



Office of Board of Selectmen

143 Main Street, P.O. Box 310, Belmont, New Hampshire 03220-0310
Telephone: (603) 267-8300 Fax: (603) 267-8327

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 2, 2023, 9:00 am
Belmont Mill, 14 Mill Street
Tioga Meeting Room

BOS Work Session – 9:00am

Present were Chairman Ruth Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Claude (Sonny) Patten, Jr., Selectman Travis O'Hara, Selectman Sharon Ciampi and TA Alicia Jipson.

The Board met with Bonnet Page & Stone and discussed the Mill renovation project.

Regular Meeting – 10:00am

The Board and TA Jipson were joined by Assessing Admin Colleen Akerman, Building & Grounds Supervisor Patrick Golden, Police Chief Mark Lewandoski, Interim Fire Chief Deb Black, CEO Mark Ekberg, Town Planner Karen Santoro, General Assistance Director Donna Cilley and Fire Lieutenant Tom Murphy. Via ZOOM were Finance Director Katherine Davis, Librarian Eileen Gilbert, Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector Jenn Thomas and Town Clerk/Tax Collector Assistants Leigh Smith and Jenny Place.

Those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes of the Public Meeting – 07/19/2023

Selectman Jon Pike moved the minutes of the meeting held on July 19, 2023 as written; seconded by Selectman Travis O'Hara, and the motion passed (5-0).

New Business

Proposals for use of County ARPA Funds:

Department Heads were asked for input on possible uses for these funds from the County. TA Alicia Jipson and Finance Director Katherine Davis suggest using them for the Mill.

Police Chief Mark Lewandoski explained his request for portable radios. The newer ones they have are not new enough. They need a total of six for all first line responders, but this grant would cover the cost of four at \$17,907.44. If the funds were granted it would take 8 to 10 months to get these radios. If the funds are not granted the radios will go on the CIP. Using the ARPA funds would not impact tax dollars. Selectman Pike asked if this cost was after the allowance for the old radios. Chief Lewandoski said yes, this is a net figure.

DPW Director Craig Clairmont suggested stipends for all employees. A decision would need to be made on whether this would cover full-time/part-time/seasonal employees. It would result in approximately \$200 before taxes for each employee.

Building and Grounds Supervisor Patrick Golden submitted a request for two commercial mowers for the Town. One of their current mowers has lots of hours on it and problems with welds on the frame, and the other mower is only a lightweight residential mower. They mow over 20 lawns per week from the trails and the bridges, to Sargent Park, and the pump stations. There is some rough terrain. With the right maintenance schedule, the new mowers would last 8-10 years. The old mowers could be sold to bring the costs down. Belmont Hardware has two mowers for \$9,400 each and MME has mowers for \$9,900 each. Chairman Ruth Mooney asked if the mowers are not granted through the ARPA funds if they would be part of the CIP or the budget. B&G Supervisor Golden said they will need to be put in the budget for next year. They will make it through this year with the old mowers, but they are concerned about next year.

Fire Department Lieutenant Tom Murphy explained they requested ARPA funds directly from the County in 2021 for two portable floating pumps. The pumps would be used for forest fires and feed about 200 feet into the woods from a small pond. They also asked for two battery operated blowhard fans to clear smoke out of building fires quickly. It would give first responders a good view for getting into the structure. The request was denied by the County. They would like to use some of the ARPA funds for one pump and one fan for a total of \$7,909. Chairman Mooney asked if these items would be in the CIP or the budget if not granted. Interim Fire Chief Deb Black said yes, they are looking to budget for one pump and three fans so that each vehicle could have a fan. Selectman O'Hara asked Lieutenant Murphy if he had a copy of the letter originally submitted to the County. He said yes and will provide one to Selectman O'Hara as requested.

It was the consensus of the board to vote on these requests at the next meeting.

NH Humane Society & Chewy.com Donation

TA Jipson had an e-mail from the New Hampshire Humane Society a week ago about a large donation they received from chewy.com. Last year they received the same donation and individuals from across the state were invited to come get items. This year they opened the donations up to partnering communities. Last Saturday DPW Director Clairmont took a one-ton truck and forklift to pick up two pallets of miscellaneous pet items. On Monday TA Jipson, Chairman Mooney, Building and Grounds crew, Police Department and DPW unloaded the two pallets into the Mill building.

The intention for this type of partnership is that Towns will know who is in need. General Assistance Director Donna Cilley has some people that she is working with, and TA Jipson set up a table at National Night Out to give out some of the miscellaneous items. The churches will also know people who need items. We will work on reaching out to veterans, the elderly and those in need first and then if there are leftovers, open things up to the public. Some items will go to the

food pantries. Larger bags of pet food can be split up into smaller bags (unlike food for humans). This is a great donation of unexpired name-brand items. Some of the items included are dog food, cat food, bird food and cat litter. The Town very much appreciates the donation and thanks the NH Humane Society and chewy.com.

Donation of Land to Town of Belmont:

There is a tiny piece of land known as map/lot 218-042-001-000 in the middle of a larger parcel owned by the Town (map/lot 217-038-000-000) off on Dutile Road. This property could be sold or subdivided in the future if the Town can acquire all of the pieces. The Board may want to do a deed and title search. Chairman Mooney suggested they wait until all of the lots are acquired and worry about it then. There was discussion about whether any previous lots have had a title search or not. The Board suggested the Town reach out to the other owners to see if they would like to donate their landlocked parcels or continue to pay their tax bills. TA Jipson believes former Land Use Technician Rick Ball may have drawn up a quitclaim deed for the last one of these donations.

There is a second property out on Witham Road, map/lot 211-048-000-000, that the owner would like to donate. It is a 50x50 parcel that used to have a radio tower. The owner said the Town can take the lot by donation or tax deed because he will no longer pay the taxes on the parcel. He said that in the past he was told if the lot was cleaned up and the tower removed the Town would want the parcel. Selectman Pike said it is used for a snow dump. Town Planner Karen Santoro said DPW turns around there. She and DPW Director Clairmont went out to look at it yesterday. Acquiring the parcel would help the DPW so that they are accessing Town property rather than private property. The Board agreed it would be a good acquisition.

TA Jipson said a public hearing will be needed to accept gifts of public property.

1st Issue Tax Bill Collection Update:

Before Town Clerk/Tax Collector Cynthia DeRoy left for vacation, she reported that 95% of tax bills have been paid. General Assistance Director Donna Cilley said TC/TC DeRoy worked creatively with many individuals in town and did an amazing job. TC/TC DeRoy is not fully retiring and this type of creative program will continue under her tutelage. There appears to be \$573,000 in uncollected taxes. GA Director Cilley said some of those are applicants working on receiving recovery funds. TC/TC DeRoy sent letters with information on how to apply to try to publicize resources available to low- and moderate-income property owners struggling with mortgages, taxes, water, or sewer bills. The applications can be overwhelming but there a lot of it is redundant. It is a collaborative effort to assist with the process. Chairman Mooney said this is the behind the scenes work of Town employees and what they try to do for the residents of our Town.

Town Resignations/Job Openings:

It was previously announced that our Finance Director Katherine Davis has given her resignation and she will be here until August 18th. We are still looking for a new Finance Director. There was another resignation from the Police Department, so there are two openings there.

There are two possible resignations at the Fire Department and the Lieutenant position was filled by promoting Firefighter Rick Raper from in house. That will leave three firefighter positions open. The Highway Department had a retirement and still has another open position, which leaves two open positions in the DPW.

Budget Meeting Schedule:

TA Jipson reported that all Department Heads, commissions and boards received their budgets and CIP memos on August 1st as scheduled. They are due to TA Jipson by September 1st for review and discussion. They will be brought to the BOS in October. Those meetings are typically held during the day. There was discussion about scheduling the additional October meetings and it was the consensus of the Board to hold the following special Budget Meetings:

October 10, 2023 at 6:00pm with the Library, Health Agencies and General Assistance.

October 11, 2023 at 10:00am.

October 16, 2023 at 10:00am.

October 17, 2023 at 10:00am.

October 23, 2023 at 10:00am

October 24, 2023 at 10:00am (if needed).

National Night Out Update:

The National Night Out was held last night on August 1st and was supported by the Police Department and Fire Department. DPW also attended. There was a Fire Department demonstration, and Rotary Club was there with hot dogs. The Girl Scouts were there, the pet donations were distributed, and the Police Department gave away many bike helmets. It was a well-attended event.

Other New Business

Fire Department Update:

Interim Fire Chief Black noted again that the Lieutenant position is being filled in-house by Firefighter Rick Raper. This leaves one position open and there are two more anticipated openings. The Fire Department thanked the Police Department for the invitation for National Night Out. They will still be holding the Old Home Day Barbecue and will have a fried dough booth. Lieutenant Murphy will emcee the race and the parade, and there will be a truck in the parade. The Fire Department will cover the fireworks that evening as well. Recently the Fire Department visited Belmont Elementary School and sprayed students with water from the truck. There was also a truck showing at the library for the kids camp and the library group, and townspeople also stopped by. Things are steady at the department and they have been busy doing inspections for lots of new businesses. The Belknap Mall is filling up with a variety of businesses. The black car has been labeled and is now a twin to the other car. Hanser Auto in Tilton completed the work for \$2,600. The first car was \$5,300 and the car was gone for months. Selectman Sharon Ciampi commented on how much fun the Belmont Elementary School visit was and the kids had a ball.

Heritage Commission Community Awards:

The Heritage Commission asked if the Board of Selectmen would like to make nominations or have any input on the annual community awards the Commission gives out. It was the consensus of the Board to leave things the same as they are now. The Board will help honor award recipients at a meeting as they have done in the past.

NHPDIP Update:

The current rate is 5.33%. Last month the General Fund yielded \$34,634.70 in interest. So far the General Fund has yielded a total of \$95,537.38 in interest and the Sewer Fund has yielded \$2,215. Finance Director Davis will be moving over all but \$1,000,000 when she leaves so that we do not have to worry about our cash balance until someone else fills her position. Right now, the money stays in the PDIP account as long as possible and we move it over when our cash balance is low. Our Town Treasurer is on our accounts and Finance Director Davis will be removed from all of the Town accounts when she leaves.

Mitchell Municipal Group Correspondence:

Mitchell Group has been our Town Attorney for many years. Walter Mitchell will be retiring in September, but municipal law services will continue to be provided by Laura Spector-Morgan, Joe Driscoll, and Naomi Butterfield.

Liability of Municipal Executives – RSA 31:104-106:

TA Jipson and GA Director Cilley recently attended a General Assistance Conference. They learned how it was important to protect ourselves by ratifying or adopting some of the state statutes for personal liability of elected officials, board and commission members and others working in an official capacity for the Town. Fire and Police have their own protections. In a “lawsuit happy world” ratifying these three statutes provides another layer of protection. The Board of Selectmen will need to make and approve a motion, which will provide coverage to all boards and elected officials and those working in an official capacity for the Town.

Chairman Mooney moved that the Board of Selectmen confirm by a roll call vote, that the Town of Belmont adopt RSA 31:104, 31:105 and 31:106 to provide immunity and indemnify all Board of Selectmen, other elected officials, employees, agents, as well as appointed officials who serve on committees and boards within the Town of Belmont; specifically covering immunity from civil liability for discretionary acts, according to RSA 31:104, indemnification for costs of defense of civil suits, according to RSA 31:105 and indemnification for civil rights claims, according to RSA 31:106. The motion was seconded by Selectman Sonny Patten. Roll Call 1: J. Pike – aye, S. Patten – aye, T. O’Hara – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).

GA Director Cilley said she will also let the School Board know about this.

Old Business

workcampNE Update:

This group arrived here last week and has been seen working around Town on different properties. Last week they invited the residents they are working with to a dinner. TA Jipson and Selectman Ciampi attended and were impressed with the great conversations, and everyone was pleasant, kind and smiling. The Building Department worked to help with permits and inspections and some of the work was only cosmetic. Selectman Ciampi was happy to learn more about the program and said the group was very appreciative of Belmont and they are having a good experience here. They would like to come back.

Old Home Day:

There will not be another meeting before Old Home Day. A decision needs to be made about the Board of Selectmen and the parade. Selectman O’Hara stated he has his own individual spot in the parade and will not be with the Board during the parade. Selectman Ciampi stated she has a group of children she will be walking with in the parade. The rest of the Board will ride together and give out candy.

CEO Update:

CEO Mark Ekberg reports continued delays with the court proceedings for 15 Johnson Street. Counsel is disappointed with the delay but will keep us posted.

The next court hearing for 752 Laconia Road and 130 Depot Street will be held on August 16, 2023. Inspection at 130 Depot Street revealed lots of buried materials, tires and steel. There is more there than expected and the attachment should be increased. The attachment for 752 Laconia Road is appropriate. Selectman Pike asked if things are recorded with photographs and CEO Ekberg confirmed they are.

Parade Route Change:

Selectman Pike asked about the change to the parade route from previous years. Chief Lewandoski explained it is due in part to staffing at the intersections, and it was more difficult to get the State permit to close off part of Route 140. Overtime officers would be needed, and we don’t have enough. It is a safety issue to reroute traffic at intersections without manning them with staff. In prior years there were volunteers from the Explorers who assisted but we no longer have Explorers.

Other Old Business None

Public Comment None

Next Meeting- The next regular meeting will be **Wednesday, August 23, 2023, at 10:00 am.** This is a change due to there being 5 Wednesdays in August.

Non-Public

Chairman Mooney moved to enter non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II (a and c) at 11:15 am; 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).

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

Discussion was had regarding the Fire Chief position; no decisions were made.

Selectman Pike motioned to continue the non-public session to Friday at 8:00 am; seconded by Selectman O’Hara.

Vote in favor 5-0

Adjournment:

Selectman T. O’Hara moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Selectman Pike.

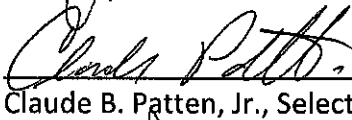
Vote in favor 5-0



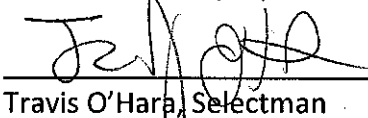
Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman



Jon Pike, Vice Chairman



Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman



Travis O’Hara, Selectman



Sharon Ciampi, Selectman