



# Office of Board of Selectmen

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**Selectmen's Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, June 21, 2023, 10:00 am**  
**Belmont Mill, 14 Mill Street**  
**Tioga Meeting Room**

Present were Chairman Ruth Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Claude (Sonny) Patten, Jr., Selectman Travis O'Hara, Selectman Sharon Ciampi, TA Alicia Jipson, Assessing Admin Colleen Akerman, DPW Director Craig Clairmont, Building & Grounds Supervisor Patrick Golden, Police Captain Stephen Akerstrom, Police Lieutenant Evan Boulanger, Acting Fire Chief Deb Black, Fire Lieutenant Sean McCarty, CEO Mark Ekberg, Land Use Tech Rod Cameron, Budget Committee Member Al Akerstrom and Planning Board Member Kevin Sturgeon. Also present was Vice President Rob Tozier from KRT Appraisal. Via ZOOM were Fire Lieutenant Sean McCarty, Parks & Recreation Director Danielle St. Onge, Finance Director Katherine Davis, Town Planner Karen Santoro, Librarian Eileen Gilbert and TCTC Assistant Jenn Thomas.

Those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **Minutes – 06/05/2023**

*Selectman Jon Pike moved the minutes of the meeting held on June 5, 2023, as written; seconded by Selectman Sonny Patten, and the motion passed (4-0-1). Selectman Travis O'Hara abstained.*

## **Public Hearing – Unanticipated Revenue**

This public hearing is being held in accordance with RSA 31:95-b to accept unanticipated revenue from the sale of municipal property in the amount of \$23,040.00. \$10,652.00 will be earmarked for the purchase of gear racks and self-secure rope system for the Fire Department.

The Chairman opened the public hearing at 10:02 am.

Acting Fire Chief Deb Black clarified that it is a "self-rescue" rope system that will allow firefighters to assist victims or themselves.

Selectman Patten asked about the equipment that was sold. It was an old utility vehicle Ford 350 pickup, the ARGO, a plow and the water tank from the ARGO.

With no public comment, the Chairman closed the public hearing at 10:04 am.

*Selectman O'Hara moved to accept unanticipated revenue from the sale of municipal property in the amount of \$23,040.00 in accordance with RSA 31:95-b. \$10,652.00 will be earmarked for the purchase of gear racks and self-rescue rope system for the Fire Department.*

*The motion was seconded by Selectman Sharon Ciampi. Roll Call 1: J. Pike – aye, S. Patten – aye, T. O’Hara – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).*

**New Business**

**KRT Property Appraisal Sales Update Q&A Session**

KRT Vice President Rob Tozier was here to explain what is involved in a sales update and how the information comes to be. This will not be an opportunity to ask questions about individual properties. It is to have a better understanding of why assessment values increase and decrease. There are some handouts of a PowerPoint presentation available. PowerPoint is also available on our website through the Assessing Department page.

Mr. Tozier is the project manager for the Belmont revaluation. KRT started in 2010 and provides services throughout New England. They run about 10 projects per year with a staff of approximately 20 people. Recent contracts with Belmont include a 2019 cyclical revaluation with data collection and a full field review, 2022 and 2023 statistical revaluation using ratio studies to update values, and a 2024 statistical revaluation with a full field review.

Recent changes to the overall market in Belmont include:

2014-2019	24.3% appreciation
2019-2022	68.9% appreciation
2022-2023	19.2% appreciation
2023-2024	TBD but estimated at 19.2% average

The values from Belmont sales from 04/01/2022 through 03/31/2023 seem to indicate increases in non-water properties 13%, water properties 33%, condominiums 17%, manufactured homes 21.9% and land 16.2%. Properties are sitting a little longer, but they are selling at good prices.

Chairman Mooney asked if this is normal or if it is excessive. Are other towns having the same changes? Mr. Tozier replied yes, rural New Hampshire is seeing lots of moves from cities to towns. Lower-valued properties are rising higher than other properties right now because they are affordable.

Ms. Barbara Eckardt from 14 Walnut Street asked how to decipher the codes on the property tax cards. There is a sample tax card document with data codes that can be provided. That document will be made available on the Town website.

Mr. Brian Gardner from 173 Hoadley Road asked if the town has considered impact fees. TA Jipson said she thinks it has been brought to the Planning Board but it hasn’t gone any further than that. Ms. Linda Frawley stated the last master plan had impact fees that were put on the ballot but the article failed. She wanted to know if there has been any update on the cost of community services and taxpayers bearing the brunt of taxes rather than sharing with developers. Selectman Pike explained the Town voted a few years ago to give a break to

commercial businesses coming in and doing new construction. They get a break for the first five years and that has helped inspire more commercial growth. It is starting to help with the tax base.

Mr. Kevin Sturgeon noted that in 2007 the tax rate fell by 1/3 but values went up 60%. We have seen this happen before.

TA Jipson said once KRT has finalized all of the values they will send a letter with the old value and the new value. There will be a limited two-week window to call them to schedule an appointment for an informal hearing before the process must close to work on setting the tax rate. Everyone should be checking their mail for a letter from the Town of Belmont.

Mr. Tom Murphy asked if different neighborhoods are taken into account in the values. Mr. Tozier said yes, there are adjustments for more desirable neighborhoods.

Ms. Linda Sweeney of 109 Tucker Shore Road asked whether reviewing some of the policies for how manufactured homes are assessed such as year-round vs. seasonal would be beneficial. It was explained that manufactured homes are not assessed based on year-round vs. seasonal use. It is still a permanent residence. Generally, the owner of the manufactured home pays the taxes on the home and the organization pays the land tax. For seasonal campgrounds with RV unit's owners can choose to register their RV or pay property tax on the unit.

#### **Police Department Promotion - Joel Pickowicz**

Police Captain Stephen Akerstrom reported that Officer Joel Pickowicz was promoted to Corporal on Monday. This will allow better supervision of patrol units and help disperse the duties of supervisors. Corporal Pickowicz has been with the Town since 2007.

*Selectman Patten moved to promote Officer Pickowicz from Master Patrol Officer to rank of Patrol Corporal as of July 19, 2023; seconded by Selectman Pike. Roll Call 2: S. Ciampi – aye, T. O’Hara – aye, S. Patten – aye, J. Pike – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).*

Captain Akerstrom announced that as of next Monday Scott Corbett from the Sheriff’s Department will be joining the department. He has 19 years of experience.

#### **Fire Department Completion of Probation - James Hayes**

Acting Chief Black announced that probationary Fire Fighter James Hayes has completed probation and is now a permanent member of the department.

A new fire fighter, Cam Stevens, was hired through the SAFER grant and started this past Monday. Lieutenant Huestis resigned effective July 9, 2023. The position has been posted in-house and will then be posted outside. Interviews for new Lieutenants will be held the end of July.

#### **Fire Department New Hire - Dalton Brown - SAFER Grant Position**

*Selectman Pike moved to approve the hiring of Dalton Brown to fill one of the SAFER grant positions at the Fire Department; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Roll Call 3: S. Patten – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, J. Pike – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).*

### **Employee Appreciation Day**

TA Jipson requested the Board's blessing to start organizing an Employee Appreciation Day because we have not had one in some time. She would like to include health and benefits vendors and recognize employees for their years of service. There are many new employees to welcome as well. September is a good time of year to host under the pavilion.

*Selectman Pike moved to authorize TA Jipson to organize an Employee Appreciation event for Fall 2023; seconded by Chairman Mooney. Roll Call 4: T. O'Hara – aye, J. Pike – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, S. Patten – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).*

### **Kevin Sturgeon Request to speak on Infrastructure**

Mr. Sturgeon did some research on the Concord Street water lines and determined they are over 70 years old, and the age and condition of pipes affects the look of water at the faucet. He asked what type of plan there is for infrastructure improvements in future years. Selectman Pike said there are none that he is aware of. Mr. Sturgeon suggested if there is a plan for roads, there should be a plan for infrastructure/water/sewer. Selectman Pike recommended bringing this up at a Planning Board meeting as something to review for the CIP [Capital Improvement Plan].

Selectman Ciampi asked if infrastructure is part of the Master Plan. Selectman Pike said yes. The Master Plan has not been updated since 2002. It comes from the Planning Department. Ms. Frawley said typically a CIP is based on the community master plan, which is what citizens want to happen. When the Plan was last worked on there was a diverse group. She recommended contacting the state planning office with regards to infrastructure and the Master Plan. Ms. Frawley can help inform us as to what worked for the last plan and what did not work. There is lots of talent in our community.

Mr. Sturgeon said he has a lot of history on the water lines and would be happy to share.

### **Other New Business**

#### **CEO Update**

CEO Mark Ekberg reported July 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> hearing dates for 130 Depot Road and 752 Laconia Road. It appears 752 Laconia Road may be digging the septic with no permit. DES has been contacted. 194 Gilmanton Road is scheduled for the ZBA meeting next Wednesday.

Our attorneys, the Mitchell Group, have instructed CEO Ekberg not to reach out to Guardian Asset Management or their attorneys with regards to 15 Johnson Street. They stated any type of communication from the CEO in the future regarding the property will result in them removing themselves from representing the Town on this matter. The Mitchell Group asked for

a response to their correspondence, but CEO Ekberg wanted to speak with the Board before replying. CEO Ekberg explained he was trying to let them know the property had been accessed so that it could be resecured, and he did not think it was a breach of ethics or protocols. TA Jipson stated that once things moved forward in the hearing process Deutsche Bank requested to not communicate with CEO Ekberg. Chairman Mooney was concerned about the cost for CEO Ekberg to communicate through our attorneys about things such as open windows at the property. TA Jipson said those costs are recoverable. The courts are trying to determine who owns the property. If it is the bank they will move forward and clean it up. Our attorneys will let us know what is going on, but we need to wait through the discovery process. They have asked for some professional courtesy to communicate between the attorneys. Chairman Mooney said it isn't fast enough. TA Jipson responded that we can't control court timeframes and the Town has a good working relationship with the Mitchell Group. Selectman Pike said if there is a safety issue with the property CEO Ekberg should contact our attorney. This is still court-involved, and we need to work with our attorneys. He instructed CEO Ekberg to keep everything in writing and keep it in the file.

CEO Ekberg reported there is quite a bit of unpermitted work happening around town and they are trying to get owners to pull permits. They have been very busy.

#### **Land Donation – Dutile Road – Map/Lot 218-042-001-000**

There is a property owner who would like to donate a small landlocked parcel of land to the Town if the Board would like to consider accepting it. It is not conservation land and could be combined with other adjacent parcels the Town owns to be sold in the future. The small lots were split up in the 1950s before zoning. Other similar parcels have been donated to the Town over the years and the Town owns the larger surrounding parcel. There are a few remaining landlocked parcels.

*Selectman Pike moved to accept the donation of parcel 218-042-001-000; seconded by Selectman O'Hara, and the motion passed. (5-0)*

This item will be brought forward at a future meeting to formally accept the parcel.

#### **New LU Tech**

Rod Cameron, our new Land Use Technician, was introduced to the Board. The land donation will probably become one of his projects.

#### **Trailhead Sign**

The Heritage Commission has been working on a new granite sign for the trailhead. It should be installed on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Commission wanted to thank Craig from DPW and Patrick and the Building & Grounds crew and the Board.

#### **Belknap County ARPA Funds**

TA Jipson received an email from Belknap County about an ARPA funds excess. One of their proposals is to give grants of \$20,000 to the towns. They should be voting on it June 27<sup>th</sup>.

The funds would need to be spent on “the provisions of public service”. Towns can decide how to spend the funds on something they would otherwise have to raise taxes for.

### **Old Business**

#### **Other - Infrastructure**

Ms. Frawley wanted to add comments re: infrastructure and planning with regards to Cotton Hill Road. She commended the DPW for keeping the road and ditches clean. The planning and zoning for the road is different between Belmont, Gilford and Laconia. Their load limits are different. There is lots of construction and Belmont is used as a shortcut. There used to be a “No Thru Trucks” sign. The road on our end is bad because of clear cutting on the Gilford end. We are paying for development in Gilford and Laconia. The town should consider slowing down the traffic and coordinating with Gilford on the road limits, or consider repaving the road.

#### **65 Dearborn Street Auction Update**

The property sold for \$66,000 on June 8<sup>th</sup> and should close in 30 days. Chairman Mooney said that should cover what was due in back taxes and fees and removal of the buildings. The buyers indicated they plan to put up a house quickly, which will get on the tax rolls. By law the Town cannot keep any more funds than were spent. If there are additional funds, they will need to find the previous owners/heirs to return any other funds.

#### **Other Old Business None**

**Next Meeting** The next regular meeting will be **Wednesday, July 5, 2023, at 10:00 am.**

#### **Non-Public**

*Selectman O’Hara moved to enter non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II (a & c) at 11:05 am; seconded by Selectman Patten. Roll Call T. O’Hara – aye, J. Pike – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, S. Patten – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).*

Those present and voting were Ruth Mooney, Jon Pike, Claude Patten, Jr., Travis O’Hara and Sharon Ciampi. Also present were TA Alicia Jipson, Kevin Sturgeon.

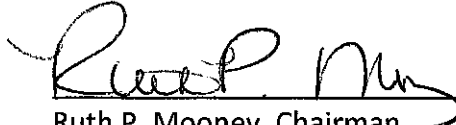
K. Sturgeon wanted to voice a complaint about a Department the BOS instructed Kevin to make a formal complaint in writing to the TA, for her to address.

K. Sturgeon left the meeting. Discussion was had on granting a late submission for a Disabled Exemption, the Board voted 3-2 to allow the late filing of the application. Discussion was also had on a request for a wage increase by a department head, Selectman O’Hara motioned to table the discussion till further information is had; seconded by Selectman Pike and the motion passed unanimously.

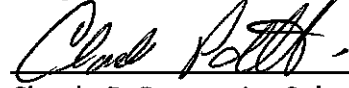
The Board returned to public session at 11:45 am.

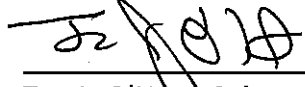
**Adjournment**

Selectman Pike moved to adjourn the meeting at 11: 45 am seconded by Selectman Patten Roll call: T. O'Hara – aye, J. Pike – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, S. Patten – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).

  
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Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman

  
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Jon Pike, Vice Chairman

  
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Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman

  
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Travis O'Hara, Selectman

  
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Sharon Ciampi, Selectman