



Office of Board of Selectmen

143 Main Street, P.O. Box 310, Belmont, New Hampshire 03220-0310
Telephone: (603) 267-8300 Fax: (603) 267-8327

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 19, 2023, 10:00 am
Belmont Mill, 14 Mill Street
Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Ruth Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Claude (Sonny) Patten, Jr., Selectman Travis O'Hara, Selectman Sharon Ciampi, TA Alicia Jipson, Assessing Admin Colleen Akerman, Finance Director Katherine Davis, DPW Director Craig Clairmont, Police Chief Mark Lewandoski, Police Captain Stephen Akerstrom, Interim Fire Chief Deb Black, Library Director Eileen Gilbert, General Assistance Director Donna Cilley, and CEO Mark Ekberg. Present via ZOOM were Selectman Travis O'Hara, Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector Jenn Thomas and Town Clerk/Tax Collector Assistant Leigh Smith.

It was the consensus of the Board to allow Selectman Travis O'Hara to participate remotely. He did not have anyone in the room with him. All votes will require a roll call.

Those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes of the Public Meeting – 07/05/2023:

Selectman Sonny Patten moved the minutes of the public meeting held on July 5, 2023, as written; seconded by Selectman Jon Pike. Roll Call 1: J. Pike – aye, S. Patten – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).

Minutes of the Non-Public Meeting – 07/05/2023:

Selectman Pike moved the minutes of the non-public meeting held on July 5, 2023, as written; seconded by Selectman Sharon Ciampi. Roll Call 2: S. Ciampi – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Patten – aye, J. Pike – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).

New Business:

Oil & Propane Contract Update:

TA Jipson reported our Irving contract is up in September. Finance Director Katherine Davis looked into rates for the next year, and we were able to get a rate of \$2.915 for oil and \$1.631 for propane.

General Assistant Director Donna Cilley said she heard Irving was being sold, and wondered if that will have any impact on our contract. Finance Director Davis said this contract is good through August 2024.

4 Leisure Lane Update:

The prior owners from before the tax collector's deed want to repurchase the property. Town Hall staff are figuring out the back taxes, water and sewer, legal costs and administrative fees to determine what the repurchase cost will be. That should be happening this week or next. Chairman Mooney stated that if they have the money, we have to sell it back to the prior owners. General Assistance Director Donna Cilley wondered if Police Department visits to the residence could also be billed. TA Jipson stated that is probably part of the administrative fee, which is 10% of the assessed value after the equalization ratio. There will also be interest due on any unpaid taxes.

General Assistance Director Cilley suggested the property is not habitable. Is there a way to have the Code Enforcement or Health Officer assess the property? The structure might need to be removed. Chairman Mooney stated right now the Town owns it but there is someone in it. Is there a way to have access? TA Jipson said we are in the process of eviction.

There was discussion that the property is now owned by the Town and are there any legal repercussions if it is sold back and the home is not in good condition. It is suspected that the home was used for drug manufacturing. It could be a liability. The Town was intending to remove the home from the property. TA Jipson will speak with our attorneys about this. She asked if there is anything on record showing the property was used in drug manufacturing. Police Chief Mark Lewandoski said it is speculated that it was used for manufacturing but there is no confirmation. An outside company will need to evaluate if there are contaminants in the building. TA Jipson noted that these aspects need to be taken into consideration when doing tax deeding. It is not always in the Town's best interest to tax deed a property. She will speak with legal about the Board's concerns.

Budget Season Update:

Budget season has started. Department Heads will get their budgets on August 1st and will have until September 1st to return them to the Town Administrator. They will meet in September and continue with the regular budget process. Selectmen's budget meetings will be held in October and the Budget Committee will start meeting in November.

Other New Business:

Sales Update Letters:

Board members received a handout in their packets with a sample of the sales update letters that will be going out shortly. The letters will have the Town of Belmont address, but they are coming from our assessor KRT. The sample letter will be available on our website and in our newsletter. A phone number is provided on the letter to schedule an appointment with the assessors. There is a limited time frame to call to schedule an appointment.

NH VW Environmental Mitigation Trust, Granite State Clean Fleets RFP:

DPW found a grant opportunity that would help replace a couple of their older dump trucks. It is a lengthy process so they would like the Board's approval to start the application

process. Selectman Pike explained that this is a nationwide issue with products from BMW or Bosch.

Approximately \$10 million is available for local government entities. The RFP closes October 13th and the notification date is November 17th. The program will replace existing diesel vehicles with an engine model year of 1992 to 2009 with equivalent diesel vehicles of engine model year 2022 or newer. We have two qualifying dump trucks: a 2006 International and a 2002 Mack. The maximum reimbursement is 80% and the minimum cost share is 20%. The replaced vehicles must be scrapped with a 3- inch diameter hole cut into the engine block and the frame rails need to be cut. Scrapped equipment can be sold and funds from those sales can be used towards the match. For reference the 2022 Western Star cab and chassis was roughly \$130,000 and upfitting it with the body and plow gear was roughly \$125,000. This grant comes with a disclaimer that it will not pay for optional or unnecessary components or add-ons, so our match may increase depending on what is deemed necessary.

There was discussion about budgeted funds and the timing of this grant. DPW Director Craig Clairmont said he may propose some additional funds for the capital reserve this year.

DPW would like the Board's blessing to move forward with the application. Chairman Mooney suggested that capital could be adjusted, and we can work on our part of the funding. DPW Director Clairmont noted that they have been nursing the 2006 truck. There was discussion about the delays with ordering vehicles. DPW Director Clairmont said if they receive two vehicles they will be in really good shape for a while.

Selectman Pike moved to allow DPW to proceed with the NH VW Environmental Mitigation grant application for two dump trucks; seconded by Chairman Mooney. Roll Call 3: S. Patten – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, J. Pike – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).

Old Business

WorkcampNE Update:

The group met with TA Jipson, General Assistance Director Cilley, and Superintendent Mike Tursi earlier this year and made plans to come to Belmont July 22nd. They are a summer camp with teens who do community outreach for home projects and repairs such as painting, decks, ramps, etcetera. They will be working on 13 homes in Belmont and the Building Department has helped them with their permits. They have invited the Board and residents who are having work done to attend dinner on July 27th or August 3rd from 5:00 to 7:30 PM. TA Jipson has provided them with day passes to the Town beach while they are here.

Water Rate Discussion Continued:

Finance Director Davis gave the Board a handout that included an analysis of rates and a 2021 study from the University of North Carolina Environmental and Finance Center and NHDES. Survey data from many New Hampshire towns is included and the Director printed the Lakes

Region areas. She pointed out that the bill comparison on the left shows the average water bill per quarter for 6,000 gallons of use and the left side shows the water price per 1,000 gallons used. Belmont is currently the lowest cost in the area at \$3.36/1,000gal. Most of the rates are \$7-\$10/1,000gal and that data is over 2 years old. They should be doing another comparison soon.

The other packet includes the water rate calculation information. The historical data shows changes were made to the base rate charges when Underwood completed evaluations in 2008 and 2018, but the flow charge has not been changed since 2009. There is a review of the revenues and expenditures since 2013 that includes a total surplus/deficit value for each year. We have been in the red since 2016. The total impact over the years was shown as a loss of \$348,508.

Page two of the packet shows what is needed to support the Water Fund. Page, one shows the current 2023 rates and the proposed 2023 rates in order to break even. The basic fund costs \$172,009 to run and there are 632 billed units. There is a 2023 shortfall of \$51,878.44 for the base rate. The quarterly base unit price must be increased from \$47.52 to \$68.04 to cover basic fund costs. The usage rate based on three years average of 29,000,000 gallons use requires an increase from \$3.36 per gallon to \$6.31 per gallon for the Water Fund to break even. There is a total shortfall of \$137,570 for 2023. We do not currently have enough funds to cover what is due to the General Fund. There will not be enough to transfer funds to the Capital Reserve.

Average comparisons for a couple and a family were presented with the current and proposed rates. Currently the average for a couple is 8,000 gal/qtr for a current cost of \$74.40. The proposed rate is \$118.52, or a 59.3% increase. The average for a family is 15,000 gal/qtr for a current cost of \$97.92. The proposed rate is \$162.69, or a 66.1% increase. It was noted that we only have two quarters left to bill for 2023, so even if the proposed rates were put into effect immediately, we will not break even for 2023. The next billing cycle ends August 31st. The Board could move forward with a public hearing at the next meeting and make changes effective for the August billing. Otherwise, there will be another quarter of losses.

In 2021, the statewide average annual bill for 71,996 gallons was \$587.35. The proposed annual rate for Belmont would be in line with the statewide average with incremental increases. TA Jipson reported that customers with a private water company are averaging \$890-\$1,100 per year for water costs. CEO Mark Ekberg noted that a home in Bartlett, NH has a base rate of \$175/quarter, plus usage fees. If no water is used, the cost is still \$175/quarter.

Finance Director Davis reported an analysis of the Sewer Fund will be coming. Some capital should be added for the Winni River Basin project. We should be proactive. We can have a public hearing and move some funding over.

Chairman Mooney said that should be on the next agenda and we should hold a public hearing. Everyone should review their packets and ask questions. DPW Director Clairmont said people have been discussing infrastructure improvements recently. We have been lucky so far

but there could be big bills in the future. We can't run in the red. We've been on a shoestring budget for years and losing money.

Household Hazardous Waste Day Update:

The Board received a handout from the Lakes Region Planning Commission about Belmont Household Hazardous Waste Day on July 29th from 8:30 AM to 12:00 PM at the Belmont Fire Department at 14 Gilmanton Road. TA Jipson confirmed there are volunteers from the Board to attend. Printed pamphlets are available at Town Hall, on our website and in our newsletter. DPW Director Clairmont mentioned that he heard the cost to participate in this event will be doubled next year. This is not free; it is a service that we have to pay for. It is a good way to dispose of "forever" chemicals.

Other Old Business

CEO Update:

Chairman Mooney was at court this week for some of the cases and they were successful days with plans to move forward. CEO Ekberg gave the Board a packet with information and photos from 752 Laconia Road and 130 Depot Street. 752 Laconia Road has gotten rid of a fair amount of stuff already. 130 Depot Street's recent property inspection shows tires and vehicles everywhere. The Town was awarded an attachment for both properties and progress hearings will be held on August 16th for both.

37 Ladd Hill Road:

There is a driveway apron issue at the property. A building permit was approved for a garage addition however the apron was never installed. The addition has also not been finished and the permit has expired. There are an excessive number of vehicles on the property but there are lots of licensed drivers residing there. Four or five of the cars have not moved in quite some time and there are some health issues with a family member. He is trying to be respectful but communication has not been good. He will reach out once more and then refer the case to Legal for a letter.

88 Tucker Shore Road:

There is an RV on the property being used for storage, which is a zoning violation. Chairman Mooney asked if this is the unit that has been in the road. The edge of the unit is in the right of way and the owner has talked to DPW Director Clairmont. He asked them to move it back but it has not happened. There has been no response to any communication from the Town. He will attempt contact once more and then refer the case to Legal for a letter.

306 Ladd Hill Road / 328 Union Road:

The number of vehicles at this property has been starting to grow after it was already brought into compliance. The tenant will be a new owner at 328 Union Road and that property also has an increasing amount of equipment and vehicles.

There is an issue with an unpermitted deck at 328 Union Road. A last-minute deck and ramp were installed to assist an ailing family member. The after-the-fact permit application revealed that the ramp is too steep and the proper materials were not used, so the permit was never approved and issued. More information is needed, and the applicant has been unresponsive. Chairman Mooney said the deck needs to be removed or it needs to be brought into compliance. CEO Ekberg stated the permit application process must be completed. An administrative inspection warrant and an accompanying police officer would be needed for CEO Ekberg to visit the property, or someone else such as Interim Chief Deb Black could complete the inspections. Selection Pike recommended TA Jipson send a certified letter about what needs to be addressed. Chairman Mooney said there should be no inspections without a permit.

15 Johnson Street:

There is no new information on this property. The Mitchell Group was informed that a window was open at the property allowing access to Building. The window is still open and it has been about 30 days, so CEO Ekberg will notify Mitchell Group again. There has been no new notification of hearings or court dates.

14 Gilmanton Rd:

The owners have until the end of the month to dispute the ZBA's decision. If they don't dispute it, the case will go to the Mitchell Group.

There was general discussion about the direction the Board would like to go on enforcement issues. TA Jipson suggested letters with 15 days to respond, and then move them too Legal.

Chairman Mooney felt positive about the judge presiding over the recent cases. The process was quick, and they left with the next date scheduled. CEO Ekberg noted the next hearing and discovery are to be done for the end of September and if necessary, a trial October 15th. Things are in motion. Selectman Pike asked about how many people can live at a property with septic because there is likely a health issue. He asked about research to determine if all of the vehicles on a property are registered to the property owner. Chief Lewandoski confirmed that information is private and cannot be researched by the CEO.

Interim Chief Deb Black clarified that the Fire Department has different regulations and covers different things than the Health Officer. Safety inspections fall under the Fire Department.

Public Comment: None

Next Meeting: The next regular meeting will be **Wednesday, August 2, 2023, at 10:00 am.**

Non-Public:

Selectman Pike moved to enter non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II (a) at 11:03 am; seconded by Chairman Mooney. Roll Call : T. O'Hara – aye, J. Pike – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, S. Patten – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).

It was the consensus of the Board to allow Selectman Travis O'Hara to participate remotely in the non-public session. He verified that he did not have anyone in the room with him. All other ZOOM attendees from the public meeting were disconnected.

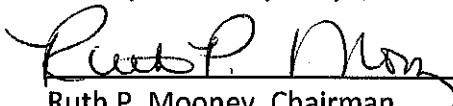
Those present and voting were Ruth Mooney, Jon Pike, Claude Patten, Jr., and Sharon Ciampi. Travis O'Hara will be voting remotely. Also present were TA Alicia Jipson and Vinnie Baiocchetti.

Consultant addressed the BOS and gave his update on his work so far. No decisions were made. TA Jipson advised the Board that the Finance Director has given her notice.

The Board returned to public session at 12:00 pm.

Adjournment:

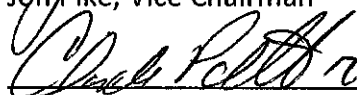
Selectman Mooney moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:00 pm seconded by Selectman Pike. Roll call: Roll Call 5: T. O'Hara – aye, J. Pike – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, S. Patten – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).



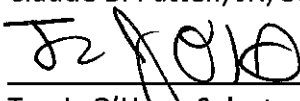
Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman



Jon Pike, Vice Chairman



Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman



Travis O'Hara, Selectman



Sharon Ciampi, Selectman