



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 Work Session Minutes Wednesday, March 27, 2024, 10:00 am Belmont Mill, Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Ruth Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Claude "Sonny" Patten, Jr., Selectman Sharon Ciampi, TA Alicia Jipson, Assessing Admin Colleen Akerman, Police Chief Mark Lewandoski, Police Captain Stephen Akerstrom, Fire Chief Deb Black, DPW Director Craig Clairmont, General Assistance Director Donna Cilley, Building & Grounds Supervisor Patrick Golden, Library Director Eileen Gilbert, Parks & Rec Director Danielle St. Onge, Cemetery Trustee Chair Hillary Horn and Planning Board Member Kevin Sturgeon.

Chairman Ruth Mooney stated today's Board of Selectmen work session is a continuation of the discussion on the default budget and to meet with department heads and the Town Administrator to discuss where we are at, where we need to go and what changes need to be made to the budget. This meeting is open to the public, however per RSA 91:A:2 the public has no guaranteed right to speak. This meeting is for the Board to conduct important Town business. No comments or discussion from the public will be entertained.

Library:

Library Director Eileen Gilbert met with the Trustees on Monday evening to consider reassignment of funds in order to meet proposed wages. They are now below the default budget by \$3,000.

Executive:

TA Alicia Jipson removed the other half of the part-time shared position with the Town Clerk's office and suggested reducing overtime. It is a hardship when there are evening meetings but we can work it out. Other lines such as phone, notices, registry posting, conferences and dues, subscriptions and equipment repair and maintenance were reduced. Staff changes reduced the health insurance line. Overall the Executive budget is \$42,000 below the default, but only if no lines are overspent.

Assessing:

TA Jipson said this is a tight budget and only \$4,300 could be cut based on last year's actual numbers. There are 80 abatements this year which could increase some of the legal and professional lines. This budget is still \$16,000 over the default.

Health Agencies:

It is hard to make adjustments to the non-profits that help our community but there are no contracts. A 30% reduction to all agencies would save just over \$20,000.

Ruth Mooney spoke on behalf of the South Road Cemetery and agreed to a budget of only \$5,000. General Assistance Director Donna Cilley reviewed the list of organizations and recommended a fair and consistent cut if the Board opted to make any cuts. Selectman Patten recommended a 25% decrease instead of 30%, which is a savings of just over \$18,000. This can be reviewed again later this year to consider restoring some of the funding.

Selectman Jon Pike moved to approve a 25% decrease to the Health Agency budgets for 2024; seconded by Selectman Travis O'Hara. Roll call: J. Pike – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Patten – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed unopposed (5-0).

Street Lighting:

The default budget is more than requested because of the savings using LED. The line is under the default budget by \$5,650.

Solid Waste:

Per the Board's request earlier this week, the Household Hazardous Waste program was canceled. No payments had been made yet and Lakes Region Planning Commission was notified. The savings, including the contract and overtime, is \$9,208.

Cemetery Trustees:

Cemetery Chair Hillary Horn explained TA Jipson recommended paying for half of the maintenance services out of the Capital Reserve Fund this year. They may need to hold an emergency meeting if the Board needs a decision right away. They are having a hard time getting all of their members together. The new proposed budget is \$12,250. They are also still trying to track down a \$3,000 FEMA storm reimbursement.

Conservation Commission:

TA Jipson suggested the invasives and contract services, a total of \$4,500, come from the Conservation Fund this year. Town Planner Karen Santoro and LU Tech Rod Cameron reviewed the RSA and will have an answer from the Conservation Commission after next week's meeting. There is currently \$230,000 in the fund, which comes from Land Use Change Tax.

Legal:

There were no changes to the Legal budget.

Insurance:

There were no changes to the Insurance budget.

Debt Services:

There were no changes to the Debt Services budget.

Parks & Rec:

TA Jipson recommended restoring some of the funding to the programs because Old Home Day has been canceled. This will give the department some funds to host other community activities and senior programs. Parks & Rec Director Danielle St. Onge is working on ideas to incorporate such as yoga, pickleball and tennis as well as partnering with other groups. Some programs may have a small fee that would be supplemented from the Programs line item.

Selectman O'Hara moved to restore the Special Events line to \$2,000 and the Recreational Programs line to \$6,500 as presented; seconded by Selectman Sharon Ciampi. Roll call: J. Pike – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Patten – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed unopposed (5-0).

Budget Overview:

With the new calculations, there is still a shortage of approximately \$15,000. In a perfect world there would be no overages but all of the line numbers will fluctuate some. The budget will be monitored carefully throughout the year.

TA Jipson said the Board will need to decide on moving forward with non-union wages. Selectman Pike stated we need to keep our personnel. Updated wages would go into effect 04/01. We have new homes and commercial projects that will also add to the tax base.

Selectman Pike moved to approve non-union wages as presented by TA Jipson; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Roll call: J. Pike – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Patten – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed unopposed (5-0).

It was the consensus of the Board to keep the Mill building open at this time. Staff will manage the meeting schedule to maximize the use of shared spaces to save on heating and cooling costs.

Other items discussed: DPW will bring a project list to the April meeting to review with the Board. It may be possible to use some Capital Reserve Funds for IT or Municipal Facilities.

Other:

It was noted that elected officials have 30 days to be sworn or the position becomes vacant.

The Board thanked all of the Department Heads for their hard work pulling together a new budget in a very short time.

Non-Public:

Chairman Mooney moved to enter non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II I at 11:00 am; seconded by Selectman Pike. Roll call: J. Pike – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Patten – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed unopposed (5-0).

Those present and voting were Chairman Ruth Mooney and Selectmen Jon Pike, Claude Patten, Jr., Travis O'Hara, and Sharon Ciampi. Also present were TA Alicia Jipson, Assessing Admin Colleen Akerman, Police Chief Mark Lewandoski and Captain Steve Akerstrom.

TA Jipson reviewed RSAs and obtained multiple written legal opinions regarding continuing the bonus program for union wages.

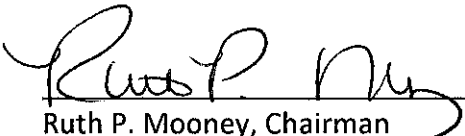
There was discussion about how to proceed with wages for union police officers and the possible ramifications of those choices.

Selectman Pike moved to exit non-public session at 11:20 am; seconded by Selectman Mooney. Roll call: J. Pike – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Patten – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed unopposed (5-0).

Selectman Pike moved to approve the union bonus program as presented by TA Jipson; seconded by Selectman Patten. Roll call: J. Pike – aye, T. O'Hara – nay, S. Patten – aye, S. Ciampi – nay, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (3-2).

Adjournment:

Selectman Pike moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 am; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Roll call: J. Pike – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Patten – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed unopposed (5-0).



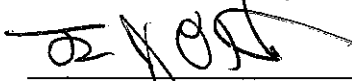
Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman



Jon Pike, Vice Chairman



Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman



Travis O'Hara, Selectman



Sharon Ciampi, Selectman