



Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 21, 2023, 6:00 pm
Belmont Mill, 14 Mill Street
Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Ruth Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Claude Patten, Jr., TA Alicia Jipson, Assessing Admin Colleen Akerman, DPW Director Craig Clairmont, DPW Assistant Director Brian Jackes, Police Chief Mark Lewandoski, General Assistance Director Donna Cilley, Building & Grounds Supervisor Patrick Golden, Fire Chief Mike Newhall, Assistant Fire Chief Deb Black, Librarian Eileen Gilbert, Town Moderator Al Nix, Conservation Commission Chair Denise Naiva, Planning Board Member Mike LeClair, Budget Committee Vice Chair Tracey LeClair, Planning Board Member Kevin Sturgeon, Library Trustee Mary Charnley, Library Trustee Jessica Ellis-Hopkins, Library Trustee Shela Cunningham, Library Trustee Terry Elliot, and Cemetery Trustee Sharon Ciampi. Also present were Woody Fogg, John (Skip) Peterson, Travis O'Hara and Brian Gardiner. 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 February 6, 2023, as written; seconded by Selectman Jon Pike and the motion passed unanimously.

Selectman Pike moved the minutes of the Special Meeting held on February 10, 2023, as written; seconded by Selectman Patten and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Hearing – Special Revenue Fund

Chairman Ruth Mooney stated this hearing is to take public comment, in accordance with RSA 31:95-c, on changing the purpose of the Special Revenue Fund known as the Fire/Ambulance Equipment and Apparatus Fund. To see if the Town will vote to amend the vote taken on Article 7 at the 1999 Annual Meeting to restrict all revenues from ambulance billings to be deposited in the Special Revenue fund known as the Fire/Ambulance Equipment and Apparatus Fund to instead restrict all but the first \$124,500 of revenues from ambulance billings received during the 2023 budgetary year to be deposited in the Special Revenue fund known as the Fire/Ambulance Equipment and Apparatus Fund. The first \$124,500 of revenues from ambulance billings will be deposited in the Town's General Fund to defray the cost items identified below. This restriction shall only be effective for the 2023 budgetary year (2/3 Majority Ballot Vote).

Training Expenses \$3,000
Medical & Supply Expenses \$30,000
Ambulance Billing Fees \$20,000
Overtime \$40,000
Telephone \$2,000
Conferences & Dues \$1,500
Office Expense \$12,000
Vehicle Repair & Parts \$8,000
Fuel \$8,000

Please note that this Public Hearing, despite the inaccurate comments on Facebook, is only necessary for this article, and that this is something that we have to do each and every year by law because it is a Special Revenue Fund. The purpose to which we are allocating these funds are directly for the Fire Department and fall within the purpose of the special revenue fund. We are not defraying funds to any other purpose or department.

Chairman Ruth Mooney opened the Public Hearing at 6:04 pm.

Fire Chief Mike Newhall stated this hearing is required by law every year because of the State RSA. There has been no change to this for 10 years.

There were no additional comments. The Chairman closed the Public Hearing at 6:05 pm.

Public Hearing – Rescinding SB2

Chairman Mooney stated this hearing is to take public comment on rescinding the provisions of RSA 40:13 (known as SB 2), as adopted by the Town of Belmont on March 11, 2008, so that the official ballot will no longer be used for voting on all questions, but only for the election of officers and certain other questions for which the official ballot is required by State law. This is a petitioned warrant article.

Chairman Mooney opened the Public Hearing at 6:06 pm.

Travis O'Hara of 25 Spring Street spoke in opposition to this article. He has heard others describe the removal of SB2 as a power move by the "elite" in our town. It breaks up Town Meeting into two sessions; one where things can be explained and debated, and then another session for balloting. Without SB2 residents have no say if they are unable to attend a meeting on one day at one specific time. If SB2 is eliminated their voice will not matter. Maintaining Belmont's status as an SB2 town will allow articles to be voted on by all citizens who can make it to the polls between 7 am and 7 pm rather than the few who attend the meeting. He suspects this article was petitioned due to what happened with the well grant last year. Mr. O'Hara said he voted for the article because he educated himself on it and knew it was worth it.

There is a distrust of the current leadership in town, whether it is warranted or not. There was a lack of information provided to the public. Mr. O'Hara thinks that we will be a target of the Free State Project again because without SB2, members can mobilize at the last minute to hold an annual meeting hostage and cut critical services. Google "Free State Croydon School" to see how they cut the school budget in half. He will remain in opposition to SB2 regardless of his election status because he wants everyone to have an equal say in our town.

Mike LeClair of 321 Brown Hill Road explained he is a 1990 graduate of Belmont High School and he knows 90% of the people in the room. The problem is that residents do not attend the Deliberative Session. This article was not about opening things up to the Free Staters. There are motions that can be made to close down the ability to reconsider articles. In the past in other towns and in this town, there was a failure to close down motions. Closing down the motions means that they cannot be revisited later in the meeting. Mr. LeClair asked for verification from Town Moderator Al Nix. Mr. Nix explained that once a motion is made to close down an article for reconsideration, it can't be reopened. Mr. LeClair suggested that with SB2 people don't understand what they are voting for. It is not about taking away people's right to vote, it is about "Town Meeting" and democracy in its purest form. It would limit voters, but only 19% of the registered voters voted last year. Tonight's room is a pretty good representation of people who have lived here their entire lives, people who are new to town, young people and elderly people. Town Meeting is nice to get to know your neighbors and see children, and support youth groups selling items. He thinks it is pathetic if someone can't contribute 5 or 6 hours one day a year to their town.

Selectman Pike said he understands where Mr. LeClair is coming from and disclosed that Mr. LeClair is his son-in-law. The auditorium used to be filled on Town Meeting Day. At tonight's meeting if all of the Town employees and representatives were removed, there would only be about 5 people remaining. Everyone complains but no one participates or helps. There were no bids for garbage collection, and no one wanted to establish a Town dump even 15 years ago. Our old dump is on top of the water supply. Rescinding SB2 may not be the answer but it is something to consider. The Town needs more public involvement. When no one participates the Board of Selectmen is expected to make all of the decisions. Tonight's meeting has a small group for a night meeting. The Town saves money by doing day meetings because employees do not need to be paid overtime. Everyone doesn't have to agree on things, but people need to talk about them.

Mr. Woody Fogg of 433 Jamestown Road declared that he was horrified when we went to SB2. Democracy is not a spectator sport. With the right to vote comes the responsibility to vote knowledgeably and responsibly. The beauty of Town Meeting is that speakers can explain the background of an article and then people listen before voting. It wasn't convenient. He has seen first-hand the price that is paid for the right to vote and he doesn't care. Democracy was never intended to be convenient.

Mr. Nix has been the Town Moderator for 10 years and has never done a traditional Town Meeting. If SB2 is repealed, he will stay on as the moderator. He is concerned that if

people won't attend a 2 ½ to 3-hour deliberative session, how are we going to get people to come to a session that could last until midnight. People can access the Voter's Guide from Town Hall or through the internet, but they don't. If SB2 is rescinded, Chairman Mooney was concerned about the need for the Supervisors of the Checklist to be present at Town Meeting and at the balloting because the Town is still responsible for the school's voting which is by SB2. Chairman Mooney asked if there are one or two voting machines for the Town and School. Moderator Nix answered there are two machines. He also noted that officials who are up for election would still need to be voted on by paper ballot on the Tuesday ballot day. The Town is mandated as part of a regional district to count the votes for the School. Last year the Town voted to add two new selectmen expecting young people to get involved, but they aren't running. Chairman Mooney has talked with some people who are new in town, and they don't want to be involved. It is difficult to get people to participate.

Tracey LeClair of 321 Brown Hill Road gets frustrated when people vote "no" to free money. Why would someone vote no on the Sargent Fund to give free money to kids? Or on the Fire Department/"Comstar" funds that are earned billings from the ambulance used to offset Fire Department expenditures at no tax impact to residents? We can't make voters educate themselves. Ms. LeClair encourages everyone to read the Voters' Guide and talk to their neighbors to figure out which articles affect their tax dollars. Last year the Town gave away \$1.5 million dollars in grant funds because there weren't enough votes.

Craig Clairmont of 33 Weston Road concurred with Ms. LeClair. Everyone worked hard to get that grant money. If people need to raise their hand in front of others at a Town Meeting and state their opinion, it means something. SB2 has advantages, but it has disadvantages too. Town Meeting was how you met your neighbors. It is traditional democracy.

There were no additional public comments. The Chairman closed the Public Hearing at 6:32 pm.

New Business

Library Trustees

Library Trustee Mary Charnley stated the four trustees are volunteers and they are not being paid. She wanted to correct a few things that were discussed at a previous meeting. The Trustees met with Trustee of the Trust Funds Chair Mr. Garfield to get the correct balance of the Duffy Fund. The \$358,000 value previously discussed was incorrect. The interest that can be used is \$160,276.07. The Duffy Fund was established from money allocated for the library to stay where it is, and to maintain the library. The funds are held by the Trustees of the Trust Funds. If there is a maintenance need for the building, they have to make a request and get approval. Chairman Mooney clarified that the only money than can be used is the interest that is made on the fund. Bank of NH holds the trust, and it is in the Town Report every year.

The Library Trustees requested that the bank building not be torn down until the Trustees review all possibilities to expand the library. Selectman Pike said this was offered 5-6

years ago and the Trustees said no. Ms. Charnley replied that they were not in a position to take it on at that time. Selectman Pike said the Board of Selectmen can tear it down anytime they want, but they can't build something anytime they want. They held onto the bank building while they focused on getting Town Hall moved to the Mill building. It is being used for storage and they don't see tearing it down right away. Selectman Pike asked about the \$150,000 architectural plans drawn up years ago that were paid for by the Town and the library. Ms. Charnley stated they do have the plans, but that was 13 years ago, way before any of the current Library Trustees were elected. The plans would need to be different because of the revitalization and the bandstand move that happened afterwards. Selectman Pike reported that Ron Mitchell, Budget Chair, has suggested that the library be moved elsewhere but that could affect the Duffy Fund. Selectman Pike stated that he was in favor of the Library's request to hold off on tearing down the bank building for now.

Conservation Commission Appointment

There was a request to appoint an alternate member to a full regular member.

Selectman Pike moved to appoint Georgina Lambert to serve as a regular member on the Conservation Commission with a term to expire in March 2024; seconded by Selectman Patten and the motion passed unanimously.

Conservation Commission Update on Land Acquisition

Denise Naiva, Chairman of the Conservation Commission, presented some materials to the Board for a land acquisition on Ladd Hill Road. The Conservation Commission voted unanimously at the February 8, 2023, meeting to expend \$218,000 from the Conservation Fund to purchase and conserve 89 acres of forest and wetlands on Ladd Hill Road. The Fund currently has a balance of \$327,598.42. There will be some additional costs such as closing costs and attorney's fees. A detailed property evaluation was completed, and the checklist is attached. The property meets and exceeds some of the conservation properties that are important to conserve. Mr. John (Skip) Peterson is the current owner and he is here to answer any questions. There is a contract for a cell phone tower option that needs to be addressed and Town Counsel will need to be consulted, but that option expires in 2024. They may need an easement if the tower proceeds. Mr. Peterson noted that the plan is to use the Gilbert property to access any potential tower. There was discussion about the tower and if it would be taxed, what would happen with the proceeds, and if any other towers might be needed in Town. There will be no paving or plowing except that which the cell phone company may do. There will be a public hearing, but 10 days' notice is required, so that will likely occur at the April meeting. The abutting Gilbert property is a potential concern, however it is inspected and monitored every year and things have been cleaned up. There was also discussion about the snowmobile club's access to the property.

Asset Management Grant Update – Drinking Water:

The Town applied for a clean drinking water grant for the third time to go towards iron/manganese treatment, but we did not score high enough. This grant was only for \$77,000

compared to \$1.5 million. We will hold off on reapplying until next year with hopes that we might move further up the list.

Household Hazardous Waste Day Letter of Commitment

Every year the Lakes Region Planning Commission asks for a commitment for this event. Chairman Mooney noted that this year's event will be held at the Highway Garage and not at the Fire Station. Tom Murphy has handed the reins over to Kyle Dodge and Brad Jameson starting this year.

