



Office of Board of Selectmen

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Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 6, 2022, 6:30 p.m.
Belmont Mill
Tioga Meeting Room

Present were TA Alicia Jipson, Assessing Administrator Colleen Akerman, Selectmen's Representative Ruth Mooney, Chairman Ron Mitchell, Norma Patten, Sharon Ciampi, Justin Borden, Mark Roberts, Gary Grant, Lisa Crocker, Albert Akerstrom, Roland Coffin, and Marsha Campbell. Also present were Fire Chief Mike Newhall, Assistant Fire Chief Deb Black, Parks & Rec Director Danielle St. Onge and General Assistance Director Donna Cilley. There were no Zoom participants.

Vice Chair Tracey LeClair and Member Justin Borden were absent.

Minutes – November 29, 2022:

Some members did not receive the draft minutes for review. This item was moved to the December 13, 2022 meeting.

Fire Department:

Fire Chief Mike Newhall and Assistant Fire Chief Deb Black presented the Fire Department budget. The Belmont Fire Department runs 24/365 for fire and EMS services with three personnel on four shifts. They handle about 1,700 to 1,900 calls per year, which are about 70% EMS calls. Last year two additional personnel were added so that there are three personnel on at all times. Two boats were also added last year and within two weeks of getting the boats someone was pulled out of the lake. There have been big changes with EMS because Concord Hospital now owns the former LRGH location in Laconia. There have been changes to how and where certain types of patients are transported and the number of transports to Concord has increased. This means the ambulance is no longer in service when it has to go to Concord. The call volume has increased 5% to 7% each year and there are more businesses and residents coming into the community. ClearChoice and ConvenientMD accounted for 119 calls. There are 33 communities who are part of the Lakes Region Mutual Aid system and can be called into service when needed. There are about 70 to 100 calls serviced each year for Canterbury. Currently they pay Belmont \$5,000.00 per year but Chief Newhall is working with Chief Gamache on increasing that amount.

Budget Chair Ron Mitchell asked about the condition of their equipment. They have two ambulances and three engines. One of the engines needs a refurbish to keep it in service but

that is included on the Capital Improvement Plan. One ambulance is a 2013 and the other is a 2019. Prices are out of sight and there are problems with deliveries. There is a tanker that will need to be upgraded in a few years.

Newer homes have more fire prevention measures which helps prevent big fires. The Chief is concerned that high heating costs will mean problems this winter. There has already been an increase in carbon monoxide calls. Our population is aging and many did not get the care they should have during COVID and that means EMS is providing more advanced EMS services. Chief Newhall noted they have a call firefighter who is also a nurse, who does in house training and recertifications to help save on costs.

The wage and benefit numbers in this budget are the existing numbers because union negotiations are still in progress. If negotiations are successful, this budget will be amended and a revote will be required on the wage and benefit portions only.

Ruth Mooney moved line 101-4220-101 Fire Chief, seconded by Norma Patten. The motion passed unanimously.

N. Patten moved lines 01-4220-106 Training Pay, seconded by Roland Coffin. The motion passed unanimously.

Ruth moved lines 01-4220-105 Part Time Call Salary \$25,000 as recommended by the Selectmen, seconded by Mark Roberts.

Chief Newhall agreed \$25,000.00 is enough because they have only used \$11,000.00 so far this year.

The motion passed unanimously.

N. Patten moved line 01-4220-108 Assistant Chief, seconded by M. Roberts. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4220-102 through 01-4220-104, seconded by Gary Grant.

R. Mooney stated because the union is still in negotiations, we carry the same figures as we have now.

The motion passed unanimously.

M. Roberts moved lines 01-4220-109 through 01-4220-117, seconded by R. Coffin. The motion passed unanimously.

M. Roberts moved lines 01-4220-120 through 01-4220-175, seconded by Bob Chapman. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved line 01-4220-176, seconded by N. Patten.

The vacation buyback amount will change if the pay rates are changed during negotiations. The maximum exposure is \$13,950.00 but \$9,665.00 is a good happy medium based on wages.

The motion passed unanimously.

M. Roberts moved lines 01-4220-201 through 01-4220-335, seconded by N. Patten.

R. Mitchell asked about station repairs and noted that the bonding agent between the blocks is peeling off in some areas and there is a crack. The building needs to be repainted. Chief Newhall explained that work would come out of the Government Buildings budget and not this line. This is for maintenance.

Finance Director Katherine Davis explained there was a 4.7% increase in health and a 1.5% increase in dental. Many employees are choosing 2-person and family plans. If employees decline health insurance but have coverage elsewhere, there is a \$3,000.00 buyback. There is a one-time state NHRS reimbursement for 7% that will be used to offset the employer portion of Group II for fiscal year 2023.

The motion passed unanimously.

Ambulance fees for transportation billed out to insurance or Medicare go into a special revenue fund for Fire Department apparatus. This helps offset budget costs. The amount fluctuates but it has been between \$280,000.00 and \$300,000.00 per year recently. This type of special revenue fund provides some breathing room to replace equipment.

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4220-420 through 01-4220-999 seconded by M. Roberts.

Fuel costs have increased but the Town uses Wex cards, which have a 2% discount, and the Town does not pay federal or state fuel tax through that program. The Fire Prevention budget pays for helmets, coloring books and other expenses for taking the program into schools. The supply line covers paper products, dish detergent, etc. The Fire Department is a live-in facility.

The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved to approve the Fire Department Budget of \$1,986,734.86 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by N. Patten and passed unanimously.

Emergency Management:

This is a placeholder account, and the place where Opioid Settlement funds were placed. The Town participated in a large joint settlement. So far the Town has received \$33,516.61 that can be used for Fire, Police or General Assistance. There is a strict RSA and guidelines on how it can be used. General Assistance could use the funds to transport someone to rehab or the Fire Department could purchase Narcan. The Fire and Police departments could use the funding for education and training. These funds will be coming in for many years but each year will be different. There is no budget for it but there needs to be an expenditure line. The budget remains zero and there is no tax impact.

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4220-999 and 01-4220-998 seconded by Bob Chapman. The motion passed unanimously.

M. Roberts moved to approve the Emergency Management Budget of \$5,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by R. Mooney and passed unanimously.

Parks & Recreation and Beach:

Danielle St. Onge is the Director for Parks & Rec. Old Home Day is now part of the Parks & Rec budget. Some of this year's programs included summer camp, fall festivals and Deck the Village. This year's summer camp averaged about 27 participants per week but it was only rolled out six weeks in advance of the program. They expect to advertise earlier to get 50 or 60 participants for next year. R. Mooney said they have done an awesome job in record time. The director position is part-time at 32 hours per week. Programs are slowly being initiated and it is appropriate to keep the position at part-time for now. The department is already starting to plan next year's Old Home Day. Director St. Onge reported that Andy Barnes from the church is helping out with the Gunstock program, which has 32 participants. They are trying to plan a recreational basketball league and set up yoga and Zumba classes, as well as swim lessons for next year.

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4520-102 through 01-4520-999, seconded by M. Roberts.

S. Ciampi asked if programs are only open to Belmont residents. Summer camp is open to everyone but there is an extra charge for non-residents, and it is only done if attendance runs low. There will be adjustments in the program to accommodate summer school students.

The motion passed unanimously.

Ruth moved to approve the Parks & Recreation Department Budget of \$141,326.43 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by B. Chapman and passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4521-101 through 01-4521-506, seconded by M. Roberts.

The beach had a lot of use this year and was kept very clean.

The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved to approve the Town Beach Budget of \$20,479.11 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by M. Roberts and passed unanimously.

General Assistance:

General Assistance Director Donna Cilley said it has been a wild year and it is going to get more challenging. The homeless population is increasing statewide. The highest count in Belmont this year was 140. There's not enough housing for everyone and there are many individuals who have issues and can't be placed, and many don't want to be placed. It is expensive and hotels are capping how many people they will take and limiting how many days they can stay. There were ERAP (rental assistance) monies available with COVID that have paid for up to 18 months of rent and hotel stays but that program will be terminated at the end of December. Individuals haven't been trying to move, so six months ago they implemented a three-month review process that requires people to start looking for apartments. The ERAP program forced rental rates up. Rents that were previously \$900.00 to \$1,100.00 for two bedrooms increased to \$1,400.00 to \$1,800.00 per month and landlords won't be dropping the rates. The Director has worked hard to barter with local motels for discounted rates and longer stays. Many will only rent for 6 days at a time but she has found one willing to allow 30 day stays. With two beds in the room, it can house two individuals which helps stretch the funds further. Families are more difficult to place. The Belknap House has a waiting list and subsidized housing is difficult to come by. Electric rates are up 42% and heating fuels are over \$4.00 per gallon. When CAP is delayed getting services to clients the Town has to cover the expenses in between. There is a new water and sewer program that will help pay for back bills. The Town is looking at arrearages to try to get people signed up for the program.

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4441-101 through 01-4441-505, seconded by B. Chapman. The motion passed unanimously.

M. Roberts moved the General Assistance Administration Budget of \$86,647.34 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by R. Coffin and passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4445-430 through 01-4445-441, seconded by M. Roberts. The motion passed unanimously.

The Director was praised for the initiative to obtain funding from other sources before depleting Town resources. Finance Director Davis reported \$7,200.00 has been recovered from last year's \$34,000.00 that was spent. That is more than double what was recovered the year before. S. Ciampi asked if funds not spent this year could be allocated to the future. Finance Director Davis explained this can only be done with things like service contract obligations and the rules are very strict. R. Coffin asked what happens if someone does not want placement.

Tents, sleeping bags and essentials are provided. General Assistance takes donations of tents and sleeping bags.

The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved to approve the Assistance Vendor Payments Budget of \$94,050.00 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by N. Patten and passed unanimously.

Solid Waste:

TA Jipson presented information on the new automated collection system for 2023. New carts are being delivered today and possibly into next week by a third-party company. Fact sheets, a schedule and other information including FAQs will be attached to the carts. Residents can go to the Casella website or the Town website for the same information. All carts will have ID numbers so they are assigned to a specific residence. The previous contract with Casella expired and no other companies placed bids. Casella has moved to automated collection services. That was not a Town decision. The previous Casella contract included free recycling however we now have to pay for it. The cost per ton for recycling is less expensive than trash so recycling is being promoted. If people don't recycle the costs will increase. The Recycling Partnership Grant was used to help provide education and purchase recycling carts. The Town tried to coordinate with Laconia on a cooperative agreement, but they opted to re-bid the project. They did not get the bids they expected. The Town has tried to be proactive and we are still saving money compared to our neighbors. People have suggested having our own facility but that would require the land, purchase of trucks and equipment, hiring employees, and still paying tonnage fees to dispose of the waste. The cost would be the same or more than our current contract. The Town is also still collecting host fees from the Casella facility in Belmont which have totaled about \$45,000 so far this year.

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4323-470 through 01-4325-450, seconded by Albert Akerstrom. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved to approve the Solid Waste Budget of \$682,907.56 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by N. Patten and passed unanimously.

A draft of the amended Solid Waste Ordinance will be posted on the Town website to include the new automation process and collection carts. The BOS will vote on the amendments at a public hearing on December 19th.

Insurance:

This covers unemployment, workmen's compensation, property liability and insurance deductibles. These rates are set by our insurance carrier, Primex. There was a slight increase from last year. This is reflective of claims throughout the year. Primex provides lots of training opportunities at no additional cost. Administration attends as much training as possible and encourages others to attend as well. There are driving safety courses for the Police

Department and Department of Public Works employees, as well as leadership and supervisor training. Chair R. Mitchell asked about the safety precautions for exhaust systems in the Fire Department and DPW. TA Jipson will follow up.

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4196-326 through 01-4196-626, seconded by A. Akerstrom. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved to approve the Insurance Budget of \$251,159.01 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by M. Roberts and passed unanimously.

Property Taxation:

Last year a portion of the Assistant Town Administrator salary was in this line but now it just represents the Assessing Administrator. There are also service contracts for the Vision property cards and the online AxisGIS system. The Appeals, Legal and Appraisal line covers abatements, or if a case goes to the BTLA. There are conferences and dues for training. The appraisal fees include pickups by KRT and the contract for our utility appraisals. The remaining lines are employee benefits. C. Akerman has been a good addition to the team and has been very busy with all of the calls about revaluations and the new garbage service.

Assessments are based on sales. There will be another sales update in 2023. S. Ciampi asked about the ability of the Town to generate revenue compared to the school. Finance Director Davis explained that we charge some fees for services but the Town is not a business for profit. We work hard to apply for grants. The Town has a lot of assets, but the school has more revenue than the Town. The Town is about 1/3 of the total tax. Town Department Heads cut or level fund their budget and lose employees because of low wages, but the school budget has increased \$1.3 million dollars. The warrant articles for the Town are very transparent.

There are a few proposed changes for a pay rate adjustment for the Assessing Administrator after completing 6 months probation.

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4152-102 through 01-4152-324, seconded by A. Akerstrom. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved to amend line 01-4152-102 FT Assessing Admin from \$48,042.85 to \$49,143.94, seconded by M. Roberts. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved to amend line 01-4152-310 PT Town Share FICA from \$2,978.66 to \$3,046.92, seconded by B. Chapman. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved to amend line 01-4152-312 PT Town Share Medicare from \$696.62 to \$712.59, seconded by B. Chapman. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved to amend line 01-4152-324 PT Retirement Employee from \$6,627.51 to \$6,779.41, seconded by G. Grant. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4152-240 through 01-4152-302 with no amendments, seconded by B. Chapman. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved to approve the Property Taxation Budget of \$107,582.85 as amended. The motion was seconded by Lisa Crocker and passed unanimously.

Long Term Debt & Interest:

There is not a lot of debt. These are Principal Debt Services. There are only two more payments for Pleasant Valley ending in 2024 and payments for the Hoadley Road culverts will end in 2026. The last payment on the Police Station will be in 2040. The Debt Service is the interest associated with the principal. The TAN is a placeholder for a Tax Anticipation Note if the Town needs to need to borrow money until tax revenue comes in. Current collections run at about 97% so this has not been needed.

N. Patten moved lines 01-4711-004 through 01-4711-006, seconded by M. Roberts. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved to approve the Principal Debt Service Budget of \$274,275.00 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by N. Patten and passed unanimously.

N. Patten moved lines 01-4721-004 through 01-4721-006, seconded by G. Grant. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved to approve the Interest Debt Service Budget of \$84,371.02 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by M. Roberts and passed unanimously.

N. Patten moved line 01-4723-001, seconded by M. Roberts. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Mooney moved to approve the TAN Anticipation Debt Budget of \$1.00 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by M. Roberts and passed unanimously.

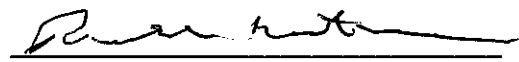
R. Mooney gave a brief overview of the status of a committee exploring Canterbury leaving the Shaker Regional School District. She is the Board of Selectmen's representative, and there is one Belmont resident also on the committee. They met every other week over the summer. There is an active group who want to leave the district for a variety of reasons including sports offerings, other programs and the length of bus trips. There is a plan to petition to raise funds through taxation for a lawyer and a specialist for this process. Typically the specialist is a retired Superintendent. If Canterbury chooses to leave Belmont we would still be the Shaker Regional School District but there would be a loss of \$4 million from Canterbury. It was indicated that the budget would not change to lose 100 kids from Canterbury due to how

they are spread between classes at the middle and the high school. There would not be enough reduction to reduce staff. There was a lawyer from the Department of Education who spoke to the group about the process and how things work. If something like this were to be approved it would not take place until 2024 or 2025. There would need to be a vote to allow Canterbury to leave. There will be two open Belmont School Board positions in March.


Next Meeting: The next meeting date will be December 13, 2022 at 6:30 pm.

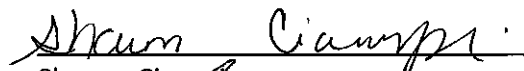
Adjournment:

S. Ciampi moved to adjourn at 9:00 pm, seconded by A. Akerstrom. The motion passed unanimously.

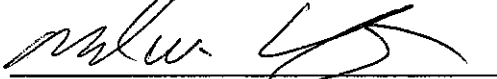

Chairman Ron Mitchell



Vice Chair Tracey LeClair



Norma Patten

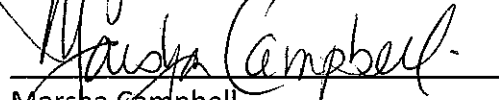

Sharon Ciampi

Justin Borden

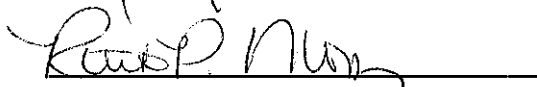

Mark Roberts

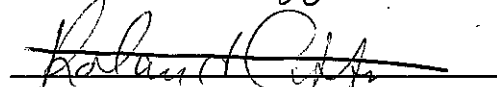

Albert Akerstrom


Robert Chapman


Marsha Campbell


Roland Coffin


Selectman Ruth Mooney


Gary Grant


Lisa Crocker

