

## Office of Board of Selectmen

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**Budget Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, December 13, 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, Vice Chair Tracey LeClair, Sharon Ciampi, Justin Borden, Mark Roberts, Bob Chapman, Albert Akerstrom, Roland Coffin, and Marsha Campbell. Also present were Library Director Eileen Gilbert, Library Trustee Mary Charnley, DPW Director Craig Clairmont, Fire Chief Mike Newhall, Assistant Fire Chief Deb Black, Parks & Rec Director Danielle St. Onge and Town Planner Sarah Whearty. There were no Zoom participants.

Members Norma Patten, Lisa Crocker and Gary Grant were absent.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

#### **11/29/2022:**

M. Roberts moved the minutes of the meeting held on November 29, 2022 as written; seconded by B. Chapman. The motion passed. T. LeClair abstained.

#### **12/06/2022:**

B. Chapman moved the minutes of the meeting held on December 6, 2022 as written; seconded by R. Mooney. The motion passed. T. LeClair abstained.

### **Library:**

Eileen Gilbert and Mary Charnley were present for the library. The library issued 250 new library cards this year. It has been a good year and the building is doing fine. They have held movie nights and story walks. The Children's Literacy Foundation did a special presentation. They also have some little free libraries in Town.

*T. LeClair moved lines 01-4550-101 through 01-4550-999, seconded by A. Akerstrom.*

There is currently one full-time librarian and three-part timers who are working 30 hours per week. The part timers are mostly there to facilitate circulation and one is also running some other programs. They are currently offering an activity to take and make at home. There will be a full-time children's librarian in the spring. There are multiple little free libraries in Town and one is near the trail. People may take a book and bring it back when they are done. It is not

part of the library collection but the library checks on them. People don't need to be a resident of Belmont for those and they are funded by donations. It was suggested that the library might make the trail more educational and set up some kiosks with information about animals and flowers and walking history. Mary Charnley said the BES PTO is amazing and has donated passes for the aquarium, the planetarium, Tarbin Gardens and other attractions including ocean park passes.

*The motion passed unanimously.*

*T. LeClair moved to approve the Library Budget of \$217,817.18 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by B. Chapman and passed unanimously.*

**Patriotic Purposes (including Heritage):**

Parks & Rec Director Danielle St. Onge has been on the job for six months and has had a good year with lots of learning. She said it has been fun. They got summer camp up and running and then Old Home Day. The Gunstock program is running now, and there has also been basketball, some fall festivals, and Deck the Village. There was a short time to learn everything and fit it into the budget. At the last minute some people charged more than expected. Last year was an all volunteer coordinator. They are asking for an additional \$500.00 for the Old Home Day line to cover increased costs for the rock wall, music, inflatables and fireworks. Last year 18 people applied for the scholarship and there is an increased need for funds. Memorial Day is hosted by the American Legion.

*R. Mooney moved lines 01-4583-101 through 01-4584-999, seconded by B. Chapman.*

They are already starting to work on next year's Old Home Day. If they can get things for Old Home Day ready now, it will give them more lead time to work on planning winter activities and events.

*The motion passed unanimously.*

*R. Mooney moved to approve the Patriotic Purposes Budget of \$17,500.00 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by M. Roberts and passed unanimously.*

TA Jipson reported that the Heritage Commission has been working on the Penstock sign for two years. They have been approved for a trail sign in front of the covered bridge that matches our other granite signs. They are looking to get into the schools for more heritage education, interviewing long-time residents and distributing senior citizen soup bags. There is no budget increase requested.

*R. Mooney moved lines 01-4589-457 and 01-4589-458, seconded by J. Borden. The motion passed unanimously.*

*R. Mooney moved to approve the Other Culture & Recreation Budget of \$4,750.00 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by R. Coffin and passed unanimously.*

**Cemetery:**

Sharon Ciampi was present on behalf of the Cemetery Trustees. They requested \$26,000.00 this year to cover the budget for general maintenance and repairs and for some anticipated legal expenses. They planned clean up of the overgrowth at some of the cemeteries and they held two stone cleaning and repair seminars. There are three legal areas where funds will be needed to determine how to utilize some of the perpetual care funds, managing an abandoned cemetery, and to try to get back some money for a project that was never completed.

*R. Mooney moved line 01-4195-999 for \$21,000.00, seconded by M. Roberts. The motion passed. S. Ciampi abstained.*

There are 23 active cemeteries with 930 people. Weymouth Cemetery on Brown Hill Road has had stones removed from it over the years. There is no way to know how many people are there, but it is probably 10-20. There are rumors that the stones were removed and used for the basement of a house that was just torn down. There has been no caretaker for 45 years. They are trying to build up the records using death certificates and information from Ancestry.com.

*The motion passed unanimously.*

*R. Mooney moved to approve the Cemetery Budget of \$21,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by M. Roberts and passed. S. Ciampi abstained.*

**Land Use (Planning & Zoning):**

Town Planner Sarah Whearty represented the Land Use Department for the Planning and Zoning budget. Detailed information packets were handed out to members at the last meeting. It was an incredible year with a heavy workload and being short staffed. Since she has been on board they have lost employees or struggled to hire new employees. Two long-time employees retired this year and it has been very challenging. They are now finally fully staffed. The Land Use Department does zoning review for all building and driveway permits, in addition to providing assistance with daily processing of mechanical, electrical, generator and plumbing permits. These duties are in addition to handling all of the Planning and Zoning applications.

There was a savings from the long-tenured employees' retirement, so there was not a huge increase in the budget to cover the new full-time Land Use Clerk. Most of the budget lines have not changed. Postage was overspent last year and the rates have increased again. It is a hard number to predict because it depends on caseload and numbers of abutters. Some cost-saving procedures have been put in place and documents are being emailed or picked up instead of being mailed. The Building Department is asking everyone to pickup their permits or

to supply a stamped envelope. The department was planning ahead for a maternity leave, but now that the Town Planner is moving to a new job, the funds can be used to provide an interim planner for part-time coverage during the transition to the new Planner. Training and mileage were reduced and some equipment and printer items were shifted to other lines. The large plotter lease ends in January and then it is owned by the Town. The maintenance contract would cost more than the lease to own payment and they have rarely used the service. Instead there is a little money in the budget if there is a service call needed. The Master Plan line was reduced to \$1.00 to keep the line open. They expect to work with the Lakes Region Planning Commission and other towns to help develop a more realistic budget for the Master Plan. The supply line was also reduced.

*R. Mooney moved lines 01-4191-101 through 01-4191-507, seconded by M. Roberts.*

There was discussion about the Lakes Region Planning Commissioners. The current Belmont representative has not been participating so Belmont does not have any representation. The representative needs to be nominated by the Planning Board and appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The person does not need to be a Board member, just an active community member. The Town Planner currently has a seat on the LRPC TAC (Transportation Technical Advisory Committee) and the Assistant DPW Director is the alternate representative.

*The motion passed unanimously.*

*R. Mooney moved to approve the Land Use Budget of \$392,906.92 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by B. Chapman and passed unanimously.*

#### **Conservation Commission:**

Town Planner Sarah Whearty reported that Land Use Technician Karen Santoro works with the Commission but she was unable to attend this evening due to a family emergency. Commission Chair Denise Naiva was also unable to attend this evening but she wanted the Budget Committee to be reminded that in 2021 the Commission's budget was reduced by \$10,000.00, which was a 43% decrease. There was also a vote so that at the end of the year any surplus funds are returned to the General Fund, not the Conservation Fund. This year the only increase is \$1,500.00 for professional services to have the Ladd Farm property boundaries blazed and painted.

*R. Mooney moved lines 01-4600-101 through 01-4600-506, seconded by M. Roberts.*

R. Coffin asked about invasive species. The invasive species line includes funding for milfoil treatment in Lake Winnisquam and Silver Lake. Some was also used for spraying glossy buckthorn on Town properties to keep it from spreading. Last year it was reported that all of the milfoil in Lake Winnisquam was suspected to be eradicated. One of the things that was a big help are the people who work at the boat ramps around the lake to catch anything before a boat is placed in the water.

*The motion passed unanimously.*

*R. Mooney moved to approve the Conservation Commission Budget of \$16,873.79 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by J. Borden and passed unanimously.*

**Executive:**

TA Jipson explained part of this budget includes two additional Board of Selectmen members for three quarters of 2023. The Administrative Assistant salary was moved to the Assessing budget which makes the budgets more accurate. The vacation buy back line includes all Town Hall staff. This is for people who don't use all of their time off and it has to be accounted for in the budget. The health insurance buyout was increased because there were more employees with spouses who carry the insurance coverage and now there are six employees with buybacks. The amount is \$3,000.00 each. This saves the Town on insurance costs. The health lines cover the Finance, General Assistance, Town Administration, Assessing and Building Departments.

*R. Mitchell moved to amend line 01-4130-315 TOE Health Insurance Buy Out from \$15,000.00 to \$18,000.00 for one additional employee buyout, seconded by M. Roberts. The motion passed unanimously.*

*R. Mooney moved lines 01-4130-101 through 01-4130-999, seconded by J. Borden. The motion passed unanimously.*

*T. LeClair moved to approve the Executive Budget of \$348,769.79 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by R. Mooney and passed unanimously.*

**Legal:**

There were no changes in the Legal budget. Union negotiations and Code Enforcement issues have eaten up a lot of this budget. Code enforcement legal expenses were included in the Building budget for 2023 but were taken from this line in 2022.

*R. Mooney moved line 01-4153-275, seconded by R. Coffin. The motion passed unanimously.*

*R. Mooney moved to approve the Legal Budget of \$35,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by M. Roberts and passed unanimously.*

**Capital:**

Fire Chief Mike Newhall presented the Fire Department's Capital Requests.

*R. Mooney moved line 01-4902-008 FD Utility Truck, seconded by M. Roberts.*

The utility truck is a pickup truck with a plow. It is used to move hose around and has a skid unit in the back for forestry use. It has 78,000 miles and is also used for hydrant plowing. The funds for this line will come out of the Ambulance Revenue Fund. T. LeClair verified that no money for this item comes from tax dollars.

*The motion passed unanimously.*

The department currently has two ambulances, a 2013 and a 2019. The 2013 needs to be replaced. It has 107,000 miles and 6,000 hours of runtime and it is not reliable. They currently have a loaner while there is warranty work being done. The delivery time frame for a new ambulance is 20 months. If it is ordered in March 2023 the Town won't receive it until 2024. Chairman R. Mitchell asked if the existing equipment will last that long. Chief Newhall said they would keep things running. The narrative includes information that there would be a down payment of \$50,000.00 in 2023 and the lease would begin in 2024.

*R. Mooney moved line 01-4902-011 FD Ambulance, seconded by M. Roberts. The motion passed unanimously.*

A couple of fire hoses get worn out every year and they need to be replaced regularly. Big fires need lots of water and there are many rural areas where additional hose may be necessary.

*R. Mooney moved line 01-4902-014 FD Hose Replacement, seconded by M. Roberts. The motion passed unanimously.*

The Fire Department pumper is a 2011 E-1 Typhoon that has been in service since 2011. It is in need of a full refurbish including paint, the compartments, and the engine. It is \$700,000.00 right now to purchase a new one. The department would like to keep this one for another 15 years at a cost of \$225,000.00. There is a new battery system so firefighters are not tethered to the vehicle. The department runs with 12 men 24 hours a day. There are 10-12 call firefighters.

*R. Mooney moved line 01-4902-020 FD Pumper Truck, seconded by M. Roberts.*

T. LeClair asked if this is the first time this truck will be refurbished. Chief Newhall said yes. It will be out of service for about a month. The company they use will get the supplies first and be ready for the truck as soon as it arrives. The Town of Belmont is fortunate to still have two engines while the pumper truck is away for the refurbish.

There is only \$689,000.00 in the ambulance fund right now and there is not enough to cover all of the requests. Some of the expenditures will be bumped out to the end of 2023 in order to replenish the fund.

*The motion passed unanimously.*

*R. Mooney moved to approve the Capital Outlay for Equipment, Vehicles and Machinery of \$903,181.00 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by R. Coffin and passed unanimously.*

Capital Outlay for Building Improvements has nothing listed at this time. The first quote for the remainder of the Mill renovations was \$2,500,000.00. It has been revised and squeezed to \$1,940,000.00. R. Mooney said the Selectboard will probably not bring a bond forward at this time. The project could be phased in floor by floor and/or done by piecemeal. The HVAC is the biggest expense. The plan would be to move the Town Clerk's office to the bottom floor and the air quality definitely needs to be addressed. It is a lot more money than anyone originally thought. The elevator also needs to be looked at because parts are no longer made for it. The frame is fine but the guts need to be replaced. It passed inspection and is not unsafe, but if the elevator goes down once Town Hall has been moved over it would be very difficult.

*R. Mooney moved line 01-4909-022 Environmental Contingency, seconded by M. Roberts.*

This fund can be used for any surprises that pop up. It has been used in the past for disposal of old oil tanks and asbestos removal.

*The motion passed unanimously.*

*R. Mooney moved to approve the Capital Outlay for Environmental Contingency of \$20,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by M. Roberts and passed unanimously.*

*R. Mooney moved the Capital Reserve Transfer lines 01-4915-001 through 01-4915-202, seconded by M. Roberts.*

The Accrued Liability line is primarily used for retirement and includes longevity, sick time, and vacation payouts. The fund will be down to \$16,000.00 by the end of the year. The number has been increased because of anticipated retirements.

The Heavy Equipment line is to be used towards any major repairs or issues that might come up. The truck that was ordered last year has still not arrived. If the prices of new equipment keep going up the department may need to start buying used equipment. R. Mooney noted that DPW does not have the same type of revenue generating fund that the Fire Department does. They have no way to build up their reserves. This type of fund also gives the department the opportunity to take advantage of any great equipment deals that may pop up. The sidewalk plow that was purchased is now used to mow the trails and it has saved the Town \$10,000.00-\$15,000.00 every year. The sidewalk tractor was purchased for \$22,000.00.

The Non Cap Information Technology fund is used to purchase software and computer upgrades that are not included in the annual contract. With some new employees coming on board, there has been a need for new computers, backup batteries, and software.

The Bridge Repair fund is to save for any costly future bridge repairs. There is \$125,888.00 coming in bridge aid funds from the State through Highway Block Grants. That will be allowed to lapse into surplus, and then a Warrant Article used to extract that amount into the Capital Reserve Fund. This does not involve any tax dollars. It is "free" money from the State.

*R. Mooney moved lines 01-4915-008 to 01-4915-603, seconded by B. Chapman.*

S. Ciampi spoke to the request for \$10,000.00 from the Cemetery Trustees. They are trying to save the Weymouth Cemetery, and to save some funds for big projects. They are looking at the Randlett Cemetery and plan to take down the white vinyl at the Church Hill cemetery because the vinyl can't be maintained easily. The granite posts were left behind and can be reused. The Selectmen approved \$5,000.00.

There is a \$300,000.00 request for the Municipal Facilities account. Finance Director Katherine Davis noted there is also \$48,096.62 left in the Police Department bond building account. This will go on the ballot to ask voters to reappropriate those funds towards the Mill renovations. They have verified that it is legal to ask the voters to spend those funds on a similar project. The Municipal Facilities account covers all Town buildings, not just the Mill. The roof at the Fire Department came out of this account. This account is important to be able to address issues at Town buildings without needing to wait a year for it to go on the ballot. This request is unchanged from last year's request.

The Library Building Improvements account will have over \$313,000.00 at the end of the year. There was money left in the Duffy Fund to maintain the existing building. It is on the National Register, so any modifications or additions will need to match. Chairman R. Mitchell proposed it might be more cost-effective to construct a new building elsewhere for the library and turn the existing building into a Town museum. R. Mooney stated people have said they want the library to stay where it is. This is the same \$25,000.00 request as last year.

There was \$750,000.00 requested for the Highway Reconstruction Fund but the Selectmen approved \$500,000.00. R. Mooney explained the Board recommended a one-year reduction in the request. R. Coffin questioned the reason for the reduction. R. Mooney replied that the idea was to reduce the figure for one year to keep the budget down and then bring the amount back up to \$750,000.00 next year. DPW Director C. Clairmont reported that the one section of Seavey Road that was reconstructed this year cost \$450,000.00. There are some other roads that should be reconstructed, but an aggressive shim and overlay has worked well. He is proud of the roads in Belmont compared to other Towns. Supplemental funds from the Highway Block Grant will help take the bite off the amount that was reduced. The Town has been putting away \$750,000.00 for the last 16-17 years but that money does not stretch the



same these days. It is important to keep up with the road maintenance because it saves the Town money. The roads don't need as much salt and it is easier on Police, Fire, DPW and other equipment that travel on the roads.

The Assessing/Property Tax account is to save towards the cost of the sales update next year and the full reassessment in 2024. This is a request for \$75,000.00, which is unchanged from the 2022 budgeted amount.

The Water System Repair & Maintenance Account is offset by revenue from water users and is intended for things like cleaning and painting the water tank. This request for \$100,000.00 is unchanged from the 2022 budgeted amount.

The Dry Hydrants and Cystersns request for \$2,500.00 was unchanged from 2021.

The Non Cap Res Election Equipment account will be used to update some of the ballot counters and replace some of the booths. The original machine was given to us by the State but we will need to save for the next machine. This \$1,000.00 request is unchanged from the 2022 budgeted amount.

The Durrell Mountain Road account gets \$5,000.00 per year paid by Lynch from an agreement the Town has made with the gravel pit located in Gilford. They use Belmont's roads to haul their materials. This year DPW spent \$180,000.00 on Durrell Mountain Road and expects to spend another \$180,000.00 next year. They are trying something new and so far it is working well.

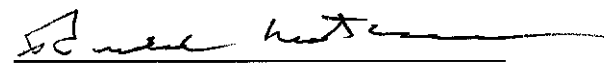
*The motion passed unanimously.*

*R. Mooney moved to approve the Capital Reserve Transfers for \$1,309,388.00 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by M. Roberts and passed unanimously.*

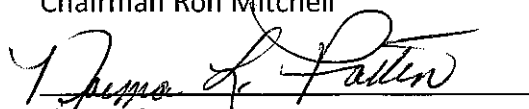
**Next Meeting:** The next meeting date is to be determined.


**Adjournment:**

R. Mooney moved to adjourn at 8:33 pm; seconded by A. Akerstrom. The motion passed unanimously.

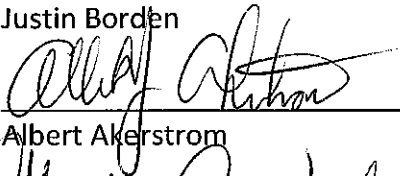
  
Chairman Ron Mitchell

  
Vice Chair Tracey LeClair

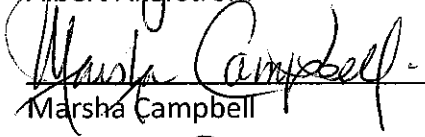
  
Norma Patten

  
Sharon Ciampi

Justin Borden



Albert Akerstrom



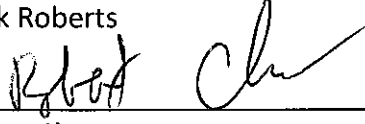
Marsha Campbell



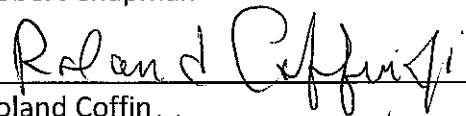
Selectman Ruth Mooney

Lisa Crocker

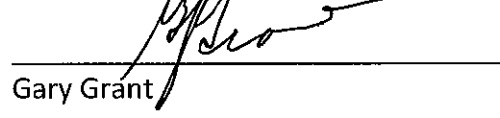
Mark Roberts



Robert Chapman



Roland Coffin



Gary Grant