



Office of Board of Selectmen

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Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 5, 2023, 6:30 p.m.
Belmont Mill
Corner Meeting House Room

Present were TA Alicia Jipson, Assessing Administrator Colleen Akerman, DPW Director Craig Clairmont, Fire Chief Deb Black, Parks & Rec Director Danielle St. Onge, Selectmen's Representative Ruth Mooney, Chairman Ron Mitchell, Vice Chair Tracey LeClair, Mark Roberts, Albert Akerstrom, Marsha Campbell, Bob Chapman, Fred Wells, Jessica Fleck and Kevin Sturgeon. Via Zoom were Shauna Foster from New Beginnings, Tarah Bergeron from CASA, Beth Vachon from Lakes Region Mental Health Center and Bojra Alvarez de Toledo from Waypoint.

Absent: Members Marc Zimmerman and Justin Borden.

TA Alicia Jipson announced the resignation of member Lisa Crocker.

Approval of Minutes:
November 28, 2023:

Albert Akerstrom moved the minutes of the meeting held on November 28, 2023 as written; seconded by Kevin Sturgeon. The motion passed (9-0-1). Tracey LeClair abstained.

Health Agencies #19:

Ruth Mooney moved line 01-4415-342 for Lakes Region Mental Health Center for \$12,000.00; seconded by T. LeClair.

Beth Vachon, present via Zoom, explained that Lakes Region Mental Health Center serves Belknap and southern Stafford County with 24 towns total. They are a private non-profit that sees 4,000 patients per year. In 2023, they have already served 270 Belmont residents and provided \$26,132 in charity care. Their request is based on the number of clients from Belmont accessing services. Their agency serves the most vulnerable population, regardless of their ability to pay. About 70% of their budget is for Medicaid reimbursement. During Covid, people were auto enrolled in Medicaid but that program has ended and they lost a lot of reimbursements. They are helping people re-register, but Town support is more important than ever. This year they received a grant to provide outreach for co-occurring mental health, substance abuse and homelessness on the streets. 80% of the grant budget is for staffing and the rest for supplies. They have requested \$14,000 but last year they were allocated \$10,000.

Chairman Ron Mitchell said it has been an awfully busy year with a lot of mental health issues happening. He hopes our contribution helps and there is a \$2,000 increase from last year.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4415-333 for Granite VNA for \$22,000.00; seconded by F. Wells.

Julie Stone, the Vice President of Strategy for Granite VNA, presented their request. Granite VNA has served the area for over 100 years providing traditional visiting nurse services and at home recovery, regardless of means. They also provide some unique services to Belmont at the Heritage Terrace with preventative and educational services for all residents to remain healthy and live independently. They assisted 278 residents and made a level funded request at \$22,000. Chairman Mitchell said we appreciate the option to have these services at home and it is important.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

Tim Harrigan, Director of Business Development for Lakes Region VNA presented their request for \$5,000. Their agency has not requested funding in previous years. Town funding would help offset the reduction in Medicare reimbursement rates and free clinics. LRVNA performed 1,353 home visits with Belmont patients providing quality home care and hospice, regardless of ability to pay. R. Mooney stated there is no line item number because there was no one present at the Board of Selectmen's meeting and the Board did not appropriate any funds. Mr. Harrigan noted that he only started this job about a month ago and he was not employed during that time. Chairman Mitchell commented that he appreciates what they are doing.

R. Mooney moved line 01-4415-343 for Franklin VNA & Hospice for \$2,500.00; seconded by T. LeClair.

Ms. Krystin Albert of Franklin VNA & Hospice stated they are a small agency out of Franklin. They complete blood pressure, foot, and newborn clinics, and in 2023 they saw 30% more Belmont patients than the previous year. They also do education and social work as non-billable visits for people transitioning to hospice because insurance won't pay for those services. They also provide advanced care directives at no cost, and flu clinics. They attended Belmont Old Home Day and the Trunk or Treat event and hope to do more education in the future. They have been working with our senior group, and they also work with our General Assistance Director, Donna Cilley. Chairman Mitchell commented that taxpayers don't know about all of the things that take place behind the scenes.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4415-344 for Partnership for Public Health (PPH) for \$2,500.00; seconded by T. LeClair.

