



Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Budget Review Workshop Minutes
Wednesday, October 10, 2023, 6:00 pm
Belmont Mill
Corner Meeting House Room

Present were Chairman Ruth Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Travis O'Hara (LATE), Selectman Sharon Ciampi, TA Alicia Jipson, Assessing Admin Colleen Akerman, General Assistance Director Donna Cilley, Heritage Commission Chairman Vicki Donovan, Heritage Commission Member Jack Donovan, Library Director Eileen Gilbert, and Library Trustees Mary Charnley and Hillary Ciampi-Horn.

Absent: Selectman Claude Patten, Jr.,

Via Zoom were: Cherrie Murray and Kristen Albert from Franklin VNA, Tarah Bergeron from CASA and Tammy Carmichael from the Partnership for Public Health.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6:02 pm.

Health Agencies:

South Road Cemetery:

This is the required Town cemetery. Selectman Sharon Ciampi asked what the money is used for. Chairman Ruth Mooney said it is used for mowing, maintenance and other care and electricity. The request is stable at \$8,500.

Granite VNA:

Ms. Julie Stone, Vice President of Strategy was present.

Selectman Travis O'Hara entered the meeting at 6:05 pm.

Ms. Stone said they have served the area for over 100 years. The \$22,000 request is for care that is not covered by insurance or subsidized. They accept all patients regardless of their ability to pay. They provide hospice services and recovery for injuries, chronic illnesses and physical therapy. They provide a unique service in Belmont at the Heritage Terrace. There is a nurse on site every week at no cost. Their request is stable at \$22,000.

Lakes Region VNA:

This is a new request and there is not a representative here to speak on their behalf. They provide home care and hospice to an aging population. There is more than one VNA serving the same communities. They have a Meredith office and requested \$5,000.

Community Action Program (CAP):

Leah Richards oversees the energy, fuel and electrical assistance programs which include water, sewer and food. Beth Hayward is the Strategic Planning Director for housing stabilization. Their request is stable at \$15,000 even though they have previously only been funded at \$13,000. They helped 320 households in Belmont last year and provided 614 people with fuel assistance. Expenses are increasing and grants are not keeping up. The New Hampshire ERAP program is now officially closed and we will not see those funds next year. Chairman Mooney said that comes back for us to support through the General Assistance fund. Most people do not qualify for CAP or Town programs because they are over the income limit. Selectman Ciampi asked about their staffing and whether there is enough staff. They said they do have enough staff and they are much further ahead with processing this year.

CASA:

Tarah Bergeron explained that CASA advocates for the best interests of children. Their request is stable at \$500. They have several cases in Belmont right now and they need additional volunteer CASAs.

Waypoint:

There was no representative to speak to their request. Selectman Pike asked General Assistance Director Donna Cilley if she had any information. She stated that she has had no dealings with Waypoint. Their letter says they have served 20 clients per year from Belmont over the last five years.

New Beginnings:

Shauna Foster is the Executive Director for this agency who provides local domestic and sexual violence support. Their request is stable at \$1,891. They provide free 24 hour confidential services to Belknap County. Last year they documented assisting 36 people in the Town of Belmont, but they do not require clients to provide their town of residence. They provided 73 bed nights at the shelter and provided goods, safety planning, emotional support, court advocacy, peer support, social agency navigation and assisted with DCYF child abuse cases. They provide transitional housing in Meredith at Sadie's Place for those seeking permanent housing. There is a long waiting list.

American Red Cross:

Assessing Admin Colleen Akerman noted the agency was unable to send a staff member to represent them because they are understaffed at this time. They provide blood drives once a month in the Town of Belmont as well as other services and their request is stable at \$4,000.

Lakes Region Mental Health Center:

This agency served over 270 patients from Belmont and provided \$26,000 in charity care to Belmont residents who cannot afford to pay for services. The agency partners with other agencies to provide a continuum of care for the physical and mental health of children, adults and elders. They are operating at a \$350,000 deficit and Town and Municipal support is more important than ever. Proactive care prevents worse outcomes. There was discussion about a

new grant program for 5 years that puts a worker "on the streets" to form relationships and give access to resources. They opened a new assisted living facility to care for severe mental illness and they are working with Lakes Region Community Developers on another project to open a lower-level care facility. They try to break down barriers for transportation and childcare and prioritize families. Their request is stable at \$14,000 however they were only previously funded for \$10,000.

Franklin VNA:

Kristen Albert and Cherrie Murray were present via Zoom. They said the agency provides home care, hospice and private duty nursing. They had a 30% increase in patients in Belmont last year. Most are in hospice. Their request is stable at \$4,000 but they were only previously funded for \$2,500. They provide blood pressure and flu clinics and education as requested by the Belmont senior group. They don't have dates yet but they can provide the information so the town can advertise.

Partnership for Public Health:

Tammy Carmichael was present via Zoom. Their request is stable at \$3,000 but they were only previously funded for \$2,500. They served more than 300 residents from Belmont who called for referrals. They provide assistance with Medicaid applications, Medicare open enrollment and services to help the aging and disabled population stay independent. They provide a regional public health network for Belknap County and provide flu clinics for children. They also assist with substance misuse prevention and homelessness concerns.

Selectman Pike moved to fund Health Agencies at \$ 71,391 as follows [total amount corrected to \$70,891]; seconded by Selectman Ciampi:

*South Road Cemetery \$8,500
Granite VNA \$22,000
Lakes Region VNA \$0
Community Action Program \$15,000
CASA \$500
Waypoint \$2,000
New Beginnings \$1,891
American Red Cross \$4,000
Lakes Region Mental Health Center \$12,000
Franklin VNA \$2,500
Partnership for Public Health \$2,500*

The motion passed unopposed (4-0).

Library Trustees:

Library Director Eileen Gilbert said they have returned to their "pre-Covid" level of activity. They have daily programs aimed at all parts of the population from infants on up. They coordinated with the Fire Department, Police Department and DPW for the "Touch a Truck"

event. The summer camp has participated in programs and their big accomplishment is the community grant to make the building easier to access. They are updating the handicap mechanism on the front door and there are grants for next year to make the building easier to use, with potential expansion in the future.

There is a dedicated staff, with part-timers who have been there for more than 4 years. They are full of initiative and new ways of doing things. There are 2 full-timers with benefits, shown at the 2023 rates because the 2024 rates are not yet available. The general expenses have remained stable with all changes going to support their employees, which is their only increase. TA Jipson noted if they want to keep in step with other proposed non-union wages they will need to do an update. Library Trustee Mary Charnley confirmed that the trustees have voted and these are the final salaries and there will be no reconsideration. Selectman Pike said they are doing a fantastic job at the library.

Selectman Pike moved to accept the Library budget of \$242,472.37 as requested with the understanding that the benefits line will change based on new rates; seconded by Selectman Travis O'Hara. The motion passed unopposed (4-0).

Selectman Sharon Ciampi stepped down from the Board.

Cemetery Trustees:

Trustees Sharon Ciampi and Hilary Horn presented the Cemetery Trustees budget. There is a little increase to get the legal aspects of the cemetery properties in line. They met with the Trustees of the Trust Funds to get a clear picture of how things work and which direction to go with funding. There is research that needs to be done in order to use some of the perpetual care funds. There is a formula to use to calculate the maintenance cost based on how many lots there are, how often it is mowed, the cost for each mow, etc. The person does not need to be buried there in order to use the funds. They have been doing research with Ancestry and historical death records to help organize the information for each cemetery. The Town of Belmont owns the cemetery on Ladd Hill Road but the Cemetery Trustees have not ever touched it. There are conflicting records and accounts on whether anyone is still buried there or if they were moved to another cemetery. This will be a winter project to research. There are 5 dead trees there and 2 of them are dangerous. DPW will help get them down. They will clean up the cemetery and put a sign on it. There is a \$1,600 increase to the budget from last year based on legal fees needed to help petition for some of the perpetual care funds. They still have some money from this year and will be working to get a public notice done and into the paper for 2023 to take over care of some of the abandoned cemeteries in Town.

Selectman Pike moved to accept the Cemetery Trustees budget of \$22,600 as requested; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. The motion passed unopposed (4-0).

Selectman Ciampi rejoined the Board.

Heritage Commission:

Heritage Commission Chair Vicki Donovan told the Board they have a good group working together. They provided a list of what they have accomplished over the last year, and some projects they are anticipating. Last year's big project was the trail sign, which was two years in the making; and the Penstock Safety Report. Their food drive for the seniors was a huge success and they will do it again.

It is their mission to not just help the Town, but also to help the Town's residents. They are in a good place and are budgeting for new banners and brackets. The American Legion would like to put up some flags and incorporate red, white and blue. They will discuss working together on the project. Members have been biking around doing an inventory and there is a lot of damage. The group is concerned about some artifacts the Historical Society has and they want to get them inventoried and into glass cases and frames to display in the future. They did a picture walk at Old Home Day which was laminated and can be reused.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the Heritage Commission budget of \$4,750 as presented; seconded by Selectman Pike. The motion passed unopposed (4-0).

General Assistance:

General Assistance Director Donna Cilley gave an overview of the outlook for 2024. Everyone is running out of money and is short staffed. The waiting lists are long. She has been thankful for the recent support of Winni Womenade. There is a significant homeless population in Town with mental health and substance misuse issues. There has been fallout from the discontinuation of the NHERAP program. 49 out of 61 on the program have been absorbed by the Town. She said she is doing "triage" at this point and there are 146 homeless to date but those aren't the real numbers. Officer Richie Bryant has provided much needed support. The grant funding his position saves a lot of extra labor. There are some encampments in Town with substance issues. GA Director Cilley has worked deals with two different motels to provide the most affordable accommodations for homeless placements. Electric rates have increased and the homeless population is up 52% from last year. Rents are high and there is no workforce housing. There was some discussion about "fair hearings" for welfare denial appeals and the cost and time involved.

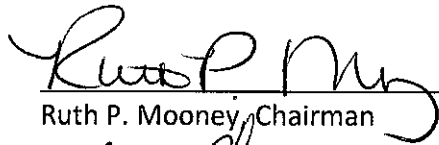
The budget includes an increase for housing and for food. Many are on special diets for medical reasons. There is some extra labor as well for office coverage and fair hearings. Service contracts have increased along with software. GA Director Cilley does not want to accept the wage increase being budgeted by the Board. She forfeit her raise last year and will not accept the full increase proposed for this year. She will accept \$76,000. Benefits are included in the Executive budget.

Selectman O'Hara moved to approve the General Assistance budget of \$199,578.60 as presented; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. The motion passed unopposed (4-0).

The Board had a brief discussion about the seniors group using the first floor kitchen at the Mill, the Canterbury Withdrawal Committee, and scheduling an informational meeting with KRT about assessments.


Adjournment:

Selectman Pike moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:21pm; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. The motion passed unopposed.


Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman


Jon Pike, Vice Chairman

Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman


Travis O'Hara, Selectman


Sharon Ciampi, Selectman