



Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Meeting Minutes

Monday, December 20, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Belmont Mill, Tioga Meeting Room

Chairman Ruth Mooney called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Also present were Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Claude Patten, Jr., TA Jeanne Beaudin, Assistant TA Alicia Jipson, DPW Director Craig Clairmont, Fire Chief Mike Newhall, and Police Chief Mark Lewandoski.

Those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

Selectman Claude Patten, Jr., moved the minutes of the meeting held on December 6, 2021 as written; seconded by Selectman Jon Pike. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Hearing RSA 31:95-b

TA Beaudin explained that we are here to formally accept a grant in the amount of \$30,000 from the ARPA Asset Management Program. We have retained Underwood Engineering to help us with this project. This is a 100% grant, there is no match requirement.

Chairman Mooney opened the public hearing at 10:00 a.m. There being no questions from the public, she closed the hearing at 10:02 a.m.

Selectman Jon Pike moved to accept the full amount of the ARPA Asset Management grant in the amount \$30,000; the motion was seconded by Selectman Claude Patten, Jr. and the motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Grant Acceptance Spirit of Blue Foundation- TA Beaudin explained that at our last meeting the Police Chief had discussed a grant that they applied for and was awarded. We are here today to formally accept the grant from Spirit of Blue Foundation for equipment with a value of \$8,390 for the Belmont Police Department.

Selectman Jon Pike moved to accept the full amount of grant in the amount \$8,390; the motion was seconded by Selectman Claude Patten, Jr. and the motion passed unanimously.

Acceptance of Grant Writer Proposal- The Gale School was awarded a \$500,000 grant. On November 26, 2021, the Town of Belmont sent out a Request for CDBG Grant Writing Proposals to: Merideth.A.Wilson@dot.nh.gov; nhgrantadmins@googlegroups.com for the Gale School. One proposal was received from Donna Lane. It is the Town's recommendation to select Donna Lane to administer their CDBG grant based on Donna's experience and deems the fee reasonable in accordance with CDFA allowable CDBG grant writing charges.

Selectman Ruth Mooney moved to accept the Grant Writer Proposal from Donna Lane in the amount of \$16,750 that will be paid through the grant that was awarded; the motion was seconded by Selectman Claude Patten, Jr. and the motion passed unanimously.

Exemption for the Disabled- TA Beaudin discussed that she had received an inquiry about the current amount of the Disabled Exemption that the Town currently offers. The current amount of the exemption given is \$50,000 that comes off the total assessed value. The request from the tax payer was to increase the amount of the exemption. This will have to go onto the warrant for approval. Selectman Pike asked if we could abate the school tax portion? TA Beaudin explained that avenue really was not the best option. You can really only increase the amount that you are giving and or change the asset and income guidelines so that more residents qualify. You can also look at a hardship abatement. The Selectmen decided to table this discussion until further information is received from other surrounding towns and the amounts of their exemptions and their income and asset guidelines.

Letter from City of Laconia in support of Gunstock- TA Beaudin received a letter from the City of Laconia where they shared that they adopted a resolution in support of Gunstock. It does not require any action from the Board, it was more of an FYI. Selectman Pike expressed that we should share in support, and he would also ask about them bringing back the discount kid's programs for the school kids as well as the Seniors Citizens. Selectman Mooney expressed that she thinks it would be in their favor to give discounts to seniors and kids in the Belknap area and it should be available all year long. TA Beaudin will send a letter of support to the Gunstock Area Commission with a copy to the County Delegation.

Police Non-Union Wages Discussion- TA Beaudin handed out a packet of wage information that was provided by the Police Chief. TA Beaudin also provided salary data that she compiled. This is a general discussion on the wages and not based on the individuals. Selectman Pike commented that we have already gone through the budget process, and how will these adjustments come into play? TA Beaudin commented that we will have another meeting with the Budget Committee and those changes can be addressed then. Chief Lewandoski commented that we have not made any significant adjustments to the non-union wages in some years. Noting that our town is unique as no other towns carry the case load that we do, we are busier than any other town. Our numbers are continuing to increase not decrease and or stabilize. We have staff that are underpaid and we need to be fair as wages go. If we lose employees in supervisory positions we will be filling it with someone with much less experience. Our newer employees need supervision and guidance from long term dedicated employees. Based on the current salaries if we had to fill these positions, we will not be able to as the wages are too low compared to other towns. The Chief expressed that he feels he was fair in his recommendations, he kept the salary recommendations competitive while not being on the higher side. We have dedicated long term employees and we want to keep them. We have an opportunity to grow this department and become a sought-after department again. TA Beaudin commented that over the past 2 union contracts the union employees have received a 4.5% increase yearly. Our non-union employees throughout the Town have only received a step increase which is only 2%. We have not given COLA increases in 3 years, where union employees have received 4.5% each year. Because of this union employees are surpassing

non-union employees' salary wise and the pay inequality is apparent. Chief also recommended reducing the pay scale from 20 steps to 10 steps. As a whole the proposed budget increase will be roughly \$50,000 to the budget. It is not a huge jump, but it is warranted and we will be more attractive on the management side. Selectman Mooney expressed that she is in favor of the adjustments and knows that we are behind in the wages and we need to catch up and that we need to retain the long term valued employees that we have. Selectman Mooney added that at the last Budget Committee meeting it was brought up that we seemed to have sacrificed in areas such as wages to keep the budget low, but that sacrifice has come at a cost where we are losing employees and or have the potential to lose more employees because of the competitive wage market. Selectman Pike suggested that the Chief look at reducing the special duty pay to \$25,000, reduce the computer budget down to \$6,000, take \$35,000 out of the part-time wages. By making these reductions you will be able to take the hit of the increase in wages. Chief felt that those recommendations were acceptable and that he can work with those new deductions. TA Beaudin noted that with these changes the overall town budget is up about \$600,000 but with reasonable increases such as the bond on the new police station.

Vacation Time Request- TA Beaudin commented that one of the Lieutenants from the Fire Department has brought it to our attention that members of the Fire Department have been unable to use their vacation time, due to covid and covering shifts. They are asking if they could carry over the unused vacation time into 2022 to be used in January. TA Beaudin noted that if we do this for one department then we will need to do this town wide. In the past the Board has on a case by case basis granted carry over. They have also granted a vacation buy back. Fire Chief Newhall asked if this will go towards the 2022 budget if it is carried over. TA Beaudin responded yes it will and will increase the wages. The concern is they are looking at a majority of the dept out on vacation in the month of January, then in January the vacation resets and then at the end of the next year we will be looking at the same issue. TA commented that when covid started in 2020 we did not have the requests for the carry overs, and does not see what has changed from then till now. The Board collectively decided not to grant the vacation carryover.


NHDOT Letter Route 106- Selectman Pike asked TA Beaudin to send a letter to NHDOT in regard to the ongoing property issue on Route 106 and ask that they place no parking signs along the road.

Non-Public

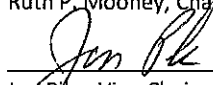
Chairman Mooney moved to enter non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II (c) at 11:07a.m.; roll call was taken and those present and voting were Jon Pike, Ruth Mooney and Claude Patten. TA Beaudin and ATA Jipson were also present.

Chairman Mooney closed the non-public session at 11:45 a.m.

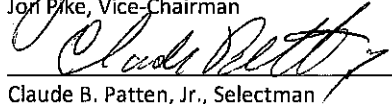
The meeting adjourned at 11:46 a.m.



Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman



Jon Pike, Vice-Chairman



Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman