



Town of Belmont

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

Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 6, 2025, 6:00 pm
Belmont Mill
Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Tracey LeClair, Vice Chair Jessi Fleck, Ron Mitchell, Selectmen's Representative Ruth P. Mooney, Members Marsha Campbell, Don House, Mark Roberts, Rachel French, Paul Maggioli, Lee Cheshire, and Susan Roache; TA Alicia Jipson, Executive Assistant Colleen Akerman, Building & Grounds Supervisor Patrick Golden; Parks & Rec Director Danielle St. Onge, Heritage Commission Chair Vicki Donovan and Heritage Commission Member Jack Donovan.

Absent: Members Brian Gardiner and Don Hurd.

Chairman Tracey LeClair opened the meeting at 6:00 pm.

Welcome & Introductions:

Chairman LeClair welcomed everyone, and introductions were made around the table. It was noted that everyone should email Executive Assistant Colleen Akerman if they will be unable to attend a meeting.

Officer Nominations & Elections:

Marsha Campbell nominated Tracey LeClair as Chairman; seconded by Mark Roberts.

T. LeClair accepted the nomination.

Motion passed unopposed (11-0).

M. Roberts nominated Ron Mitchell as Vice Chair; seconded by Paul Maggioli.

R. Mooney nominated Jessi Fleck as Vice Chair; seconded by Susan Roache.

R. Mitchell and J. Fleck accepted the nominations.

A count of hands was taken with three in favor for R. Mitchell and four in favor for J. Fleck. J. Fleck will be the new Vice Chair. R. Mitchell will remain the "Historian".

Chairman LeClair recognized Tykie Akerstrom for all of his years of service to this Committee and to the Town.

Minutes Approval – 01/07/2025:

Ruth P. Mooney moved to approve the minutes of the January 7, 2025 meeting as presented; seconded by Don House. Motion passed unopposed (11-0).

Members will receive an email every week with the minutes to review in advance. If there are any corrections or suggestions, please email C. Akerman so the changes can be made before the meeting.

Important Dates for Local Officials:

TA Alicia Jipson explained the NH Municipal Association (NHMA) calendar included in the binders that dictates when we have meetings, deliberative sessions, public hearings and more.

Meeting Change:

T. LeClair and TA Jipson have a conflict with our meeting of 12/04/2025. If members are amenable, we can try to move the meeting to 12/11/2025 depending on availability of department heads. It was the consensus of the committee to move the meeting to 12/11/2025 based on department head responses.

Role of the Budget Committee:

TA Jipson provided a few PowerPoint slides from NHMA about the role of the budget committee under the Miscellaneous tab. There are specific RSAs that guide the committee. The full budget law is also included under the Budget Law tab.

State Budget Highlights:

The State adopted a \$15.9 billion two-year budget. Proposals to reduce Rooms & Meals tax were defeated, although grants for wastewater infrastructure were reduced significantly. This year there is a new Solid Waste Surcharge that everyone will pay, but quarterly, municipalities can request a 100% refund on the surcharge. It needs to be budgeted but we will get it back. That could change at any time in the future. There were also slides about PFAS Mitigation, NH Retirement System, State Aid to Municipalities, Rooms & Meals Tax and Highway Block Grants.

TA Budget PowerPoint:

TA Jipson reviewed the printed PowerPoint presentation with an overview of meeting dates, members and term expirations, the 2025 tax rate, a recap of 2025, personnel changes, and a look ahead at 2026.

Things have been status quo. We are keeping a close eye on spending. There will be an increase in spending over the next two months even though the budget binders only include what was spent at the time the binders were printed. TA Jipson has the “live” up-to-date data that will be shared during the meeting. We collected 97% of our first issue tax bills and the target goal is 94%. We expect second issue bills to be due around 12/15/2025.

A PowerPoint will be distributed in the future to explain how the unexpended fund balance works.

Department Budgets:

TA Jipson explained that everything on the budget sheets is based on 2023 numbers because of our default budgets. The sheets also show what was actually spent in 2024 and 2025, and the requested amounts for 2026. The bottom % default number is the comparison of what has been requested in 2025 compared to the default from 2023.

Department heads and committees will present their proposed budgets and then the budget will be opened for discussion and members can ask questions about each budget, one at a time. Department heads do not request their own salaries. The Board of Selectmen decides if they will give wage increases or not. The Board agreed to a 4% increase in wages for non-union employees for 2026. Union contracts dictate union wages. Typically, employees will have a step increase in April.

Heritage Commission (1):

Vicki and Jack Donovan presented the Heritage Commission's proposed budget for 2026 which includes a \$250 budget and \$2,500 on a warrant article. J. Donovan reviewed their accomplishments and projects, including the Community Heritage Awards, Senior Citizens Food Drive, US Flags for Main Street, plaques for the Mill, Bandstand and Horse Trough, and replacement of banners in downtown. They have also started purchasing protective cases, albums and shadow boxes for historical items in conjunction with the Historical Society. Their request is \$2,000 less this year than previous years. Chairman LeClair said she appreciated the conservative request.

R. Mooney moved to approve \$250 for the Heritage Commission Budget and \$2,500 for the warrant article; seconded by P. Maggioli. Motion passed unopposed (11-0).

General Government Buildings (2):

Building & Grounds Supervisor Patrick Golden explained they are a small department with only two employees and a part-time helper during non-default budget times. They had a good year, and all of their equipment is good. They did a truck swap with DPW to replace their old truck and now they have 4WD and a plow to help in the downtown area. They have taken on more mowing and do about 25-28 lawns per week; some of them twice a week. They maintain the trail from the bridge to South Road and take care of the beach, pump stations and the old dump on Hurricane Road. Our buildings are getting older, but we have been able to maintain them and keep them inspected and up to date.

The majority of this budget is service contracts for oil, propane, electric, elevators and sprinklers. Our vendors worked with us to get the best pricing, and they are loyal to the Town and provide great timely service. They have decreased 10 line items. Some projects have been on hold, and they need their part-time helper for some of those including repairs to the Mill

bell tower, cleaning the second-floor exterior of Town Hall and replacing the roofs on the 4 beach pavilions.

Ron Mitchell asked how often the upstairs of Town Hall is checked and it is done 2 or 3 times each year. It doesn't look bad but the building moves. The rubber roof looks good, but the old radio tower should be removed because it is not used and puts stress on the building. The building is good structurally and it is amazing that it can operate with so many people in the building. The new Mill generator will run the entire building including the elevator.

There was a \$21,000 decrease in the IT line because we changed vendors this year. The new vendor is less expensive, and we are no longer leasing equipment, so the monthly package cost was reduced.

Susan Roache had questions about the wages because the math does not seem to compute properly. TA Jipson explained the wages are calculated for 13 weeks at the old rate and 39 at the new rate because changes are not made until April. This year the Board proposed 4% increases for non-union wages based on the 2025 rate of pay. This is not based on department requests.

J. Fleck questioned some of the low actual amounts. Those amounts are low due to encumbrances brought forward from the previous year, and some 2024 and 2025 requests are lower than the default budget. Encumbrances are used first and they reduce the current year budget.

J. Fleck moved to approve the General Government Buildings budget of \$521,362 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by Lee Cheshire and passed unopposed (11-0).

Parks & Rec and Beach (3):

Parks & Rec Director Danielle St. Onge has been with the department since 2022 and works to sustain programs and maintain equipment, which is difficult due to rising costs. Ancient playground equipment is a concern. Some of the program highlights are the Gunstock outreach, toddler time, park nights, the yard sale, movie nights, Old Home Day, Trunk or Treat, Deck the Village and the Chewy Food distribution as well as employee appreciation and summer camp. They are hoping to increase summer camp capacity to support more kids. Last year there was a waiting list of 14. Summer camp has offsetting revenue and made \$1,139 after expenses in 2025. They are looking to add a farmers' market and a craft market.

S. Roache asked about events for 2026 and suggested more advertising. The Deck the Village date is not known yet. Chairman LeClair said that is great feedback, but we need to focus on budget questions.

There was discussion about staffing needs, and the camp director's duties. If the proposed budget passes, the summer camp program could support 70 kids instead of 50. They want to serve as many kids as possible because the community needs it and the expenses have

offsetting revenue. There will be an increase in the part-time counselor line. Field trips include Water Country, Whale's Tale, Canobie Lake Park and Story Land. Volunteer chaperones are not used but parents are invited to attend the last field trip. They have a good, structured system. J. Fleck asked about benefits, and they are in the Executive budget. Parks & Rec is hoping for additional donations to offset programs.

J. Fleck moved to approve the Parks & Rec budget of \$187,139 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded D. House and passed unopposed (11-0).

This year the beach was only staffed with lifeguards for summer camp. It is expensive to get certified and there are not a lot of hours. The gatekeeper position is not funded but Selectman Jon Pike has volunteered for duty, and he thinks that Selectman Sonny Patten may be willing to assist. Overall, both budgets have a decrease of 1% and they are hoping to serve more kids. The gatekeeper's availability was limited, and beach visitors came at other times. The Police and Fire Departments patrol and Building & Grounds clean the beach every morning.

R. Mooney moved to approve the Parks & Rec and Beach budget of \$197,641 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by M. Roberts and passed unopposed (11-0).

Patriotic Purposes (4):

Parks & Rec is looking to decrease this budget and increase fundraising efforts. They want to host a farmers' market. Last year they raised money for Old Home Day for everything except the fireworks, which were covered by a prior year encumbrance. The Budget Committee voted not to fund the fireworks for 2025, but the Selectmen used encumbered funds. The Good Citizen Award for high school seniors was separated from the Old Home Day line in case Old Home Day is not funded at some future point.

The American Legion donated \$1,000 for Memorial Day because of the default budget, and they will do it again if they need to. The Legion also donated to Old Home Day. J. Fleck asked about the fireworks because she has a hard time using those funds for something that is gone in 15 minutes when we could hire camp staff or fund programs. They are trying to increase donations for the fireworks. We don't get the same deal that we used to, and they are much more expensive.

R. Mooney moved to approve the Patriotic Purposes budget of \$13,100 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by L. Cheshire and passed unopposed (11-0).

Legal (5):

The Selectmen finalized the Legal budget yesterday. It covers three legal firms for employment, all other and franchise agreements. This year's budget also covered union negotiations for 2026-2028, which are expensive. We use NHMA for free legal advice as much as possible. There are also legal costs involved when a property goes to auction, and when there are union grievances. L. Cheshire asked how the Legal budget can be overspent. The Department of Revenue only cares about the bottom line at the end of the year. The

Selectmen can also transfer from another underspent line but that wouldn't allow seeing the over and underspent lines at their true values. Legal is one line that towns are allowed to overspend, along with general assistance because we can't turn anyone away. J. Fleck asked if we are seeing more expenses due to complaints because the insurance market is seeing an uptick in employment issues. TA Jipson replied that we are seeing an uptick.

R. Mooney moved to approve the Legal budget of \$60,000 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by J. Fleck and passed unopposed (11-0).

Debt, Principal & Interest (6):

R. Mooney commented that as a Town, our debt is minimal compared to other towns. We are very fortunate. R. Mitchell said we have always been frugal.

T. LeClair moved to amend line 01-4723-001 to \$1; seconded by R. Mooney and passed unopposed (11-0).

There was discussion about the Town's debt. The Hoadley Road Culvert will be paid off in 2026 but we might be adding a bond for the library renovation. We will still have very low debt. Some members would like to see Town Hall moved to the Mill before a library renovation. The library renovation will be a warrant article so voters will get to choose. The Board opted to do Mill renovations here and there using some of the Municipal Facilities Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) but when it gets voted down, we can't move forward. We may need to take out a bond to get it done. The voters opted years ago to move Town Hall to the Mill. S. Roache commented that residents voted to sell the Mill building a few articles later. A lot of work was done on a feasibility study, and all of the buildings were reviewed. We invite anyone to come to Town Hall for a tour and see how cramped it is. We still have to pay for the Mill maintenance even though it is empty. We are doing the best we can with our investment. TA Jipson reminded everyone that the facilities CRF is for all town buildings and not just the Mill. These funds are used for all facilities such as the Fire Department, DPW and Police Department.

R. Mitchell left the meeting.

R. Mooney moved to approve the Debt, Principal & Interest and TAN budget of \$254,924 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by S. Roache and passed unopposed (10-0).

R. Mitchell returned to the meeting.

Insurance Not Allocated (7):

Insurance Not Allocated includes unemployment, workmen's compensation, property liability and our deductible of \$1,000 per occurrence. Primex is our carrier and they use our 2024 numbers to calculate the cost. We budget for 5 claims per year. So far we only have 1 this year. If an incident occurs and someone else is at fault, Primex will go after them to

reimburse us. J. Fleck recommended checking into a higher per occurrence deductible such as \$2,500 or \$5,000 for a savings on the premium.

L. Cheshire asked if there are any other providers to choose from. There may be one or two but Primex covers schools, counties and towns and they are well known.

J. Fleck moved to approve the Insurance Not Allocated budget of \$389,557 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by D. House and passed unopposed (11-0).

Solid Waste (8):

This budget covers the Casella contract and we don't have any control over that. The Board decided not to offer the Household Hazardous Waste program this year because it was a large expense, \$9,516, and there were less than 200 Belmont residents who participated at the last one in 2023.

There is a new NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) surcharge for solid waste disposal but there will be a 100% revenue offset through a quarterly rebate program. We also receive host fees which were \$61,000 last year.

R. Mooney moved to approve the Solid Waste budget of \$794,395 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by D. House and passed unopposed (11-0).

Executive (9):

This budget includes the health insurance for most of the Town Hall departments as well as Parks & Rec and General Assistance. The Town pays for 87% of the policies. Dental increased 4.4%, health 8.4% and there were no changes to short term disability and life. Some employees have other insurance and get a health insurance buyout. The Trustees of the Trust Funds voted to forgo their meager stipend and do their civic duty to be charitable. The overtime line is for the Executive Assistant and Finance Clerk, such as for meetings or if we are under deadlines. Vacation buy back is offered but staff are encouraged to take their vacation time. The contracts for computers, tax, payroll and A/P software, town report printing, the electronic sign and the mail machine are part of this budget. The General Expenses do not fit into a specific line and include things like employee appreciation. NHMA provides lots of training and helps guide us on new changes to laws and they help advocate for towns.

L. Cheshire asked about the health insurance and Finance Director Steve Forster explained we are in a pool, which means the premiums don't increase if there are some employees with expensive medical diagnoses.

J. Fleck moved to approve the Executive budget of \$438,090 as recommended by the Selectmen; seconded by R. Mooney and passed unopposed (11-0).

Other Old Business: None

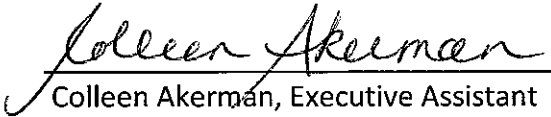
Members were reminded that elected officials can still obtain health and/or dental insurance before open enrollment ends.

Members asked about remote participation via Zoom. Chairman LeClair thought that members could comment but not vote remotely. TA Jipson will check the statute to clarify.

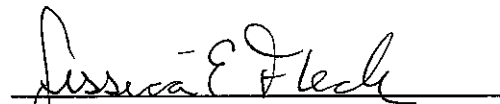
Adjournment:

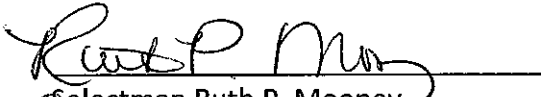
R. Mooney moved to adjourn at 8:36 pm; seconded by M. Roberts and the motion passed unopposed (11-0).

Respectfully Submitted By:

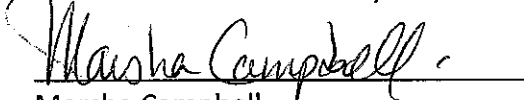

Colleen Akerman, Executive Assistant

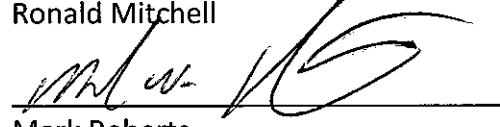

Chairman Tracey LeClair

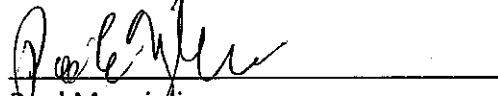

Vice Chair Jessica Fleck



Selectman Ruth P. Mooney

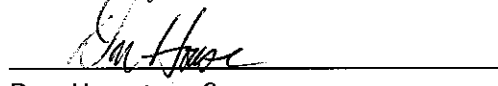

Ronald Mitchell



Marsha Campbell

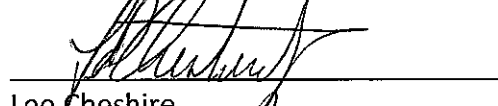

Mark Roberts


Paul Maggioni

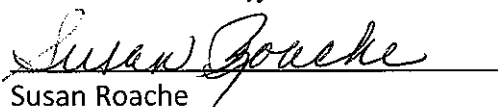

Don Hurd


Don House


Rachel French


Lee Cheshire


Brian Gardiner


Susan Roache