Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Budget Workshop Minutes
Wednesday, October 7, 2025, 3:00 pm
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/Assessing Administrator Colleen Akerman, Finance Director Steve Forster, Building & Grounds Supervisor Patrick Golden, Library Director Eileen Gilbert, and GA Director Donna Cilley.

Also present were Budget Committee Members Susan Roache and Lee Cheshire and Library Trustee Mary Charnley; and Health Agency Members Andy Morse of Granite VNA, Erin Jospe & Josh Harnett of Lakes Region Visiting Nurse Association, Beth Vachon of Lakes Region Mental Health, Tarah Bergeron of CASA, Beth Heyward of Community Action Program (CAP), Tammy Carmichael of Partnership for Public Health, and Sarah Al-Sheraidi of Family Promise of the Lakes Region.

Via Zoom were Cherrie Murray, Nicholas Johnson & Krystin Albert of Franklin VNA & Hospice, Laura Zorawowicz of WayPoint, Ted Bolognani of HealthFirst, and Shauna Foster of New Beginnings.

The Chairman opened the public meeting at 3:00 pm and those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Mooney requested that audience members avoid conversation during the meeting due to the acoustics of the room, and informed attendees that although this is a public meeting, it is a workshop and not intended to solicit public comment.

General Government Buildings:

Building & Grounds Supervisor Patrick Golden and Laborer Kyle Dodge and TA Alicia Jipson presented the General Government Buildings proposed 2026 budget.

B&G Supervisor Golden explained that they are only presenting what they need, and not what they want. They know things are tight with the default budgets and it has been a challenge. They are working with vendors to try and maintain service contracts or minimally increase them. All of the annual inspections have been completed and repairs to buildings are finished for this year. They do not need any new equipment and the truck swap with DPW has worked out well.

They have been able to reduce eight line items from last year but there are some big projects they will need part time summer help for. Four pavilions at the beach need new roofs and the dome on the Mill building needs to be repainted. The upper section of the Town Hall building needs to be cleaned but they will need a lift. Overall there is a 6% increase in the

budget from the 2023 default, which is only 2% per year. Chairman Mooney asked if they plan to do the roof at the beach themselves. They do but it should only be stripping and re-shingling. There should be no rot, but there will be if they don't redo them.

Custodial services is an annual contract and they have increased their fee. This is for the Town Hall and Police Department. Other service contracts include pest control and the elevator at the Mill. They are trying to work on a contract that will include the elevator at the Police Department as well. B&G is trying to utilize the same vendors at all facilities to help save money and have someone that is available no matter which building has an issue. The new generator has a 5-year contract over the guarantee and an annual service rate of $2,500.00 per year. Selectman O'Hara asked if we encumbered funds for heat. TA Jipson replied that we encumbered heat, electric, phone, and all other "red" lines on the budget worksheet. Selectman Pike asked about the heating budget. We are paying $2.547 for oil and $1.505 for propane and we just locked in those contracts.

Selectman O'Hara asked if the projects are needs for this year. B&G Supervisor Golden stated the pavilion roofs are 5 years beyond needing to be redone and were originally built by Brian Jackes as a Scout project. They are looking for volunteers and donations for the projects if possible. B&G Supervisor Golden said the Mill dome needs to be addressed to avoid future problems with rot.

TA Jipson reported the health and dental rates aren't available until next week but it is anticipated to be 5.5% for dental and 10-15% for health insurance. Selectman O'Hara asked about the computer line and there is extra there for computer replacements.

TA Jipson also reminded the Board that there will be three contracts on the ballot this year. The DPW union has already come to an agreement but police and fire have not.

We have used lots of encumbrances in this budget but things will be finalized in December. A lot of the unspent funds will move forward to be encumbered for next year to reduce the budget. Selectman Patten asked why the phone line had decreased so much. TA Jipson said she did not know why the line was so high previously but that has been the default number since 2023 and it is not necessary.

It was the consensus of the Board to wait to move the General Government Buildings budget until we have more information about the health and dental costs, the elevator update and the encumbrances.

Health Agencies:

New Beginnings:

Shauna Foster of New Beginnings presented their proposed 2026 budget request of $1,418.00.

New Beginnings has provided funding for domestic and sexual violence services in Belknap County for 30 years. They are available 24/7 free of charge. They have a partnership

with the Belmont Police Department for a 24-hour response. They provide accompaniment for court or hospitals for evidence collection. They provide prevention education, peer support, emergency housing and transitional housing. They provided 284 services to 39 Belmont residents, but the number is likely higher because residents may decline to report where they are from for safety reasons.

The Board will wait to discuss health agency requests with the General Assistance Director before making a motion.

South Road Cemetery:

Ruth P. Mooney presented their proposed 2026 budget. The association allows the cemetery to be used as the required Town Cemetery, and Belknap County also has a plot there. They have not changed their request from last year and are asking for $8,500. Expenses to maintain the cemetery have increased but they have tried to absorb that through sales and donations.

Granite VNA:

Andy Morse of Granite VNA presented their proposed 2026 budget request of $11,000.00.

They have provided home health and hospice since 1899. In 2021 Concord Regional VNA and Central VNA merged to create Granite VNA. They serve 72 communities in New Hampshire from Manchester to Tamworth and provide home health care, a hospice house, community wellness programs, flu clinics and presentations. They work with all ages but primarily older adults and pediatric patients. They also offer bereavement services. They have served over 250 Belmont residents and requested level funding at $11,000.00, which is what the Board awarded last year under the default budget.

Selectman O'Hara asked about services not covered under insurance, and is Belmont primarily insured. Mr. Morse said they did not provide any free or subsidized care to Belmont residents.

Lakes Region VNA:

Erin Jospe & Josh Harnett of Lakes Region VNA presented their proposed 2026 budget request of $7,500.00.

They are a community-based nonprofit organization operating in the Lakes Region for over 100 years. They are focused on the health and wellness of the population with patients from infants to geriatrics. They offer home care, hospice, bereavement, social work and maternal care and more. They make investments in the community such as scholarships for students. A Belmont High School senior was awarded a $1,500.00 scholarship this year. They had three times as many charitable cases this year than last year.

They made 1,400 in-home visits to Belmont residents and 600 skilled nursing visits, which is double the amount from the prior fiscal year. They employ four Belmont residents full-time

and give scholarships to four students each year. They participate in community events such as Old Home Day and they will be hosting a flu clinic in Belmont on October 24th. They provide services regardless of financial need. They saw between 60 and 80 patients from Belmont this year. They anticipate providing more charitable care in the future as more patients have increased out of pocket expenses and more people are losing their insurance.

Community Action Program (CAP):

Beth Heyward presented their proposed 2026 budget request of $15,000.00. A summary of services was provided to the Board. Belmont receives all of CAP's services except for transportation and family planning, which is no longer being funded. They served 1,027 Belmont residents and provided over $880,000 worth of services to Belmont. Services include Fuel & Electric Assistance, Meals on Wheels, Community Dining, Child Care and Housing Stabilization.

Chairman Mooney expressed concern for the Fuel Assistance program funding because of State and Federal budgeting. Ms. Heyward was confident that we will have funding available this season.

TA Jipson asked how our services compare to other communities and Belmont falls just under Franklin, Concord and Laconia in services provided. Selectman O'Hara asked if they work with the homeless encampments. Ms. Heyward replied that they visit local encampments twice a week with a "boots on the ground" effort. They work with State and local police and assist local welfare. CAP provides much needed support for Belmont that would otherwise be covered in the Town budget. Last year that would have added over $880,000 to the Town budget.

CASA:

A CASA representative was unable to attend the meeting.

Waypoint:

Laura Zorawowicz of WayPoint presented their proposed 2026 budget request of $4,000.00. Statewide they provide social services to 8,000 people. They served 12 Belmont families last year and they work to help coordinate efforts for those up to age 21 with chronic health conditions and to provide resources once a DCYF case has been closed. They requested $4,000.00 last year and made the same request this year. The cost of providing programs is increasing and there are many financial challenges.

American Red Cross:

An American Red Cross representative was unable to attend the meeting.

Lakes Region Mental Health (LRMH):

Beth Vachon of Lakes Region Mental Health presented their proposed 2026 budget request of $19,921.00. They are a private non-profit founded in 1966 and they are one of 10 designated community mental health centers in the state. They serve 24 towns in Belknap and southern Grafton County and contract with Health & Human Services. LRMH provides behavioral mental health services to anyone regardless of their ability to pay. They provide 24/7 emergency services for the most vulnerable population who require the highest level of care.

Their budget is comprised of 70% Medicaid reimbursement and 30% for copayments, private and insurance and Town and County grants. There are high costs associated with staffing and maintaining services. They have six prescribers and are working to eliminate emergency room boarding with their facility "A Place to Go" in Plymouth, which offers short-term stabilization and resources. They have open access two mornings per week for adults to provide immediate care and they also have street outreach through a federal grant. Belmont residents have required increased services and at least 200 residents were served. Their request of $19,981 reflects their current needs based on reduced staffing, increased insurance costs and how much more charity care will be needed. It is only one-third of the $63,000 in charity care provided to Belmont residents.

Franklin VNA:

Cherri Murray, Krystin Albert and Nick Johnson were present via Zoom with their proposed 2026 budget request of $4,000.00. They are a small home health and hospice serving 14 towns in Belknap & Merrimack Counties. One-fifth of their visits are provided to patients in Belmont. They also offer a homemaker program for homebound individuals. They provided $20,000 in charitable care last year and served 105 patients over 862 visits. They also provide regular health clinics at Great Brook Village, Briarcrest and Mallards Landing. They are seeing more hospice patients and patients who require more care. Eight of their employees are residents of Belmont and they offer clinics, walk-in grief support, dementia support, and other community health clinics. They attend Belmont community events such as Old Home Day and Trunk or Treat. They provided $20,000 in charitable care to Belmont.

Partnership for Public Health (PPH):

Tammy Carmicheal presented their proposed 2026 budget of $3,000.00. They serve 1,795 residents and provide assistance with open enrollment for Medicare through their Aging & Disability Center. They average 200 calls per month but received over 800 calls the first week of open enrollment this year. They help people plan budgets and stay independent. They have lost state and federal contracts for suicide prevention and other programs. They have reapplied and anticipate receiving funding because they are one of the higher candidates. They will also be applying for some State funding through Senator Shaheen's office that is for non-profits only. They have a paramedic in Laconia who operates as a community health worker to assist patients in obtaining a primary care physician and decreasing the need for emergency room use for non-emergent situations. They hope to expand this program to other communities such as Belmont in the future. PPH works with uninsured patients and helps them with options for healthcare.

Family Promise of the Lakes Region:

Sarah Al-Sheraidi of Family Promise of the Lakes Region presented their 2026 budget request of $5,000. They are a developing affiliate and have not provided any services yet. They will be offering case management stabilization services to about 100 families in their first year and anticipate 10 of those will be from Belmont. She is experienced in social work, child welfare, preventing the trafficking of minors, homeless and low to moderate income housing and they have a diverse Board of Directors with varied talents and experience.

HealthFirst Family Care:

Ted Bolognani of HealthFirst was present via Zoom with their proposed 2026 budget request of $1,000.00. HealthFirst has been a Lakes Region nonprofit since 1996. They provide primary care, behavioral health, and substance use disorder assistance. They are mandated as a federally qualified health center and serve every individual regardless of insurance or ability to pay. They treat and see everyone. They have physicians, nurse practitioners, behavioral health practitioners and social workers. There is a lot of care provided that is not billable because they treat all aspects of the individual. This is the first time they have ever asked for municipal support due to federal funding decreases because they need alternative funding. The future does not look bright for insured patient numbers and Medicaid has decreased their coverage. With state work requirements and federal requirements and the Affordable Care Act tax subsidies gone, they are communities' safety net provider. They served 498 Belmont residents over 1,500 visits and provided $9,600.00 in uncompensated care. They are asking for $1,000.00 to help.

Selectman Ciampi asked about outside fundraising and Mr. Bolognani stated they had to cut their budget and staff by over $500,000.00 this year and the communications and grant writer position was not filled. They are running on bare bones administration and raise funds wherever they can.

Cemetery Trustees:

Sharon Ciampi presented the Cemetery Trustees proposed 2026 budget request of $26,000.00. They tried to keep their number low. The maintenance contract came in at $22,000 and they added $3,000 to cover any emergencies and association dues, memberships and conferences. They will be working on the Weymouth Cemetery cleanup in 2026. They have hired Craig Bailey to survey the area because there are no definitive lines. The neighbors have completed a recent survey so the Trustees were able to get the rest of the survey done affordably. They are working on some designs for signage and anticipate working with the Department of Corrections, who made the metal signs for the Purple Heart designations. Selectman O'Hara asked what is included with the maintenance contract. It includes spring and fall cleanups, mowing, cleaning the rock walls, picking up storm debris, weed whacking, cleaning up the entrances and an extra cleanup before the Wreaths Across America event. The bidding process is done every two years to save money. It will be put out to bid again next year. The contractor carries the liability insurance. On another note, they are going to pursue action against the fencing contractor who owes the Trustees $5,000.00. They are still looking into how they can use trust funds and one of their new members is doing a lot of research.

Library Trustees:

Eileen Gilbert and Mary Charnley presented the Library's proposed 2026 budget request of $266,598.00.

The library is busy and there is increased use of digital services. One service is up 40% over last year. They have worked hard to increase outreach and collaboration. They participated with Old Home Day, National Night Out, some programs with the school and this week they are hosting a presentation with police department and AARP about scams.

They are hopeful for their library expansion plans which will provide more seating, tutoring space, and more space for books and programming. Two national grants helped make the building more accessible and improved the entrance and lighting. They have also added items to their collection for those with disabilities. The Trustees have requested funds from the Duffy Fund for repairs to the building including interior and exterior woodwork. Line 140 includes increased compensation for part-time assistants and an increase in hours for one.

General Assistance:

GA Director Donna Cilley presented the General Assistance proposed 2026 budget.

The Director is planning for the worst but hoping for the best. There are no major changes in the General Assistance Services area. There is some part-time labor for vacation and other coverage but it will be costly to get someone with experience who won't get us in trouble. The Director has always previously worked during vacations and time away.

The Vendor Assistance Budget shows over $129,000 in the housing line as of 10/03/2025. There are still two more months to go.

Selectman O'Hara commented on the year-to-date number showing that we have provided assistance of $136,000 and the default is only $94,000.

We have 4 rooms and 6 cottages that vacate and immediately refill. Chairman Mooney said last year the Board increased the housing to $140,000 and we are going to be close to or exceed that this year. GA Director Cilley stated we are beyond our capacity for local welfare and we need a transitional county shelter. We can't arrest our way out of this problem. We need to get agencies engaged in a shelter that could transition people to sustainable housing. There was some discussion about the homeless and local encampments. They move back and forth between towns. GA tries to visit them once or twice a week. There are also concerns about decreases in food stamps.

Chairman Mooney does not believe that $140,000 is enough for the housing line. We have to provide these services. Finance Director Steve Forster reported the housing line averages about $15,000 per month. The GA Director would like our county to look into a cold weather shelter grant. She is worried about seniors with the medical plan changes. Applications are still coming in for Fuel Assistance. Chairman Mooney recommends increasing the housing line but we may have a better idea on the numbers when we meet with the Budget Committee.

Health Agencies Continued:

The Board discussed all of the health agency requests.

South Road Cemetery gets funding from the County and has a plot for indigent Belmont residents.

Granite VNA requested $11,000 because of our default but in 2023 they were approved to receive $22,000. Selectman O'Hara would like to see more balance with the VNAs.

CAP requested $15,000 but we only gave them $13,000 last year. They provide housing and homeless outreach and housing stabilization. Chairman Mooney asked if we are getting our money's worth and GA Director Cilley said yes.

Selectman O'Hara said he loves CASA but they have funding from other sources. Chairman Mooney recommends eliminating their funding.

Waypoint assisted 12 Belmont families. The GA Director had no interaction with them.

New Beginnings works with our Police Department and assisted more than 39 individuals this year.

Selectman O'Hara said the American Red Cross does not appear to be directly benefiting our residents.

Lakes Region Mental Health provided $63,00 in charitable care to 62 residents.

PPH helps a lot of people with insurance issues and people with disabilities.

Family Promise of Lakes Region is a great idea, but Selectman O'Hara does not support funding a startup with community funds. He would like to see them stabilize their organization with other donations first.

GA Director Cilley asked what these organizations are requesting from other Belknap County communities. We will ask them for that information.

Healthfirst is a federally qualified health center that provides a variety of services including mental health on sliding scales. They offer a lot of benefit and they never come to us for support. They even give transportation vouchers.

There was discussion about balancing funding for VNAs and the impact on residents.

Selectman Ciampi noted that Granite VNA has the Hospice House in Concord. She recommended funding the VNAs: $11,000 for Granite VNA, $5,000 for Lakes Region VNA and $4,000 for Franklin VNA.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve $68,839 for the following 2026 Health Agency requests:

South Road Cemetery	*$ 8,500*
Granite VNA	*$11,000*
Lakes Region VNA	*$ 5,000*
Community Action (CAP)	*$15,000*
CASA	*$0*

Waypoint	*$0*
New Beginnings	*$ 1,418*
American Red Cross	*$0*
Lakes Region Mental Health	*$19,921*
Franklin VNA & Hospice	*$ 4,000*
Partnership for Public Health	*$ 3,000*
Family Promise of the Lakes Region	*$0*
Healthfirst	*$ 1,000*

seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

General Assistance Continued:

Selectman O'Hara moved to approve the 2026 General Assistance budget requests of $264,518 as presented; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Cemetery Trustees Continued:

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2026 Cemetery budget request of $26,000.00 as presented; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Heritage Commission:

TA Jipson presented the Heritage Commission budget request for 2026. They requested a budget of $250.00 and reduced their warrant article from $4,500.00 to $2,500.00.

Selectman O'Hara moved to approve the Heritage Commission 2026 budget of $250.00 as presented; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Selectman O'Hara moved to approve the Heritage Commission's requested warrant article of $2,500.00 as presented; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Debt, Principal & Interest, and TAN:

TA Jipson presented the request for 2026. Our debt has decreased because Pleasant Valley was paid in 2024. Hoadley Road will be paid in 2026. The Town has not been asked to take on any new debt for 2026. $254,923.00 is a good payment for a town of our size.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2026 Debt, Principal & Interest and TAN budget of $ 254,923.00 as presented; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Legal:

TA Jipson presented the Legal budget request of $60,000.00 for 2026. Finance Director Forster reported we have spent $53,500.00 so far this year. Next year we won't have union negotiations. Last year we spent $64,600.00. TA Jipson reported Land Use and Code Enforcement have their own Legal lines to pull from now.

This budget item was tabled to see what other legal bills may still come in before making a decision.

Insurance Not Allocated:

This item was tabled to a future meeting because numbers are not yet available.

Solid Waste:

TA Jipson presented the Solid Waste budget request for 2026, which does not include any Household Hazardous Waste (HHW). Our cost would be $9,516.00, which could be added to the budget. Chairman Mooney and Selectman O'Hara were not in favor of adding HHW to the budget.

Selectman O'Hara moved to not add the Household Hazardous Waste program to the Solid Waste budget for 2026; seconded by Chairman Mooney. Motion passed (4-0-1). Selectman Ciampi opposed.

The Board discussed host fees we receive from Casella, which go back into the General Fund. There is a new line item for an NHDES Solid Waste Surcharge of $3.50 per ton of waste disposed of at a landfill. The charge will help fund DES waste and infrastructure grants and will be 100% reimbursable to Towns who submit quarterly, which would effectively be an offset. Finance Director Forster thinks we may be able to spend these funds out of the revenue instead of it being an expenditure, but we do have to budget for it.

Selectman O'Hara moved to approve the Solid Waste budget as presented of $794,395 seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Adjournment:

Selectman O'Hara moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:47pm seconded by Chairman Mooney. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Respectfully Submitted By:

Colleen Akerman, Executive Assistant

Approved by the Board 10/15/2025:

Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman

Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman

Jon Pike, Vice Chairman

Sharon Ciampi, Selectman

Travis O'Hara, Selectman