



# Office of Board of Selectmen

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**Selectmen's Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 10:00 am**  
**Belmont Mill, Tioga Meeting Room**

Present were Chairman Ruth P. Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Claude "Sonny" Patten, Jr., Selectman Travis O'Hara, Selectman Sharon Ciampi, TA Alicia Jipson, Executive Assistant Colleen Akerman, Town Planner Karen Santoro, Police Captain Steve Akerstrom, Fire Chief Deb Black, Assistant Fire Chief Don Pickowicz, DPW Director Craig Clairmont, TC/TC Jennifer Cashman, Library Director Eileen Gilbert, and Building & Grounds Supervisor Patrick Golden. Also present was Conservation Commission Chair Denise Naiva, and Heritage Commission Member Priscilla Annis.

Those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Review & Approve Minutes – 11/06/2024:**

*Selectman Jon Pike moved the minutes of the meeting held on November 6, 2024 as written; seconded by Selectman Sonny Patten. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

**New Business:**

**Heritage Commission Community Awards Presentation:**

TA Alicia Jipson spoke on behalf of Heritage Chairman Vicki Donovan who was unable to attend: "The Belmont Heritage Commission and the Belmont Board of Selectmen proudly announce its 2024 Belmont Community Heritage award winners. This annual event recognizes individuals, organizations, and businesses who have contributed to our heritage or provided a service to enhance our community.

The Exceptional Commitment to Community Award goes to a small group of persistent dedicated members of the Belmont Community who volunteered many hours to get the Got Lunch! Belmont and Friends program running and off the ground. It's not easy to start something new but these volunteers saw a need and the Belmont children of our town benefited. Got Lunch! Belmont & Friends provided essential support by offering free weekly meal deliveries throughout the 8 -10 weeks of summer vacation. Your efforts in starting this program, which improves the health and well-being of children, go way beyond the gratitude this award bestows to your group. Hard work and determination for such a worthy cause for the children of the community of Belmont is very much appreciated. This award is just a small token of our appreciation, but it was an easy decision to recognize all of your Got Lunch Volunteers for bringing such a worthy program to our town. Thank you: Hillary Horn, Briana O'Hara, Jeanne Hibbard – Bickford, Jessica Treadway, Sharon Ciampi, Chris and Sara Arsenault, Jena Fleck, Cheryl Woundy, Ginger Wells-Kay, Ruth Mooney, Katrina Boucher, Travis O'Hara, Christine Smith, John and Kate Goegel, Laurie Hart, Alex Lenfest, Diana Johnson & Family, Laurie

Oberter, Chrissy Riser, Natalie Labbare, Tari Selig, Brenda Seavey, Dana DeAngelis and Diane Hatch. In my opinion this is a prime example of "It Takes a Village". The children of Belmont especially thank you all as well.

The Heritage Commission is also proud to announce two Youth Leadership awards. Both award recipients are 2024 graduates of Belmont High School, and both served as Student Representatives: one on the Conservation Commission and one on the Heritage Commission. Here to present the first Leadership Award is Denise Naiva from the Conservation Commission."

Conservation Commission Chairman Denise Naiva stated: First, thank you to the chair of the Heritage Commission, Vicki Donovan, and to the Heritage Commission for initiating this award to recognize Belmont youth who have made a positive impact on their community. Thanks to your vision, the Conservation Commission "borrowed" the idea from you (the Heritage Commission) to include student representatives. Emilie is the third student to serve on the Conservation Commission. According to her dad, Jeff, when Emilie was young she had a belief that a strong society should have a strong environment. This led her to wanting to help the planet. In high school she took an environmental science class that inspired her to join the conservation commission. She has always been passionate about being outdoors and having a healthy environment. During her 4 years in high school, she was a member of the Environmental Club and served as president of the club during her senior year. The club was very active and planned many outdoor hikes, including morning hikes up Red Hill and sunset hikes up Mount Major. She was a 3-season athlete all 4 years in High School and was recognized by the state for being a New Hampshire scholar athlete. This busy student was also a member of the National Honor Society, the English honor society, the French Club, and was a class officer all four years of high school, serving as Vice President during her Junior and Senior years. Emilie actually recruited her dad, Jeff DeFrancesco, to join our Conservation Commission. He started as an alternate member and now continues as a very active full member. I had the honor of co-sharing the Grand Marshall position with Emilie during the 2023 Belmont Old Home Day celebration. She, her parents and brother decorated Jeff's truck and Emilie was able to secure many flower and vegetable seed packets to toss to our community friends from the back of Jeff's truck. We nailed the "Queen Elizabeth" wave!! Emilie, thank you for your participation with the Conservation Commission. You are a bright light and the Commission wishes you continued success as you pursue your professional nursing career. Your caring for your patients, family, friends and the environment will continue to shine for many years to come. Congratulations on receiving this Heritage Commission Youth Leadership award."

TA Jipson spoke again: Our second Youth Leadership recipient is awarded to Adam Ribeiro. For two years Adam held the Student Representative position for the Belmont Heritage Commission. The Heritage Commission's goal was to have a Student Representative attend and participate in monthly meetings to learn more about the history and heritage of their town.

Although Adam is not a voting member he provided valuable input to the commission. Adam was also a huge help with the Senior Citizens Soup Drive project. He organized the players on his hockey team with their own soup collection to contribute to our Food Drive. Adam's involvement with the Heritage Commission proved to be insightful for its members as well. He was on the committee at BHS researching the history of the mascot. He asked us to participate in the discussion and to bring what background we knew about the establishment of the first Belmont High School. This partnership with the High School students and staff opened the door to many more possible discussions concerning Belmont's educational history. We thank and appreciate Adam's participation in our commission. Adam presently attends the University of New Hampshire, and we hope he takes a little piece of his experience with the Heritage Commission with him wherever his future endeavors take him."

### **2025 Budget Updates:**

The Board received updated breakdowns in their packets.

There were some updates to the health, dental and life insurance lines, as well as a change to the FICA and Medicare for the Water Department, and an increase in the Belmont North fees from Laconia. Chairman Ruth P. Mooney confirmed that those fees are paid through user fees.

*Chairman Mooney moved to approve the amended Water Department budget of \$343,438.00; seconded by Selectman Sonny Patten. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

There was a change in wages due to a new certification in the Sewer Department.

*Chairman Mooney moved to approve the amended Sewer Department budget of \$736,834.00; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

The Police and Fire Department budgets were updated after open enrollment changes.

*Chairman Mooney moved to approve the amended Police Department budget of \$3,161,230.00; seconded by Selectman Patten. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

*Chairman Mooney moved to approve the amended Fire Department budget of \$2,374,155.00; seconded by Selectman Patten. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

The budget worksheet for General Government Buildings had a broken link for the retirement line that was corrected.

*Chairman Mooney moved to approve the amended General Government Buildings budget of \$513,473.00; seconded by Selectman Patten. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

The Executive Budget had a change due to open enrollment updates.

*Chairman Mooney moved to approve the amended Executive budget of \$418,638.00; seconded by Selectman Sharon Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

The Property Taxes budget was revised after receiving the updated contract for Vision, our property card database system.

*Chairman Mooney moved to approve the amended Property Tax budget of \$141,216.00; seconded by Selectman Patten. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

TA Jipson reported the Budget Committee moved to reduce the Patriotic Purposes Fireworks line item to \$1. Selectman O'Hara thinks removing the fireworks will politically hurt the budget. Chairman Mooney mentioned she believes they will try to raise the funds through donations. Selectman Pike asked what will happen if they don't raise the funds. There will be no fireworks. Another consideration is a light show, which will reduce the costs for the Highway, Police and Fire Department coverage. Selectman O'Hara thinks if the budget passes, there should be enough money to fund the fireworks. TA Jipson reported that Parks & Rec is trying to bring Old Home Day back to a volunteer and donation event, like other communities run their events. They are trying to step back the Town contributions. Chairman Mooney noted the event was all volunteer in the past and she is not sure why it didn't stay all volunteer. A laser presentation is an option, and they are looking into the pricing for something like that.

Selectman Ciampi does not want to change the \$9,000 BOS approval for fireworks. Lots of people look forward to the show. If there are enough volunteers and donations, the line item amount could be reduced. Old Home Day should bring unity back to the community. Selectman O'Hara commented if there were more donations and more vendors there would be more income. Chairman Mooney would support a drone show. TA Jipson stated if the Board leaves the budget as is, it shows BOS support for the fireworks where the Budget Committee did not support the fireworks. Selectman Ciampi said the Budget Chair was spot on when she disagreed with cutting the fireworks line. Funds on that line could also be used for a comparable laser show, and there could be enough donations raised to cover the costs.

It was the consensus of the Board to make no changes to their recommendation for the Patriotic Purposes Fireworks budget line item, leaving it at \$9,000.00.

#### **NHDES Lead Line Initiative:**

TA Jipson, DPW Director Craig Clairmont and Assistant DPW Director Brian Jackes were hit hard with sudden EPA & NHDES rules and regulations that we need to adhere to. There was a mad dash to get informational letters out to our water users. The acceptable lead levels have been changed and 99% of the water lines in Town are unidentified so we don't know which have lead lines. Water users are being asked to test their water. The bottles and paperwork are available at Town Hall. Some people are saying no and many have not responded, but we have to contact everyone a minimum of 4 times to try to prove the presence of lead. Some lines may need to be tested by potholing at the curbstop. The Town is required to distinguish and inventory which lines are lead. Known lead lines will need to be replaced by 2037. DES is paying for the water tests. There are lots of questions about how the replacement of lead lines

will work, who will pay for the costs and what happens with unidentified lines. We can apply for some grants, but those will be first-come first-serve. DPW will document and record things as they encounter issues. They are going to consider asset management for water and take pictures and attach them to the service cards to make things easier in the future. This will be ongoing as we educate and engage homeowners. Unknown lines need to be identified to help reduce costs to the Town in the future. Krystal Jacobs is taking calls and distributing the tests.

**Well 4 RFP:**

Underwood Engineering has released the RFP for Well #4.

**Other New Business:**

**Egg Drop:**

The school is doing an “egg drop” where students build molds to protect an egg from breaking when dropped from a tall height. The Mill is a tall building, and they are going to do their egg drop from the 4<sup>th</sup> floor at 12:30 pm tomorrow. It will last about an hour and Kyle Dodge will be here to supervise. They are using a tarp to collect the waste.

**Cash Payment Policy:**

TC/TC Jennifer Cashman requested the Board consider approval of a policy for cash payments, such as not accepting large tax payments in pennies and limiting the amount of rolled coins that can be accepted. The policy would help protect the department’s ability to conduct business. It is a common policy for other municipalities and a recommended practice. TC/TC Cashman will provide a copy of the policy for review at the next meeting.

**Second Issue Tax Bill Collections:**

Since November 12<sup>th</sup>, we have collected over \$1,000,000.00 in taxes.

**Old Business:**

**JSJ Auction – 2001 Mack-Pierce Tanker Fire Truck Update \$25,650:**

The Board will need to hold a public hearing to accept the proceeds from the fire tanker that was auctioned at the White Farm. A notice will go out in the paper. The Board will need to decide if they will accept all of the funds as unanticipated revenue, or if they will restrict up to \$10,000 to offset unexpected repairs for Ambulance 2.

There was discussion about how these situations have previously been handled where auction proceeds from equipment goes back to the General Fund. The Board did restrict some funds from the auction of police cruisers to offset the leases for the replacement cruisers. Repair costs should be accounted for during the budget process. Selectman Pike is concerned about setting a precedent they can’t live with. TA Jipson consulted with former TA Beaudin, and she recommended the repairs be funded from the unanticipated revenue, because that is not money funded from taxes. DPW Director Craig Clairmont reported that all previous equipment sale proceeds from his department were deposited back to the General Fund, and he has never been given an option to earmark those proceeds, but agrees it would be helpful. Chief Black noted the budget line will be over expended if some of these proceeds are not used to offset the unexpected expense. There was some conversation about municipal budgeting

and accounting functions. DPW Director Clairmont reiterated that he would like the option of utilizing auction proceeds in the future. Chairman Mooney asked if the proceeds could be put in the General Fund and then removed later. Unfortunately, they need to be restricted now, and they can't be moved after the fact. Once earmarked for a specific purpose the funds cannot be used for anything else. The Ambulance 2 bill has already been paid but if the funds are restricted, they will be used for regular maintenance items otherwise the account will be overextended.

There was discussion about maintenance needs on other fire department equipment. Chief Black said they are trying to get the fleet up and running well but this was an unexpected repair. TA Jipson suggested the Board could consider making an internal policy about equipment or vehicles sold at auction. It should not be used as "extra" money, but a portion could be restricted for a specific purpose if there is an unexpected need.

B&G Supervisor Patrick Golden suggested that we need to give the Chief the tools to work with for an unexpected problem. The Board discussed creating some Capital Reserve Funds for unexpected emergency expenses and the timing for warrant articles for the 2025 ballot. Selectman Pike noted again that the Chief has inherited these issues due to a lack of past maintenance.

*Selectman Ciampi moved that the public hearing to accept the unanticipated revenue restrict \$9,367.39 for unexpected ambulance repairs with the remainder to be deposited to the General Fund; seconded by Chairman Mooney. Motion passed unopposed (5-0).*

#### **Review of Capital Outlay for 2025 Warrant Article Consideration:**

The Board discussed the \$400,000 unexpended fund balance from 2023. This is the remainder after funds were put towards offsetting the tax rate. The Board reviewed the list of Capital Reserve Funds (CRF) and which accounts are funded from the unexpended fund balance. TA Jipson suggested that the HD Heavy Equipment CRF, and the Property Revaluation CRF could be increased and we are going to be needing some important software soon, so an increase to IT would be good, or Building & Grounds needs a truck. There was a proposal for B&G to get a hand me down truck from DPW and use funds from the HD Heavy Equipment to get a new truck for DPW. The B&G truck now has electrical problems with the dash computer, one of the windows won't go down and there is no four-wheel drive for inclement weather. The hand me down truck would also allow B&G to assist with some plowing. The old truck would go to auction. The Board discussed creating a contingency fund but will need some more information. TA Jipson will get some more information and report back to the Board. General Assistance Director Donna Cilley asked what happens if the furnace breaks. It would come from Municipal Facilities or possibly insurance. The Fire Department has some serious structural issues and an engineer will be needed. The engineer expense will come from the Municipal Facilities account that was not funded in 2024.

#### **FD Request for ARPA Funds – New Pagers:**

TA Jipson stated there is a balance to be designated before the end of the year. The Fire Department submitted a request to consider pagers. The generator for the Mill and a Building

& Grounds truck are still under consideration. Chairman Mooney would push for the generator. Selectman Ciampi asked about the cost. There were quotes last year for \$86 to \$110,000 but could be \$130,000 now. Selectman Ciampi would also lean towards the generator. Chairman Mooney said if there are additional funds after the generator, they could consider the pagers.

It was the consensus of the Board to purchase a generator for the Mill out of the ARPA fund balance after the repeater and a cruiser.

**Other Old Business:**

**Building & Grounds Update:**

The work on the Fire Department bathroom is complete. The shower was removed and the floor dug out. The piping underneath was squirrely, but it has been cleaned up now. They found a tile that matches, and the shower is operating. The sewer has been fine. B&G Supervisor Golden commended Kyle Dodge on the nice job tiling. It was a one-person job.

We had the sprinkler inspection completed two weeks ago. There were a few old gauges that had to be switched out. The second floor plumbing work has been completed, and the Penstock tree removal is scheduled for the week after Thanksgiving.

**DPW Truck VW Diesel Mitigation Grant Update:**

The truck will be ready tomorrow. There was lots of work and effort to make this happen. There will be an article in the paper explaining about the truck and the funding. It is a great benefit to get a \$250,000 truck for 20% of the cost.

**IT RFP:**

TA Jipson requested the Board allow an extension of time for responses to our recent IT RFP. It is more involved than anticipated and will require site visits from the vendors. We also have an offer of assistance to help review the RFPs and bids. We will remain status quo with our current provider. We want to find the best service at the best price and it would be beneficial if we do not rush the process. We are currently budgeted for the cost of current provider. There was discussion about the cost of \$116,000 and what will be necessary for a different company to step in to take over due to our hardware and warranties.

It was the consensus of the Board to allow an extension of time for our recent IT RFP.

**Public Comment: None**

Chief Black thanked everyone for the work on the bathroom and garage doors. She inherited the fleet and the building and is trying to take care of everything.

**Next Meeting:** December 4, 2024 at 10:00 am.

**Non-Public:**

Chairman Ruth Mooney moved to enter non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II (c) at 12:06 pm; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Roll Call 1: J. Pike – aye, S. Patten – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).

Those present and voting were Chairman Ruth P. Mooney and Selectmen Travis O'Hara, Jon Pike, Claude "Sonny" Patten and Sharon Ciampi. Also present were TA Alicia Jipson, Executive Assistant Colleen Akerman and Town Clerk/Tax Collector Jennifer Cashman.

The Board discussed options on how to proceed with litigation regarding past due property taxes, and also made a decision to make a negotiation offer.

The Board discussed a property that was recently taken by tax deed and made a decision to allow the owner until December 31, 2024 to repurchase the property.

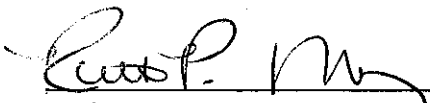
It was the consensus of the Board to close Town Hall at 12 pm on Wednesday, November 27, 2024 but staff will be required to use their own personal earned time.


Selectman Pike moved to exit non-public session at 12:35 pm; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Roll Call 4: T. O'Hara – aye, J. Pike – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, S. Patten – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).

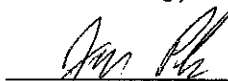
Selectman Pike moved to seal the minutes of the non-public session because divulgence of information could affect the reputation of a person other than a member of the Board; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Roll Call 5: S. Patten – aye, J. Pike – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).

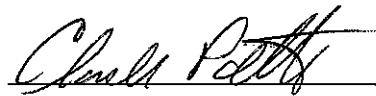
**Adjournment:**

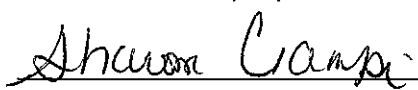
Selectman Pike moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:36 pm seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Roll Call 6: S. Ciampi – aye, J. Pike – aye, S. Patten – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).

  
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Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman

  
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Travis O'Hara, Vice Chairman

  
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Jon Pike, Selectman

  
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Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman

  
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Sharon Ciampi, Selectman