Tammy Carmichael, present via Zoom, is the Executive Director for the agency and they provide health services in the Winni region. PPH provided services for over 300 Belmont residents this year. They work with aging and disability and help connect people to services so they can live independently. They assist with applications for Medicare and food stamps, provide assistance for fuel and medication, help choose insurance plans, and provide materials and supports and speakers for school age students. The state provides funding for school flu clinics to communities with 30% free and reduced lunch but they cover other schools that the state does not fund. They work with the Health Council for the Winnepesaukee Region to get health agencies together to reach all areas of the community and to prevent duplication of services. They have completed a community needs assessment and determined more practitioners will be needed in the area within 3-5 years. Access to medical care has decreased. Ms. Carmichael thought the BOS funded them at \$3,000.00 for 2024. R. Mooney noted the BOS level-funded PPH from the 2023 allocation of \$2,500.00. Chairman Mitchell stated that he doesn't know how they do everything they do, but it is important.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4415-335 for the Community Action Program for \$15,000.00; seconded by T. LeClair.

Beth Heyward thanked everyone for their support over many years. They could not do everything if the Towns did not support their agency. Last year Belmont received \$782,543.60 worth of services in fuel, electricity, weatherization, housing and food assistance. CAP assisted 320 households with fuel, 353 with electricity, 9 with weatherization and 28 with rent assistance. They requested \$15,000.00 but were previously allocated \$13,000.00. R. Mooney noted the BOS approved the \$15,000.00 request this year because it is in our best interest to and CAP works closely with our General Assistance Director.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

T. LeClair moved line 01-4415-330 for the South Road Cemetery for \$8,500.00; seconded by F. Wells.

R. Mooney explained every town is required to have a cemetery, and there is an area for the indigent. If someone passes at a county nursing home or jail we may need to provide a place for that person. The request is unchanged from last year.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4415-336 for CASA for \$500.00; seconded by T. LeClair.

Tarah Bergeron presented for CASA, Court Appointed Special Advocates. They assist victimized children in New Hampshire who need a voice in court during traumatic times in their lives. They only represent the child. Volunteers provide hope for children. This last fiscal year they refused 277 children, which is twice the number refused in 2022. Covid and the opioid epidemic have caused increases, but their funding request is the same as last year.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4415-337 for Waypoint for \$2,000.00; seconded by T. LeClair.

Bojra Alvarez de Toledo, President & CEO, presented via Zoom for Waypoint. They run a statewide program that focuses on children who suffer trauma and family issues. Many of their referrals are from DCYF for children at risk of being removed from their homes. Their agency provides intensive in-home services 3-4 times per week, 3 hours at a time. They provide services for children with chronic health conditions until they turn 21. Early education is provided for young parents who were not parented well themselves, to help ensure families remain intact. They served 20 families this past year in Belmont. Chairman Mitchell said he appreciates all that the agency does for communities but everyone is trying to keep their budgets under control.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4415-340 for New Beginnings for \$1,891.00; seconded by T. LeClair.

Shauna Foster, Executive Director, presented via Zoom. They are the local domestic and sexual violence center in the area, based in Laconia where they have a drop-in office, and an emergency shelter. They also have a transitional housing facility in Meredith open to all county residents. They served 600 survivors last year and provided services to more than 36 individuals from Belmont. For safety reasons, no one is mandated to report their residence so the number is likely much higher. The agency provides prevention education in all schools, as well as court and hospital accompaniment. They are pivoting to help try to meet the need that housing is a barrier to leaving. They provide one-time flex funds for short-term low barrier assistance, and 6-24 months of transitional housing in Meredith free of charge.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4415-341 for the American Red Cross for \$4,000.00; seconded by T. LeClair.

Assessing Admin Colleen Akerman reported that the Red Cross is not represented this evening due to efforts to assist with the tragic event in Maine. Bob Chapman noted the agency runs monthly blood drives at St. Joseph's and collects 20-40 pints of blood.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved to approve the Health Agency Budget of \$70,891.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by A. Akerstrom. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

General Assistance #20:

Ruth Mooney presented the General Assistance budget on behalf of General Assistance Director Donna Cilley.

T. LeClair moved lines 01-4441-101 to 01-4441-505; seconded by F. Wells.

R. Mooney reported that homelessness is out of control and Donna Cilley is a “one man show”. A lot of the budget is unknown and there are many open cases. If someone is homeless in Belmont, they are our responsibility regardless of where they came from. TA Jipson noted GA Director Cilley declined a step raise last year and this year took less than other employees. There was an increase to part-time labor to provide office coverage and assist with fair hearings.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

T. LeClair moved lines 01-4445-430 to 01-4445-441; seconded by K. Sturgeon.

Housing is level-funded but we have 41 additional homeless cases this year because one of the state programs, NHERAP, was terminated. The Police Department previously received a grant for an outreach and prevention officer, Richie Bryant, who works closely with the GA Director, otherwise another employee would be needed in General Assistance. There is a rental market shortage and this is a challenging budget. This year over \$55,500.00 in overdue taxes and water/sewer bills, and \$2,800.00 in electric was recovered. The food line was increased because there are limited cooking abilities for those placed in hotels. Heating was reduced but the funds were allocated to other lines such as shelter. \$20,782.64 was also recovered in welfare liens. Properties are liened when owners receive assistance from the Town. \$79,082 was returned to the General Fund this year.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved to approve the General Assistance Department Budget of \$199,670.40 as amended; seconded by M. Roberts. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

Fire Department #12:

Fire Chief Deb Black presented the Fire Department budget for the first time. She took over as Interim Chief earlier this year and then moved into the Chief position. The Department has been increasing their staff and trying to fill the Assistant Chief position. They are in the

process of interviews and hope to be at full staff in January. Everyone was happy with what the Board pushed through for wages.

The Department has been busy with over 1,400 calls this year. Fire prevention has been busy with subdivisions at Aiden Circle, Wild Acres, Grimstone and Dutile/Horne Road. The mall has been filling up with new tenants. This past summer they got their new utility truck with a plow, which will be used to pickup hoses and plow hydrants and it can carry a skid unit. It will get rotated to forestry in the future so new trucks are not out in the woods. The new ambulance was ordered with a February 2025 arrival. All of the new hoses have arrived. Chairman Mitchell asked about the boats and they are working well.

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4220-101 through 01-4220-999; seconded by M. Roberts.

TA Jipson reported on updates after budget books were printed:

Line 109	\$58,519.74
Line 116	\$56,940.81
Line 312	\$17,857.90
Line 316	\$4,581.60

New total \$2,413,643.93

R. Mooney asked if overtime decreased because the department expects to be at full staff. Chief Black said it has increased but it should level off. F. Wells asked about the operating equipment increase. Chief Black stated the age of the equipment on their trucks was part of that determination. DPW maintains the trucks with the basics for inspections, oil changes and brakes. Otherwise they go out to the dealership or a truck service.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved to approve the Fire Department budget of \$2,413,643.93 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

Emergency Management #14:

R. Mooney moved line 01-4290-999, seconded by A. Akerstrom.

Chief Black explained they haven't used any of the funds yet this year but they hope to get a flatbed utility trailer to take over for the one that is too small to haul the ATV. The current trailer is not rated to carry the ATV they have. They will also use the trailer to carry road closure signs, and when responding to storms and accidents. The ATV can't be put into a truck if the skids are in. There was some discussion about emergency preparedness and notifications. A reverse 911 call could be setup if necessary but often in isolated situations police and fire go door to door.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved to approve the Emergency Management budget of \$5,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by K. Sturgeon. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

Parks & Recreation #21:

Parks & Recreation Director Danielle St. Onge presented this budget.

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4520-102 through 01-4520-999; seconded by M. Roberts.

P&R Director St. Onge reviewed their year and said it was a good one and the summer camp picked right up. There were more activities and more attendees. Last year was not the time, but this year the director position will move from part-time to full-time because that was always the plan. Wages are varied so they can have the proper staffing for camp. All of the programs fund themselves and they want to start up exercise classes again. There was discussion about the mileage cost for the director to travel to the beach during summer camp and to travel for field trips in the event of any emergencies. They may try to work with the GotLunch program, and Waypoint has helped with the cost of summer camp for local families and provided scholarships for some students. Jessica Fleck commented on the summer camp program and how it has grown since she attended the first original summer camp. Getting the seniors involved in the Parks & Rec program is very important.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4521-101 through 01-4521-506; seconded by K. Sturgeon.

T. LeClair commented the program has already posted for lifeguards. Director St. Onge said they need to get into the class quickly and they may pull senior seniors to fill the positions. It is expensive to get certifications and that can be built into the budget next year. There is a swim instructor lined up as well.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved to approve the Parks & Recreation and Beach budget of \$192,953.60 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

Patriotic Purposes #23:

R. Mooney moved lines 01-4583-453 through 01-4584-999, seconded by M. Roberts.

Director St. Onge said this will be her third Old Home Day. The fireworks company was sold to a new company and they will not honor the pricing specials the previous owner offered. The prices will increase again if we wait too long.

The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved to approve the Patriotic Purposes Budget of \$19,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

Chairman Mitchell asked the Director to think of some projects that could be done by the high school senior class for community service such as a clean up, beautification or planting gardens. They have also talked with Building & Grounds.

Capital #27 & 28:

Fire Chief Black presented the Fire Department's Capital requests.

R. Mooney moved line 01-4902-021 FD Air Compressor System for \$60,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by F. Wells. Fire Chief Black said this is for a new Cascade system to fill air cylinders that are worn into building fires. The existing unit needs replacement and repairs are expensive. It came from the college to the Winnisquam station and then to the Belmont station. When it is down, they have to go to Laconia or Gilford to fill their cylinders. Life saving equipment should be up to date, certified, and healthy and safe. This article is funded from the ambulance fund, which can be used for trucks and equipment, fire or EMS items. Lots of equipment has been replaced with this fund at no cost to taxpayers. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4909-022 CO Environmental Contingency for \$20,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by J. Fleck. This is a town-wide fund that does not grow. If it is not used, it does not get rolled over. It can be used for oil spills, demolition, asbestos remediation, etc. It goes back to the General Fund if it is not used. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved to approve the Capital Outlay for Equipment, Vehicles and Machinery of \$80,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by K. Sturgeon. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4915-001 Accrued Liability for \$100,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. These are warrant articles to help save for projects that are not budgeted through the year. The history of all of the articles can be found in each member's budget binder. TA Jipson explained this line is funded through the unexpended fund balance instead of taxation and includes payouts for retirement with years of service, vacation and sick time and retirement and could be \$25,000.00-\$30,000.00 each person. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4915-003 HD Heavy Equipment for \$60,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. DPW Director Clairmont explained DPW does not have a fund similar to the ambulance fund and this is important to save for

heavy equipment or replacements. For example, insurance pays for 100% of a fire truck but a DPW vehicle is prorated. They recently applied for a grant for a new \$250,000.00 truck and got the good news that they were selected to proceed to the next phase of the grant process. It will be an 80/20 match and the match funds would come from Highway Block Grant money, which would mean zero taxpayer funds used. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4915-005 Information Technology for \$10,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. This line is used in case computers, servers or firewalls need to be upgraded, or broken equipment not covered under contract needs replacement. Town Hall is looking into a new phone service that would work better with desk and cell phones together. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4915-202 Bridge Repair \$20,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. The motion passed unopposed (10-0). This line can be amended once we get the amount the state will be giving to the Town.

R. Mooney moved line 01-4915-008 Cemetery for \$5,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts.

K. Sturgeon recused himself because he is an alternate.

Cemetery Trustee Sharon Ciampi explained the Trustees would like to start on a project to replace the old cemetery signs and make them uniform like the signs in the Village. There are 25 cemeteries that need signs. There was discussion about the sign cost and bids. T. LeClair noted it is hard to justify funding sign replacements when health agencies are in need. Trustee Ciampi noted they are waiting for some FEMA funds for tree damage at Randlett Cemetery, which also needs a lot of other work, but the terrain is difficult. The motion passed unopposed (9-0).

K. Sturgeon returned to the Committee.

R. Mooney moved line 01-4915-011 Municipal Facilities \$500,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. This is a fund set aside for all town buildings in case of unforeseen repairs and they are trying to dedicate more funds to the rehab at the Mill to move Town Hall. R. Mooney explained once the elevator is done, they will be looking at a generator because this building gets cold fast. TA Jipson noted they tried to obtain a grant that included help for facilities that encompassed Parks & Rec and a Senior Center but it was not funded. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4915-050 Library Building Improvements \$25,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. Library Director Eileen Gilbert explained this is for long-term library expansion funding. They have done a lot of education this year and looked at options. They are waiting on their Trustees for direction, because they are the governing body. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4915-205 Highway Reconstruction \$750,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. This line was decreased to \$500,000 last year because there were more Highway Block Grant funds and it would be good for one year. The number has stayed at \$750,000.00 for 15 years and we are proud of our progress. Well maintained roads put less strain on vehicles and saves on equipment. F. Wells and K. Sturgeon asked about the bidding for projects. DPW Director Clairmont explained the Town has the option to stick with a single contractor once the job has gone out to bid, based on quality, price and other factors. Different paving projects around Town were discussed. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4915-300 Assessing/Property Tax \$75,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. These funds are put away to spread out the cost for a full revaluation contract of \$250-\$270,000.00. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 02-4915-501 Water System Repair & Maintenance \$100,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. DPW Director Clairmont reported the tank needs painting, they are getting a new well with some ARPA funds and they got a grant for a lead service line inventory this summer. Funds may be needed for a treatment plant. K. Sturgeon asked if this is funded through taxation or user fees. This warrant article is funded through user fees. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4915-502 Dry Hydrant & Cistern \$2,500.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by A. Akerstrom. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4915-602 Election Equipment \$10,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. A new voting machine costing \$6-\$7,000.00 may be needed to meet state regulations and new voting booths may also be required. The Town is trying to obtain grants. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4915-604 Durrell Mountain Road \$5,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. This line is the result of a negotiation with the pit in Gilford. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved line 01-4915-555 Sewer System \$30,000.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts. This line is paid through user fees and will likely be used for repairs on Route 140. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mooney moved to approve the Capital Reserve Transfers for \$1,692,500.00 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by A. Akerstrom. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).

Next Meeting: The next meeting date will be Tuesday, January 2, 2024 at 6:30 pm.

Adjournment:

A. Akerstrom moved to adjourn at 9:10 pm; seconded by Bob Chapman. The motion passed unopposed (10-0).


Chairman Ron Mitchell


Vice Chair Tracey LeClair


Albert Akerstrom


Selectman Ruth Mooney

Mark Roberts

Justin Borden

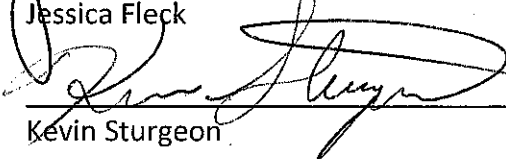
Robert Chapman


Marsha Campbell


Fred Wells


Jessica Fleck


Marc Zimmerman


Kevin Sturgeon