



Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 13, 2023, 10:00 am
Belmont Mill, 14 Mill Street
Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Ruth Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Claude Patten, Jr., TA Alicia Jipson, Assessing Admin Colleen Akerman, DPW Director Craig Clairmont, Police Chief Mark Lewandoski, Police Lieutenant Evan Boulanger, General Assistance Director Donna Cilley, Fire Chief Mike Newhall, Cemetery Trustee Sharon Ciampi, and Planning Board Member Kevin Sturgeon.

Those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

SAFER Grant

Acknowledgment and understanding of the terms of the Grant Award Reduction for SAFER Award from FEMA for two new SAFER Grant funded positions in the Fire Department.

The Fire Department applied for a SAFER grant in March 2021 to add more staff. Their initial application was for six positions, and they were awarded the grant for six positions. As of November 2022, the Fire Department had already added two additional full-time people. The Board was concerned that a \$1.5 million hit to the budget after the grant period ended would be too much for Belmont to sustain at one time. The Board instructed TA Alicia Jipson to submit a request to FEMA requesting that the award be reduced to hiring two new staff members and not six. FEMA responded and accepted the request for reduction, but they need a decision by March 16, 2023, so this was a time sensitive item. The new terms and award amount need to be accepted by the Board, then it will go back to the Fire Department and a public hearing will be held.

Selectman Jon Pike moved to accept the official new terms of the amended FEMA SAFER Grant to include two SAFER funded positions at the Fire Department for a 3-year period with the adjusted award of \$491,611.32; seconded by Selectman Claude Patten. The motion passed unopposed.

Fire Chief Mike Newhall thanked the Board.

TA Jipson stated the original grant would have given until February to advertise and hire new staff, and the performance period starts tomorrow where wage reimbursement can begin. The positions can be advertised and filled as soon as possible. The grant can be extended later to get full use of the three-year term.

COPS Grant Application – Request from Chief Lewandoski

Police Chief Mark Lewandoski explained that a grant opportunity opened for the COPS grant. It is a grant that will bring police officers here for three years. Lieutenant Evan Boulanger jumped on it because he has the grant skills and knowledge. They are here to request that the Board agree to move forward with the grant process. It is a very competitive grant and the sooner the application is submitted, the better our chances are. TA Jipson has been a help with this, and everyone has been on the same page.

The federal government releases certain funds for police departments every year. It is about \$220 million. This is a three-year grant that uses attrition, and it is meant to have the Town budget get used to the positions over time. The goal is to retain these officers at the end of the grant. They are asking for a 12-month mandatory retention period, so everyone has to be on the same page. There are stipulations for what can be applied for based on White House priorities. They are looking to cover police-based responses for people in crisis/mental health issues. Currently multiple officers are glued to a property until a mental health episode is cleared once the State arrives. Those incidents are taking officers off the streets. Right now, there are 16 full-time staff. New hire Judy Estes was hired as a patrol position but moved into Detectives. They are down a patrolman on the road. Detective Estes just arrived, and she is already over her head in investigations. There is a lot of detective work generated in Town. It takes time to handle felonies. The patrolmen handle misdemeanors. We have three detectives who are busy, and we don't see that changing. The patrol side needs to work harder because they are one person down. They have been using a part-time officer to help offset the busyness. Both grant positions would be patrol and would not get reassigned. The dynamics in Belmont have changed and more personnel are needed.

Chairman Mooney asked about the request for two officers. Chief Lewandoski said they can use more than two, but two would be a help. Last Friday during a SWAT call the Chief was the only one in the building. There were people out sick, on vacation and out for court proceedings.

Selectman Pike asked what the timeframe is. The application deadline is May 11, 2023. If the grant is awarded, they would allow five years for the three-year grant in order to handle the budget. The initial hiring could be moved to 2024 and it does not need to be acted on right now.

Chairman Mooney asked for clarification on what is covered under the grant. The grant covers \$125,000 for three years for salary only. These would be entry level Step 1 positions. They need to be uncertified, and the Town will need to train them. Lieutenant Boulanger explained their salary would be covered while they are at school. And because these positions do not currently exist in the department, it won't be a burden for staff to send them to school at the same time. He thinks we have a small to medium chance of getting the grant. Our crime rate is above the NH average and we have a rural designation and community-based hires, so

they are hopeful. This grant includes the involvement of State Attorney General's Office so there is a local contact for this grant.

Selectman Pike moved to authorize the Police Department to proceed with the COPS Grant application for two additional patrol personnel; seconded by Selectman Claude Patten. The motion passed unopposed.

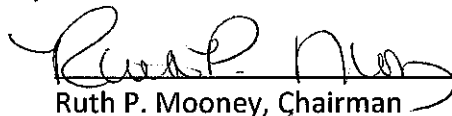
Next Meeting: The next regular meeting will be **Monday, March 20, 2023 at 10:00 am.**

Non-Public:

Chairman Mooney moved to enter non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II c at 10:21 am. Selectman Pike seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. Roll call was taken and those present and voting were Jon Pike, Ruth Mooney and Claude Patten, Jr. Also present were TA Alicia Jipson and Police Chief Lewandoski. Discussion was had in regards to the Police Chiefs contract and seeking legal opinion on an amendment, but the BOS felt that there was not a need to make any changes at this time. The Board returned to public session at 11:00 am.

Adjournment:


Selectman Mooney moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:02 ; seconded by Selectman Patten and the motion passed unanimously.



Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman



Jon Pike, Vice Chairman



Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman