funnel down to the Deputies as well.

There is a proposed noise ordinance with regards to farming and agriculture activities. There are also two articles to readopt the Veterans' Credits of \$500 per year. If these articles fail, the amount will revert to \$50 per year.

The Board discussed the large number of zoning amendments proposed by the Planning Board and the confusion that the wording and numbering may cause. Acting Town Planner Karen Santoro stated she was not involved in the initial process for the proposed amendments and TA Jipson suggested the Planning Board may want to invite former Town Planner Sarah Whearty back for consultation on the proposed amendments. The Board was concerned that residents will be confused and vote no on all of the zoning amendments because the wording is difficult. TA Jipson responded that they will be explained in more detail in the Voter's Guide.

There is a large amount to be distributed from the proceeds of the Sargent Fund to groups that help children.

There was discussion about the general confusion with the wording of warrant articles and the article to accept the Durrell Mountain settlement funds. Often times voters do not read far enough into the article to determine that the funds have been paid to the Town as part of a settlement and have no tax impact.

It was the consensus of the Board to accept the existing order of the articles on the warrant and the Default Budget as presented.

Investment Policy Approval:

This is a housekeeping item for 2023 to formally readopt the policy. Nothing has changed since the 2022 policy was adopted. This is necessary for the audit and the NHPDIP.

Selectman Patten moved to re-adopt the Investment Policy as presented; seconded by Selectman Pike, and the motion passed unanimously.

Revised Purchasing Policy Review:

This policy has been under review by the Town Administrator and Finance Director. A draft policy was distributed to the Board for review. It is intended to make clear to Department Heads and anyone who does purchasing the proper procedure for specific types of purchases.

This item will be placed on the agenda for the February 6, 2023, meeting.

Other New Business

Alternate Mill Meeting Room:

Building & Grounds Supervisor Patrick Golden reported the renovations are 95% complete and there are enough tables and chairs that the existing meeting rooms do not need to be disturbed. The project was budgeted at \$1,500 and it came in at about \$452.

There was discussion about whether the Parks & Recreation Office on the second floor may also need to be moved temporarily when the elevator is down. She may keep her office on the second floor and meet with people on the first floor. We are unsure when the elevator project may take place so that won't need to be addressed until later. It was recommended that the meeting room be setup now rather than waiting if it needed to be done during the busy spring or summer months.

The electrician has visited the Mill to see about a quote for a generator. A quote should be ready for the next meeting. This is for a generator to run the furnace.

Code Enforcement Update:

CEO Mark Ekberg reported that he has been asking for training from NHBOA for the ability to issue a citation for zoning violations to try to handle things in a different way that would be faster than deferring to legal.

There are a small handful of towns issuing specific citations for zoning violations. Belmont Prosecutor Estes sent CEO Ekberg an example because he was previously going to do some of this for the Town. The process is that issuing citations needs to be approved by a Circuit Court. There is specific RSA language that says it needs to be seen or reviewed by Superior Court. If it doesn't go to Superior Court, get bounced back to Circuit Court and

approved by the Circuit Court, then it isn't enforceable. If this was going to be done years ago, it is possible that it has already been approved. CEO Ekberg has a call into the Clerk of Courts to determine the status.

The rationale for issuing citations is that it is an immediate thing that can be hand-delivered. We can adjust the fines. For example, trying to recoup \$275 per day for a couch left in the yard is not appropriate, and difficult. Citations would be a legal, binding document with some specifics about fines and how they are paid. It can be paid, fought in court, or violators can be found in contempt of court. When there is a dispute agreement, that is also binding and if someone doesn't follow through, they would be in contempt of court again. This should speed up property violations. There would need to be protocols, such as issuing a warning first and then a citation. At the court level, someone could be issued a bench warrant for failure to follow through. Some municipalities defer to the State and the State can suspend driver's licenses. There are different scenarios on how this could play out. Information was distributed for the Board to review to see if it is a direction, they want to proceed in.

Chief Lewandoski recommended sitting down to talk about this because there are different processes involved. There is a civil process, and it seems like it is trying to be pushed into a criminal process.

Automated Trash Collection Issue:

Building & Grounds Supervisor Golden observed that there has been an increase in bags of household garbage left off at the Park & Ride and the Beach since the new system started. The situation is being monitored.

Other Old Business

Homeland Security Winter Storm Update:

TA Jipson asked if the Board had reviewed the documents Chief Newhall distributed at the last meeting. He received a phone call from the State, and FEMA TA Jipson had no concerns with the paperwork. The State is saying that they may declare the storm, and to make sure that the Town is prepared with all of their documentation. There was discussion about the damage that has not been taken care of yet with regards to downed trees and damaged homes because it is hard to get contractors to complete the work.

Next Meeting: The next regular meeting will be Monday, February 6th, 2023, at 10:00 am.

Non-Public:

Chairman Mooney moved to enter non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II (c) at 10:56 am. Selectman Pike seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. Roll call was taken and those present, and voting were Jon Pike, Ruth Mooney and Claude Patten, Jr. Also present were TA Alicia Jipson, Police Chief Mark Lewandoski, and Captain Stephen Akerstrom. After they finished up their NP session they left and CEO Mark Ekberg and Mrs. Walker addressed the board in regard to cleanup of their property. The Board returned to public session at 12:30 pm.


The meeting was adjourned at 12:31 pm.



Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman



Jon Pike, Vice Chairman



Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman