

# Office of Board of Selectmen

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**Selectmen's Budget Review Workshop Minutes**  
**Wednesday, October 11, 2023, 10:00 am**  
**Belmont Mill**  
**Corner Meeting House Room**

Present were Chairman Ruth Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Claude Patten, Jr., TA Alicia Jipson, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Cynthia DeRoy and Library Director Eileen Gilbert.

Present via Zoom: Selectman Travis O'Hara.

Absent: Selectman Sharon Ciampi.

**Town Clerk:**

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Cynthia DeRoy distributed a packet of information to the Board with information about the types, number and dollar amount of transactions processed in the office. It will be helpful for staffing. DMV registrations are down this year, which appear to be a result of larger companies registering fleets of vehicles differently. We have a tax warrant of about \$20 million and only \$1 million of that is unpaid, which is very good. There is only \$366,000 not collected from 2023 1<sup>st</sup> Issue tax bills.

Because of elections there are some increases for next year, but that will decrease again the following year. Town Clerk, Deputy, 2 full-time clerk positions and a 3<sup>rd</sup> part-time clerk position are included in the budget. This part-time position would be for a full-time employee, with 20 hours for the Town Clerk's office and 20 hours for the Town Administrator's back office. This position would help provide coverage in the clerk's office for any absences and help provide additional stability. There is a computer in the back office with the tax program so that mail could be processed. TA Jipson said this position would help with Assessing and the Executive/Finance department side of things. Water and Sewer would also split the cost of this employee. Sewer is harder to collect, but the Water department has to read the meter when properties are sold. Chairman Mooney asked if there was enough overtime in the budget for elections. TC/TC DeRoy said yes because there is overtime in the Elections budget as well. There are currently about 4,500 registered voters and she expects a large turnout for the January election. The office may need to be closed. She will be available if they need any help. Postage was increased because of absentee ballots. Contracts are increasing but vendors did not yet have final numbers. The recommended increase was 5%. Conference and dues had no increase. Typically the Town Clerk attends and brings information back to others in the department. Mileage was decreased because there is no longer travel for the bank. Once we are moved to the Mill, there will be mail pickup and delivery at the Mill building with a mailroom and there will be an additional decrease. Supplies were increased because the

election machine needs to be encoded. The new incoming Town Clerk/Tax Collector Jennifer Cashman will review this budget and may suggest some modifications before it goes before the Budget Committee. The Clerk's office is the busiest area of Town Hall. TA Jipson said this is a way to test the waters for a year to see if there is the need for an additional full-time clerk or not. When the clerk position in the Assessing area was discontinued after Covid there were a lot of duties that had to be absorbed. It would be a big help for the "back office" to have additional part-time help. Chairman Mooney was concerned about dividing the 40 hours but TA Jipson said there will be plenty of flexibility. Selectman O'Hara asked if this position will help the clerk's office reduce overtime. TC/TC DeRoy replied that it would. With an additional person and some stability there should not need to be overtime. Most overtime would be attributed to elections. TA Jipson noted the 31% increase looks high, but in 2023 the Town Clerk/Tax Collector position was budgeted as a part-time position, and now it is a full-time position. The deputy and two clerks were the same.

*Chairman Mooney moved to accept the Town Clerk's budget of \$161,968.15 as presented; seconded by Selectman Pike. The motion passed unopposed (4-0).*

#### **Elections & Registration:**

All election increases are because there are so many elections. The Supervisor of the Checklist, Brenda Paquette, submitted her requests as well. Moderators and Supervisors have increased because there are three big elections next year. The State will be requiring a new voting machine, but not for 2024. We have been saving money for booths, but not a new machine. Belmont has been put in for a grant for a new machine. The machine will be \$8,000 to \$10,000 and a small set of booths is \$1,000 each. Hand counting ballots has a high cost for wages and it will take 3-4 days for ballots to be counted twice. It will be less accurate than a voting machine. A chip will need to be programmed for each election, at a cost of about \$700. TA Jipson reported there is a Capital Reserve Fund for elections but there is not enough funds to purchase even one machine. Rumor is that it will be mandated to have the new machines for 2026. Demand will be high. We should put enough into the Capital Reserve Fund to cover purchasing one machine and some additional booths.

Selectman O'Hara was disconnected from Zoom.

*Chairman Mooney moved to accept the Elections and Registrations budget of \$24,818.15 as presented; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unopposed (3-0).*

Selectman O'Hara reconnected with Zoom.

#### **Tax Collector & Financial Administration:**

TC/TC DeRoy explained this budget includes a portion of the new part-time clerk position, and an increase for postage. There was some discussion about the current lack of a Finance Director and possible solutions such as part-time, or subcontracting an accounting firm. TA Jipson stated municipal budgeting is very different. Chairman Mooney said we need to be creative. Selectman Pike has some contacts he is going to reach out to. Other towns are having

problems with hiring as well. Medical and dental is in the Executive budget so this budget could be approved.

*Chairman Mooney moved to approve the Tax Collector & Finance budget of \$370,362.57 as presented, with the exception of whether the Budget Committee chooses to increase line 01-4150-208 for NHMA training; seconded by Selectman Pike (4-0).*

**Executive:**

This is the Town Administrator's budget with a lot of other things comingled. Postage rates are increasing and more people have requested notices be mailed to residents about important things. NHMA dues are paid by the Town and they provide free legal advice, publications, and trainings at low or no cost. They are anticipating a 3% increase. Professional services was overspent for 2023 for the use of a consultant. The requested amount was increased for 2024 to account for any additional consulting that may be required. Health and dental insurance is shown at the 2023 rate but the increase is expected to be 14.8% for medical and 4.7% for dental. Other towns saw 20-25% increases so we are in a better position. There were many changes with employees and the plans they selected. The Board received a HealthTrust document with more information about the rate updates and how the rates are calculated. The insurance line includes the Executive office, Town Clerks, Assessing, Finance, Land Use, Building Inspections, Parks & Rec and General Assistance. The "Buyout" line is an annual \$3,000 benefit paid to employees who choose not to carry their insurance through the Town. That is low compared to other towns who offer a percentage, sometimes up to 50%, of the premium cost.

Selectman O'Hara was disconnected from Zoom.

TA Jipson commented the increase looks large, but a big portion of the increase is for the health insurance for the "Town Hall" departments.

*Chairman Mooney moved to approve the Executive budget of \$465,273.42 as presented, with an anticipated increase when insurance rates are finalized; seconded by Selectman Pike. The motion passed unopposed (3-0).*

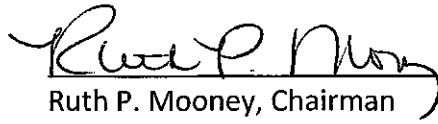
**Legal:**

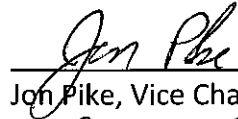
There is no change to the Legal budget. This line is used for HR issues, Town issues, and union negotiations. Land Use, Zoning, and Building & Code Enforcement have their own legal line.

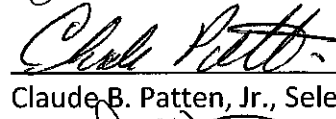
*Selectman Patten moved to approve the Legal budget of \$35,000 as presented; seconded by Chairman Mooney. The motion passed unopposed (3-0).*

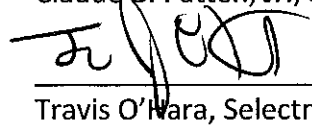
**Adjournment:**


*Selectman Pike moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:22 am; seconded by Selectman Patten. The motion passed unopposed (3-0).*

  
Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman

  
Jon Pike, Vice Chairman

  
Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman

  
Travis O'Hara, Selectman

  
Sharon Ciampi, Selectman