



Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Budget Review Workshop Minutes
Wednesday, October 7, 2024, 5:00 pm
Belmont Mill, 14 Mill Street
Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Ruth P. Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Travis O'Hara, Selectman Claude Patten, Jr., Selectman Sharon Ciampi, TA Alicia Jipson, Executive Admin Colleen Akerman, Finance Director Steve Forster, and General Assistance Director Donna Cilley. Also present were: Cemetery Trustees Hillary Horn and Fred Wells, and Library Trustees Mary Charnley and Shela Cunningham.

Via Zoom were Beth Vachon, Erin Jospe, Krystin Albert, Cherrie Murray, Nick Johnson, and Borja Alvarez de Toledo.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 5:07 pm.

Health Agencies:

South Road Cemetery:

Ruth Mooney presented the South Road Cemetery budget. Last year they voluntarily reduced their request to \$5,000 from \$8,500 to help accommodate the default budget. They have tried to carry the same amount for a number of years but things are tight.

Selectman Sonny Patten does not agree with the increase. Selectman Travis O'Hara asked if it would be harmful to do \$5,000. R. Mooney stated their superintendent did not get an increase last year and he deserves it. It did affect the bottom line to lose \$3,500. They try to keep the budget low and use the monies in perpetual care. There are some stones to be repaired. Selectman Jon Pike asked how much there is in perpetual care funds.; That information is not available right now; those funds are held by the Trustees of the Trust Funds. The perpetual funds are intended to care for sites forever.

TA Alicia Jipson noted that the \$5,000 amount was a reduction to the original 2024 request of \$8,500 because of the default budget. R. Mooney stated the Cemetery voluntarily reduced their request to \$5,000 for 2024.

Selectman Pike moved to approve \$5,000 for South Road Cemetery; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed (3-0-2). Chairman Mooney and Selectman Sharon Ciampi abstained due to their cemetery connections.

Granite VNA:

Sarah Hinkley from Granite VNA presented their request for \$22,000 to support home care, hospice, palliative care, community health and more. This request helps those without insurance receive home care services such as skilled nursing, PT, OT, speech therapy, home health and social worker services. They also offer community health clinics, pediatric clinics and bereavement programs. Selectman Pike asked how much has been spent this year to date. That information is not available, but there have been 4,771 visits to Belmont. Selectman O’Hara asked if funds can be earmarked for Belmont alone or do they go into a general pool. Ms. Hinkley can’t speak to that and it would be a question for their CFO to answer. She is here to speak about the services they provide. Selectman Ciampi asked how many offices there are. There are offices in Concord, Wolfeboro and Laconia.

Selectman Pike moved to approve the default amount of \$16,500 for Granite VNA; seconded by Selectman Patten. Motion passed (4-1). Selectman Ciampi opposed.

Lakes Region VNA:

Dr. Erin Jospe was present via Zoom to request \$5,000. She is the new CEO and worked as an internist and primary care doctor previously. There is a lack of continuity and relationships for primary care and they are trying to build that back. Healthcare is broken. They have been providing VNA services for more than 100 years. They provided 1,440 visits to Belmont and serve anyone regardless of their ability to pay. They provide home care, hospice, rehabilitation and grief support as well as wellness and flu clinics. They offer their staff professional development and tuition reimbursement as well as provide scholarships for high school seniors entering the medical field.

There was no request made in 2023, so there was a \$0 default amount for 2024.

Selectman Patten moved to approve \$2,000 for Lakes Region VNA; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed (4-1). Selectman Ciampi opposed.

Selectman Ciampi stated that is \$1.38 per visit and the \$5,000 request was not unreasonable and they have never asked for assistance before.

Community Action Program (CAP):

Beth Heyward and Kristin presented their request for \$15,000, which was their original 2024 request. That request was reduced and they received less than \$10,000 with the default budget cut. They are requesting \$15,000 back. They provided the program details a little differently this year to give the full impact of all of their services and not highlight the main 6 programs. This gives everyone a better understanding of what towns need for services. CAP provides fuel and electrical assistance and food pantry services. They provided 18,273 meals and over \$1.1 million in services. They served 915 individuals and 1,076 households. Selectman O’Hara asked for clarification on the breakdown. The government requires programs to be broken down differently so that is why there is a disparity between the individuals and households. Chairman Mooney asked about the meals and volunteers. Ms. Heyward said it

includes Meals on Wheels, congregate meals and food box meals. They could use more drivers for their programs.

Selectman Patten moved to approve the default amount of \$13,000 for CAP; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates):

Tarah Bergeron presented a request for \$500 to provide volunteer legal aid to abused and neglected children. CASA only speaks to the child and determines what is in their best interests. There are currently 12 cases involving 17 children in Belmont. Many cases are lasting longer because of the severity, which means volunteers take fewer cases. They meet monthly and visit the children where they are at, such as in a home setting with their family or a foster family but not at their normal home. Advocates speak with teachers and foster families and report back to the judge. Chairman Mooney asked how they get referred. Ms. Bergeron stated they are appointed once the court finds abuse or neglect and DCYF investigates.

Selectman O'Hara moved to approve \$500 for CASA; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Waypoint:

President & CEO Borja Alvarez de Toledo was present via Zoom to support their request of \$4,000. They are the oldest organization serving children in the state. They currently serve 8,000 families. They served 12 families in Belmont last year but they have a resource center in Laconia that brings that up to a larger number for group services. They help families with children up to age 21 who have chronic health conditions. Some case workers stay with a family for 21 years. Their organization handles cases that are reported to DCYF but are not severe enough to enter a case. When cases are not accepted by DCYF families can come back the next year with more complications that could require foster care. Waypoint helps prevent those cases from getting deeper into the system. They are committed to prevention services. Last year they requested \$4,000 but that was reduced to \$1,500 with the default.

Selectman Patten moved to approve \$2,000 for Waypoint; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed (4-1). Selectman Ciampi opposed.

New Beginnings:

Shauna Foster presented their request of \$1,900 to provide support for domestic violence and sexual assault crisis services. They have served Belknap County since 1991 and provide free and confidential services to all ages. They provide prevention education at Belmont High School. Last year they provided 5,000 services to 800 individuals. Their most critical service is their emergency shelter which is always at or over capacity. They also rented office space in Laconia to add more shelter rooms. There is a privately funded 5-unit transitional housing facility in Meredith that is open to Belmont residents. The office space provides meeting space for support groups. There were 267 services provided to 51 Belmont residents last year. There is no requirement to report place of residence so those are only the

numbers from those who disclosed they live in Belmont. Services provided include emergency shelter, emotional support, accompaniment to the hospital for a sexual assault exam, court accompaniment, assistance obtaining pro bono legal counsel, material goods such as prescriptions, emergency transport and hotel vouchers.

Selectman Patten moved to approve \$1,900 for New Beginnings; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

American Red Cross:

The American Red Cross is responding to Hurricane Helene and is unable to attend tonight's meeting.

Selectman Pike moved to approve \$4,000 for the American Red Cross; seconded by Chairman Mooney.

Selectman Ciampi asked if the Red Cross pays for the blood drives in Belmont or do their sponsors such as the Knights of Columbus. No one had an answer.

Selectmen O'Hara, Patten and Ciampi are opposed. Motion fails (2-3).

Selectman Patten moved to approve \$3,000 for the American Red Cross; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Lakes Region Mental Health Center (LRMHC):

Beth Vachon presented their \$14,000 request via Zoom. Their organization serves 24 towns and 3,125 patients. The number is low because of a new electronic health record system that was implemented mid-year and they are having trouble marrying some of the data together. They provide integrated mental and physical health care for all ages. They work in cooperation with other groups such as hospitals, law enforcement, corrections, courts, school districts and social workers to provide a continuum of care that improves the quality of life in the Lakes Region. Their street outreach grant has benefited many homeless individuals. They provide a warming center during cold weather. Belmont residents received \$79,180 in charity care, which is a 67% increase. 248 residents accessed services. Next year LRMHC will be able to provide the number of hours of services provided. The \$14,000 request is based on the population of Belmont. Last year was their worst budget year due to the end of the public health emergency where thousands lost their enrollment to Medicaid. Many can't afford their Medicaid copay.

Selectman O'Hara stated they are the only ones who have a guaranteed allocation for Belmont residents. Chairman Mooney commented they are giving far more than what they request.

Selectman O'Hara moved to approve \$14,000 for LRMHC; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Franklin VNA & Hospice:

Cherrie Murray, Krystin Albert and Nick Johnson were present via Zoom to support their request of \$4,000. They have provided home health care for 80 years and serve 14 towns. 17% of their staff live in Belmont. They provide home health, hospice care and private duty including skilled nursing, rehab, social work, LNAs and hospice. 47% of last year's Belmont visits were with hospice patients. They also provide community health clinics. There were 668 visits to Belmont. They can set aside funds for Belmont only.

Selectman Patten moved to approve \$2,500 for Franklin VNA & Hospice; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Partnership for Public Health (PPH):

Carissa Elphick presented their request for \$3,000. They are a non-profit public health organization that addresses unmet public health needs. They serve all of Belknap County and Franklin, Hill, Danbury and Northfield. New Hampshire does not have traditional public health departments. We have 13 regions across the state and PPH serves as the public health organization for Belmont. They are tasked with public health initiatives and human services such as aging and disability. Almost 250 aging Belmont residents and caregivers received information and resources on how to age safely at home. By 2030, 25% of the population of NH will be over the age of 80. They host a wellness link program and have an emergency preparedness department. In an emergency, they can support 12 people for up to 72 hours until the Red Cross can arrive. They host school food clinics, flu vaccine clinics, vaping prevention training, drug take back, and substance misuse and suicide prevention programs.

Selectman Patten moved to approve \$3,000 for the PPH; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the Health Agency budget as discussed for a total of \$63,400; seconded by Selectman Patten. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Library Trustees:

Library Director Eileen Gilbert reported their budget has been scrutinized closely. They have looked at where others are saving on costs. They need to maintain a consistent level of service, and the documentation provided shows the programs that have been offered throughout the year. The Belmont Library collection size is only about 40% of what libraries of similar size towns have to offer. They offer programs you might not think of such as a telescope, metal detector, literacy kits and two digital book services. They provide aid to residents looking for administrative aid with government services or charitable aid. They also provide photocopies for applications for fuel assistance, tax forms, faxing services, and phone number lookups. There are 27 other towns in New Hampshire that serve populations of Belmont's size, but Belmont's library is a lot smaller, and this is an advantage because it doesn't need as many resources. The Trustees spent two meetings reviewing the budget for savings and produced the most effective budget they could. With the default budget they moved some

things around in general expenses to provide for employee salaries. They are looking for a new website provider due to the current provider cancelling services in 2025. Ebook services will increase as the cost is based on usage, which has been increasing. Thank you to the library staff and trustees for their hard work this year.

There was discussion about possible options for the library website depending on their needs and connections to outside services. Salaries were discussed because there is a new earnings threshold for salaried employees. There is only one employee who won't meet the standards as of 01/01/2025. Chairman Mooney asked about repairs and maintenance. Library Trustee Mary Charnley explained that line covers things like painting, trim work, cleaning, and plugged toilets. Any big maintenance goes to the Duffy Fund.

Selectman Ciampi moved to approve the Library budget as discussed, with the understanding that health insurance rates will change; seconded by Chairman Mooney. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Cemetery Trustees:

Selectman Sharon Ciampi stepped down from the Board for this presentation only due to her membership as a Cemetery Trustee.

Cemetery Trustees Hillary Horn and Fred Wells presented the Cemetery budget.

The maintenance contract is going out to bid in the next month or so and it is expected to increase due to fuel costs. The Trustees use the other budgeted funds for professional development and database management, which includes an Ancestry subscription. There are two cemeteries without signage and one without direct access. They used an abutter's property to access the location at Weymouth Cemetery. Records show at least 20 people buried there. A packet with photos for the Capital Reserve request shows the Weymouth Cemetery. The maintenance budget will also increase a little because of the two additional cemeteries to be maintained. Due to the default budget, the Trustees used funds from their Capital Reserve Fund to help cover 2024 maintenance costs.

There is \$1,855 left in the 2024 budget, which could potentially be returned to the general fund because the 4th installment of the maintenance contract for this year will come out of the CRF.

The trustees are still researching how they can access and utilize perpetual care funds.

Selectman Patten moved to approve \$27,500 for the Cemetery Trustees; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed (3-0-1). Selectman Pike abstained.

Selectman Ciampi returned to the Board.

Heritage Commission:

The Board received handouts from the Commission and there is no change to their requests. They have requested \$250 for their budget and \$4,500 for their CRF, which goes on the ballot as a warrant article.

Selectman Pike moved to approve the \$250 budget for the Heritage Commission and \$4,500 for the Capital Reserve Fund request; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

General Assistance:

General Assistance Director Donna Cilley reported the homeless population is increasing. She has never gone over budget because she has used other lines to offset things, but the housing line for 2024 is already over \$98,686 with unposted transactions. If using other hotels that would look like \$165,000 or \$170,000. The hotels/motels are out of control but there is a good relationship with one place that averages about \$40 per day. Cots are set up to house more than one person in a room and they are considered shelter rooms, not rental rooms. The homeless person must sign a contract with General Assistance just like they would at the Carey House, to follow the rules and regulations so that offenders can be removed immediately without requiring an eviction process. Homeless shelters are full and there are many domestic violence issues, which makes it hard to place some individuals, especially when there are children involved. There is a good relationship with the CAP Street Outreach program to help get people into rooming houses. The rooms available at our negotiated hotel rate cost \$87,600 for the year and they are always full. Other hotels run \$127-\$140/night so the negotiated rate of \$40/night is a great deal. Persons staying there are responsible for their own meals. We also have other people struggling in their homes that need some temporary assistance due to medical, childcare or employment issues. Some of the homeless are paying a portion of their hotel cost as a shelter contribution but they don't have very much earned income.

This is not just a town or city issue, it is a global issue. Every county in the state should have its own shelter. Local shelters are all full and it would be cost efficient at the county level and to have the state as a partner.

Wages will be the same as 2024 as the Director is not taking the wage adjustment.

The top of the budget is where it needs to be. Part-time labor is for someone to fill in when the Director is out.

Selectman Pike moved to approve the General Assistance Services budget as discussed; seconded by Chairman Mooney. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).


Director Cilley recommended increasing the housing line to \$135,000 to \$140,000 as the current year's expense is already at \$98,000 and there are still two more months in the year. The new bottom line for General Assistance Vendor Payments is \$158,775.

Selectman O'Hara left the meeting at 7:05pm.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve \$254,709 for the General Assistance budget as discussed; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Adjournment:

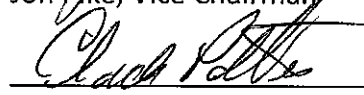
Selectman Pike moved to adjourn at 7:11 pm; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).



Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman



Jon Pike, Vice Chairman



Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman

Travis O'Hara, Selectman



Sharon Ciampi, Selectman