Selectman Patten moved to approve the Letter of Commitment for Belmont to participate in the Household Hazardous Waste Day Collection Program on July 29th or August 5th, 2023, with an appropriation of \$6,014; seconded by Selectman Pike and the motion passed unanimously.

PD New Hire – Luis Arias

Luis Arias has worked for Belmont as a part-time officer for several months. He has over 4 years experience and is already certified. He worked with Woodstock as well.

Selectman Pike moved to approve moving Luis Arias from a part-time Police Officer to a full-time Police Officer at the Belmont Police Department; seconded by Chairman Mooney and the motion passed unanimously.

PD New Hire School Resource Officer (SRO) – Stephen Colcord

The new candidate for Belmont's SRO is from the Sheriff's Department. He will be dedicated to the High School and Middle School only. He has retired from full-time work and will be limited to 1,325 hours, which will be eaten up by the school. Selectman Pike confirmed that the school is reimbursing the Town for the cost and there are no Town tax dollars being used to pay for the SRO.

Selectman Pike moved to approve hiring Stephen Colcord as the new School Resource Officer assigned to the Shaker Regional School District; seconded by Chairman Mooney and the motion passed unanimously.

PD Detail Increase Request

To stay competitive in the area with hiring and retention, Chief Lewandoski proposed raising the detail rates from \$75 to \$90 per hour. He also recommended that we stay with the current rate for Town residents who need civil standby, which requires a 4-hour minimum, so that residents pay at a lower rate. New rate will be effective 4/1/2023.

Selectman Pike moved to approve increasing the PD Detail Rate Schedule as presented by Chief Lewandoski, and to keep civil standbys at the current lower rate; seconded by Selectman Patten and the motion passed unanimously.

Finance Clerk New Hire – Stephen Forster

Finding a part-time Finance Clerk in this market was hard. Our candidate Stephen Forster only wanted part-time and comes from another town with the same systems Belmont currently uses. He will start in March. He will work four days a week: Monday through Wednesday from 9-3 and Friday 9-2.

Selectman Patten moved to approve hiring Stephen Forster as the new part-time Finance Clerk; seconded by Selectman Pike and the motion passed unanimously.

LCHIP Incentive Program

The New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program awarded Belmont an incentive payment of \$300.00 acknowledging submission of the required 2022 annual monitoring report for the Currier-Sanborn Conservation Area. These funds were established to ensure resources protected with LCHIP assistance remain in compliance with associated legal agreements. The Land Use Office is requesting permission to deposit the funds into the Conservation Fund. This is something that happens annually.

Selectman Pike moved to approve depositing the \$300 LCHIP award into the Conservation Fund; seconded by Chairman Mooney and the motion passed unanimously.

Lakes Region Planning Commissioner Update

Currently Belmont has no Commissioners. Belmont is entitled to two Commissioners and one alternate. The nominees must be a town resident but can also be a municipal employee. The most recent Commissioner Mr. Condodemetraky has not been actively participating. TA Jipson said it is important to get the word out. The new representatives for Belmont will need to be nominated by the Planning Board to the Board of Selectmen, who will then make the appointments. The Commission looks at projects and how to help communities in the Lakes Region. Belmont has not had good membership for at least 4 years, and this has hurt Belmont by not having active participation. Selectman Pike charged the Planning Board to put this on their next agenda. They are also seeking a representative for TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee). Currently Assistant DPW Director Jackes is appointed, and the previous Town Planner was appointed before her resignation.

NHDES Information Meeting – Silver Lake Association Invite

The Board and the public are invited to an informational meeting for NHDES to provide an assessment of the issues surrounding Silver Lake, with a presentation and question and answer session. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 28, 2023, at 6:00 pm at the Belmont Mill. They are trying to move forward to get grant money for a dam for Silver Lake. The Silver Lake Association has been very active and put a lot of time and effort into this.

Other New Business

Town Equalization Ratio

TA Jipson announced that the 2022 Equalization Ratio was received from the State around 5 pm today. The ratio is 91.8%.

Mill Renovations

TA Jipson met with Bonnette, Page & Stone (BPS) about Mill Renovations and the first project being the elevator. The quote from Otis is \$105,100 and does not include any of BPS's portion. The rest is part of a bigger picture. Selectman Patten requested details about what will be replaced. TA Jipson only received the quote today but will provide copies to the Board. It will be about 5 months to manufacture the elevator and about 4-6 weeks for installation. Selectman Pike asked for details about BPS's portion of the elevator installation. We do not have the information yet because it depends on how the Board wants to move forward with other projects in the Mill. Because the installation is 4-6 weeks, it would make sense for BPS to work on other projects in the building at the same time. Selectman Pike requested a meeting with Otis to provide more details about the work to be completed.

TA Jipson stated there are three options on how to proceed with renovations: complete all of the work at once, phased where some of the floors are completed and some offices move while other remain at Town Hall until the rest of the work is complete, or some construction while occupied. Chairman Mooney maintained that it all boils down to money and they have discussed that the elevator needs to be done first, and then a generator is needed for the building.

There was discussion about how much can be spent on the project this year. Depending on how the warrant articles go, and leaving a buffer for other projects, there is potentially \$616,000 to work with. The generator will need to be one like the Police Department, which was \$80,000 and propane-fed. B&G Supervisor Golden recommended the system be large enough to handle a propane furnace. He suggested keeping the existing oil-based furnace and installing a new propane unit so that the Town can work around market/supply issues by having multiple heating options. Chairman Mooney requested a quote for the generator.

There was additional discussion about the work to be completed on the elevator, and if a second opinion was needed. Not a lot is changing with the elevator except for the mechanics and "internal guts". As much as possible will be kept and reused such as the floor.

A temporary meeting room has been set up downstairs so when the elevator work is being done we will meet handicap accessibility. We are not going to spend a lot of money to move all of the electronics for one or two meetings. Meetings will still be hosted and recorded on Zoom.

Mr. LeClair suggested that Otis is a large enough company that they should be able to provide an engineer on site from start to finish and through the permitting process. He does not think paying BPS to GC the elevator is a good use of taxpayer money.

If the Board makes some suggestions as to the direction they wish to proceed, BPS can provide some quotes.

It was recommended that we work with our current propane provider to determine what our options are for underground or above ground tanks, how large the tanks should be and if they can be placed underground near the water.

DPW Heavy Equipment Request

DPW Director Craig Clairmont and Assistant DPW Director Brian Jackes presented a request for a replacement truck due to the severity of the repairs needed as well as the age. They are seeking the Board's approval to expend \$73,350 out of the Heavy Equipment Fund to purchase a 2023 GMC dump truck with V-plow. The fund currently has \$134,792. They have been nursing the truck along since the last inspection but now it needs replacement. There is a limited supply of vehicles and this one is available, in stock, from the same company as the last truck that was purchased, and it is a great deal. The old truck is 13 years old and is estimated to get \$5,500-\$7,000 at auction.

Selectman Patten moved to approve the purchase of a new dump truck with V-plow for \$73,350; seconded by Selectman Pike and the motion passed unanimously.

This is the last piece of equipment to be replaced that lacked good maintenance. The truck that was ordered a year ago should be delivered in the next couple of weeks.

Old Business

Purchasing Policy Acceptance:

Selectman Pike requested a fresh copy of the policy for review. It was the consensus of the Board to table this to the next meeting.

Code Violations Update

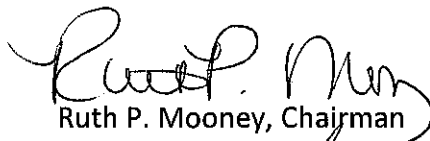
It was the consensus of the Board to table this discussion until Code Enforcement Officer Mark Ekberg could be present.

Other Old Business

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

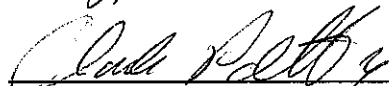
Adjournment

Selectman Pike moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 pm; seconded by Selectman Patten and the motion passed unanimously.


Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman



Jon Pike, Vice Chairman



Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman