



Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Workshop Minutes

Monday, October 25, 2021, 5:00 p.m.

Belmont Mill 4th Floor Tioga Meeting Room

Chairman Ruth Mooney called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Also present were Selectman Claude Patten, Selectman Jon Pike, Assistant Town Administrator Alicia Jipson, Library Director Eileen Gilbert, and Library Trustee Mary-Louise Charnley.

Budget Reviews

Library

Library Director Eileen Gilbert commented that the past 18 months has been slow with people coming in or feeling comfortable with coming in. We have seen an uptick in those using the online services that we offer. We did provide activities and gatherings outside. Selectman Patten commented that a 16% increase over last year is high and that it seems to be associated to salaries.

Mrs. Gilbert replied that there has been a change in the position, and the salary has been changed to be more in line with other surroundings libraries. Comparatively we were about \$5 behind in salary. Selectman Pike asked why did the former employee leave? Mary-Louis responded that she left due to receiving a higher salary and the hours fit her schedule better. Selectman Pike commented that we seem to always be waiting to make a change and by then we have already lost an employee. Seems we need to address the salary issues before we lose the employee. Selectman Pike commented that the new Library Assistant looks like the salary has been increased. Mrs. Gilbert responded that the new assistant was hired at the new wages after we took a look at the salary, and she also has a degree. The Board collectively supported the budget and what they do but asked that they go back to the drawing board on the wages to look over the budget further, and if need be, get together with TA Beaudin to assist, before making a final decision.

Selectman Mooney made the following brief statement:

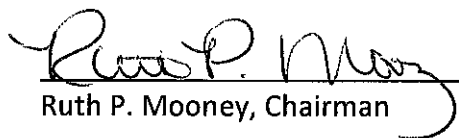
I personally would like to take a moment to comment on the recent video hared on social media; a video clip of the Selectman's meeting held on Monday October 18th was shared which took my comments out of context. The Board of Selectmen were faced with a budget request for

two additional firefighters, the request with wages and benefits was in excess of \$114,000 for a partial year, as a board we chose not to support the request but instead I offered comment on increasing the call salary line to allow more opportunity for the department to encourage student firefighters to join the department. I did not disrespect our Chief or the department, my suggestion, and the Boards subsequent vote on the budget, were a compromise that we felt could be supported in the budget.


When my daughter Alicia was in High School and exploring what she wanted to do after she decided to join the Fire department and absolutely loved it. She joined the Belmont Department and rode with Laconia as well. There were members of the department who took her under their wing, and she decided to go to EMT classes. Her pager would go off at all hours of the night and she would go. I remember her coming home and talking about the experiences of going to calls and there was always something to do to help without being a firefighter. I remember one weekend she was gone both days and I believe they were at Silver Lake, but it was helping out and sandbagging from flooding. Where did the idea of all of this go? When did we stop encouraging the younger people to come and experience the department to hopefully build future firefighters?

I support the Belmont Fire Department and its mission, but I was also elected to be fiscally responsible with the taxpayer's money. We need to continue to seek out grants through State and Federal programs that will assist in funding additional staff. Detailed information needs to be put together showing our departments statistics and members of the department should support their Chief and attend our meetings to offer comment when important issues such as this are discussed so that they can hear firsthand what is said.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.


Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman


Jon Pike, Vice-Chairman


Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman