



# Office of Board of Selectmen

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

## Selectmen's Meeting Minutes Tuesday, November 18, 2025, 6:00 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 and Executive Assistant/Assessing Administrator Colleen Akerman, Police Chief Steve Akerstrom, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Jenn Cashman, Fire Department Chief Deb Black, Assistant Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz, and General Assistance Director Donna Cilley. Also present was Budget Committee Member Brian Gardiner.

Those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance and the Chairman opened the meeting at 6:00 pm.

### Review & Approve Minutes:

#### Minutes of Public Meeting 11/05/2025:

*Selectman Sonny Patten moved to approve the minutes of the public meeting held 11/05/2025; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

### New Business:

#### Heritage Commission Community Awards:

Heritage Commission Chair Vicki Donovan and Member Jack Donovan presented the Heritage Commission Community Awards.

Since 2011 individuals, groups, businesses and organizations have been recognized by the Heritage Commission and the Board of Selectmen for contributing to the heritage, history and well-being of our Town. This year those recipients are:

*Exceptional Commitment to Community Award - Belmont High School Students and Staff*

*Preservation of Town History and Heritage Award - Bill and Nancy Naughton*

"The Exceptional Commitment to Community Award goes to a unique group of volunteers of students and staff at Belmont High School. For several years, on Earth Day, a Spring clean-up event was organized around the school and town. Ms. Edith Takantjas continues to lead the way by organizing other staff members such as Ms. Tardugno, Mr. Seaton, Mr. Foley, Mr. Charleston, Ms. Korek, Ms. Angwin, Mr. Takantjas, Ms. Fontaine, Ms. Haskell, Ms. Hampton, Mr. McNabb, Mr. Tautkus, and Ms. Bourdeau, just to name a few who have supported this cause eagerly every year. Edith starts off the Earth Day Event assigning students and staff members to clean-up

designated areas such as Sargent Park, the Mill, the Tioga Trail, Gale, High and Church Streets, Wildlife Boulevard, as well as the Belmont High School campus. The Heritage Commission and the Board thanked the staff for teaching community pride, and the student body at Belmont High for their valuable contribution to the Town.

Bill and Nancy Naughton were nominated by two different committees in Town to receive the Preservation of Town History and Heritage Award. Both are also members of the Historical Society. They have worked diligently to inventory artifacts and documents donated to the Town of Belmont by prominent well-known townspeople who left their footprint and legacy such as Sue Roberts, Wallace Rhodes, Diane Marden and Linda Frawley. All four were known for the way they shaped the Town in their quest to preserve its history.

Vital artifacts and historical documents that tell the story of Belmont's beginnings are in good hands. Both Nancy and Bill are retired teachers and know the value and importance of safeguarding historical information. They have cataloged items such as old photos, delicate papers, and relic items from the Corner Meeting House, Province Meeting House and the Gale School. Donations to the Historical Society from older items found in Belmont homes dating back to the 1800's have also been preserved by the duo."

The Heritage Commission and the Selectboard thanked Bill and Nancy for being the unsung heroes of Belmont's past.

#### **2025 Tax Rate:**

Belmont's 2025 tax rate was set at \$17.39 per thousand, which includes \$9.98 Local School tax, \$1.10 State Education Tax, \$5.39 Municipal Tax and \$0.92 County Tax.

Selectman Pike requested a copy of the school district's bus contract because he would like to see how the mileage breakdown is split between Belmont and Canterbury. TA Jipson will request that information from the Shaker Regional School District.

Selectman Patten had concerns about the timing of the tax due date with Christmas. TA Alicia Jipson and TC/TC Jenn Cashman explained the process involved in getting tax bills out including data collection by NH Department of Revenue from the school district, the county, and the state, as well as the Sunray Shores Water District. Bills are created as soon as possible after the tax rate is set but it takes time for bill printing and mailing. We do the best we can and do not pick a random date.

Selectman Travis O'Hara commented on some complaints he has seen on FaceBook regarding the range for Town Administrator salary in New Hampshire (NH). The majority are \$116,000 to \$142,000 with the median at \$130,000. We are not overpaying for NH. It was also noted a portion of the salary increase was due in part to a change in position from Assistant Town Administrator to Town Administrator.

Chairman Mooney stated every town is dealing with tax rate complaints. It isn't less elsewhere. No one is happy. TC/TC Cashman recalled the tax rate was \$30 when she started here many years ago.

Chairman Mooney said our employees are diligent and we are scrimping and trying to save. We are halfway through the budget process and there have been no changes. If our budget doesn't pass, it will be the third year of a default and there are going to be cuts in services that no one wants to see. Every year the budget doesn't pass we get five years behind to get back to where we were two years ago.

Selectman Pike again expressed concern about the school budget and management and requested the transportation breakdown. The Town has worked for grants for dump trucks and fire trucks. We need to pay attention to the bus schedule and billing.

Selectman O'Hara mentioned Belmont voters turned down the school budget, but Canterbury voters approved it. There was some discussion about rumors of closing the Canterbury school due to low enrollment. GA Director Donna Cilley stated if we separated from the district, it would be extremely expensive and Belmont would see a big hit. Bus routes should be condensed if they can, but the contract can't be changed until it is open. The federal government is making cuts, and we will have to pay. Mental health and special education expenses are high. This is not only a problem in our district.

Selectman Ciampi requested a chart to show all of our grants the Town has received, applied for, or has pending. We try diligently to find other funding sources. TA Jipson said we have this information in our budget PowerPoint and she will make it available.

**Record Retention Policy Adoption:**

Every town is required to have a Record Retention Policy and ours is overseen by the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's Office. TC/TC Assistant Devon Tibbetts has spearheaded the policy, which has not previously been formalized by the Board. The policy outlines who is on the committee, RSAs and laws, how records are stored and disposed of, and it has an addendum to show how many years documents must be retained, the format, and who oversees the documents. Selectman O'Hara requested the Selectboard member on the committee be the Chairman of the Board instead of voting someone onto the committee each year. There was some discussion that another Board member may want to be on the committee, and the vote is only once a year like other committees.

*Chairman Mooney moved to approve the Record Retention Policy as presented; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

**Police Department Patrol Officer New Hire Approval:**

Police Chief Steve Akerstrom requested approval to hire a new patrol officer. She is not certified yet but will do pretraining and field training before the academy. That helps the candidate and the department determine if it is a good fit before attending the academy. The

January academy is filled, but there will be another in the spring. Pretraining also gives candidates an advantage at the academy.

*Selectman Patten moved to approve hiring a new patrol officer Sarah Walsh; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

**Police Department Part-Time School Resource Officer (SRO) New Hire Approval:**

Chief Akerstrom said they are waiting on final approval from the school but would like the Board's preliminary approval to hire a resource officer in preparation for the school's approval. The candidate will need to recertify at the academy, but it is intermittent training. The school district will allow the SRO candidate to work in the schools before being recertified and the district will cover the payroll. This position only works during the school year.

*Chairman Mooney moved to approve hiring a new part-time SRO Michael McFadzen; seconded by Selectman Patten. Motion passed (4-1). Selectman Ciampi opposed.*

The school is invoiced quarterly to reimburse us.

**Fire Department Call Pay Increase Request:**

Fire Chief Deb Black proposed increasing the call firefighter pay because it has been a few years since an increase. Surrounding departments were surveyed to determine a new base rate and additional increases for certifications. Starting pay is \$10 and a paramedic is only making \$11. The call budget line has always been under budget, and it has been decreased, but we have a default budget again. Call firefighters cover when there are vacancies, second calls, or building fires. There is an incentive for those with a CDL because they can drive a fire truck or tanker. Right now, officers are filling in for firefighters because sometimes they are on shift for too long. Officers are on a rotation, and everyone is happier.

Selectman Patten had concerns that now is not the time to consider an increase because of the budget situation. Chief Black explained this will not change the budget because the line has been under with low pay and only seven people. It is not a 40 hour/week position, but we need an incentive for call firefighters to come out. TA Jipson suggested this change might help reduce the overtime line. One of the call firefighters teaches our AEMTs which is a big cost savings compared to the EMS teacher.

*Chairman Mooney moved to approve increasing call firefighter pay as presented; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

**Remaining 2025 Holiday Calendar Review (Town Hall Closures):**

TA Jipson reviewed the remaining 2025 calendar with two more holidays left. We are closed for Thanksgiving and the day after, and for Christmas. In past years, the Board has approved closing early the day before Thanksgiving and Christmas with employees using their earned leave or working through the time if they choose.

*It was the consensus of the Board to approve closing Town Hall at 12 pm the day before Thanksgiving and Christmas, with employees to use earned leave time.*

Looking ahead at the 2026 calendar it includes a biennial election. In the past Election Day has been designated as a floating holiday but the way the holidays fall it does not look like it would be advantageous.

**Election Voting Booth Demo and Approval to Expend Capital Reserve Fund (CRF):**

TC/TC Jenn Cashman showed off a new style voting booth. It is a quad with one handicap station. We will continue to use table seating, and our traditional booths, but they are no longer manufactured. The new booths include curtains for each section. TC/TC Cashman proposes 5 new stations for a total of 20 new voting spaces for \$8,015.30, funded from the CRF. There is about \$17,000 in the CRF and we already took out \$3,500 for the voting machine.

Chairman Mooney questioned if there was enough space for the new style booths. TC/TC Cashman said removing some of the broken stations would make more space, and Selectman Pike suggested moving the check-in stations forward because we don't use all of the gym space. Selectman O'Hara asked if there will be any state funding options before we spend from the CRF. At this time there does not appear to be. TA Jipson mentioned that we also need to provide a special machine for handicap voters. The state provides the machine but the chip for the unit is expensive. Last year it was \$850. The unit does not save any choices and prints out a ballot that is put into the ballot machine. The new ballot box is much larger and should not need to be emptied as often. It is slower because you have to wait for each page to scan and "beep" before the next page can be fed into the machine. The inside design is different and write-ins will be fed into a slot. Previously voters could not ask to have their ballot hand counted unless there was a problem. Now if they request it there is a different slot. TA Jipson asked if these new booths will meet the booth requirement based on the increase in registered voters and replace the broken ones. TC/TC Cashman confirmed they would.

Selectman Ciampi asked about purchasing more now because we know we will need more in a couple of years and they will be more expensive. TC/TC Cashman explained right now there is a \$1,000 tariff on the booths so she hopes the cost would be less expensive in the future. She does not want to expend all of the CRF in case the state has any new requirements. There will also be a warrant article to replenish some of the funds.

Selectman Pike requested that during elections people are not moving freely around the area and remain at their stations. TC/TC Cashman will do her best to oversee everyone.

*Chairman Mooney moved to approve expending \$8,015.30 from the Election CRF for five 4-station voting booths; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

**Other New Business:**

**Fire Truck Repairs:**

Assistant Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz reported that while doing truck checks the crew noticed there was something wrong and got the truck right in to be checked. It has a blown

turbo which could have been catastrophic if ignored. It is \$13,000 to fix but it could have been worse. Selectman Pike asked if this is the truck that will be replaced with the grant truck, but it is not. This truck is a 2017 and it is a very good truck. The repair budget line is already over by \$20,000-\$30,000 but they are reviewing the rest of the budget to see if it can be covered or the Board could consider using some of the contingency funds.

Selectman Patten asked how long it will be tied up for repairs. They hope it won't be more than one week. They are down to one working fire engine and tanker right now because it can't be run without repairs. This truck will also need new pump packing but that is on next year's budget and needs to be completed at a different facility.

The repairs will be completed and the funding will be determined at a later date.

### **Old Business:**

#### **2026 Budget Amendments:**

The Board reviewed a list of ongoing changes for the 2026 budget.

TA Jipson reported that the Library Trustees approved the changes that the Board approved at their last meeting.

TA Jipson suggested a reduction to the heating line in General Government Buildings budget from \$30,000 to \$27,000. It is a small amount but it can be reduced.

The TAN budget was missing \$1 from the line. We can't take from the line if we do not add the \$1. The Budget Committee approved the budget with \$1.

The Laconia Police Department has found an Animal Control Officer for more salary than we have budgeted and would like us to increase our contribution. It is a shared position with Laconia, Belmont and Gilford. The request is to increase from \$17,000 to \$20,000. Chairman Mooney said that is still a good deal.

*Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2026 budget amendments as presented; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

The Police and Fire contracts are waiting on one item in one department. It will need to be approved by January but there are a limited number of meetings with the Board and the Budget Committee before January.

#### **Disabled Veterans Credit Update Continued:**

As requested, Assessing Admin Colleen Akerman provided the Board with more data for comparison in their packets. We were uncertain if the numbers reviewed previously included both amounts or not, but the data shows that overall, we are lower than other communities on the Disabled Veterans Credit. Selectman Patten said he is willing to help vets but it is not a good time to make increases. TC/TC Cashman reported the legislature made changes this year that would reduce the credit for disabled veterans because they are no longer be able to get the

standard and disabled credit combined, which they have always received. The disabled veteran credit would need to be increased to keep our disabled vets from losing a \$500 tax credit. Chairman Mooney recommended increasing the disabled vet credit by \$500. There was some discussion about an additional increase, but more information will need to be collected. The state has increased the limit of what is allowed to \$5,000 and our disabled vets currently received \$1,900. A warrant article will be proposed to review updating the credit to prevent disabled vets from losing \$500 credit per year.

**Other Old Business:**

**Hoadley Road/Middle Route Update:**

The November newsletter reported that someone stole all of the new signs that were posted for the four-way stop. The Police Department made an arrest last night and we have our signs back. We already expended the funds to replace them, so we have some extra stop signs.

**Fire Department Truck Grant:**

TA Jipson requested guidance from the Board about funding options for the remaining balance of the grant truck which would be about \$350,000-\$400,000. We could take a bond or loan. Finance Director Steve Forster has been reviewing the numbers in the ambulance revenue fund. We need to get some quotes to create a warrant article. There was discussion about the merits of a bond, a lease or a loan or raising the funds in one year. TA Jipson noted a bond can't be paid off early. Selectman O'Hara requested an analysis of the tax impact for different options.

**Library Expansion Funding Options:**

A 20-year bond for the library for \$4.85 million would cost \$6.9 million total with \$2.1 million in interest. The tax impact is \$0.31 per thousand, which would be an increase of \$31 for every \$100,000 that a property is worth, using the current tax rate. Selectman O'Hara commented we could build two for that amount. Decision making is up to the Board.

GA Director Cilley requested the Board discuss the library proposal with the Trustees and ask them to consider withdrawing their proposal this year. We are in the second year of a default and trying to pass an operating budget. The library is busy and deserves an expansion, but we need to be able to run the Town. There was discussion about how important the library is, but we need to run the Highway Department, Police Department, Fire Department and Town Hall. GA Director Cilley said the Board should not make any decisions without speaking with the Trustees. TA Jipson will invite them to the December 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting because the December 18<sup>th</sup> meeting cuts things too close. If the Board doesn't want to go in this direction, we should not spend time researching funding options.

Selectman Ciampi said she is a big supporter of working on the Master Plan because the library expansion was on the list after the Police Department. It is the intent to work on the plan but it comes down to funding.

**General Assistance Budget:**

GA Director Cilley said when she presented her budget she had reservations on how to build it and left the housing line at \$140,000. Today we are at \$146,000 and the state is cutting \$3 million for housing support. We are in trouble. Some people are at risk of losing their Section 8 housing. There is a push to do away with homelessness and cut permanent supportive housing and put a focus on substance abuse. Those who lose their vouchers will be looking at paying a much higher rent and it is going to be a rocky road.

GA Director Cilley spoke about misinformation presented at the recent county homeless meeting in Laconia. Many of the encampment cleanups were paid for by the State, not the City of Laconia, and non-profit groups have helped. Things get distorted because encampments are cleaned up and then they move and Belmont is stuck in the middle. GA Director Cilley stated we need a county homeless shelter. The county jail can't support the volume of homeless.

A request was made to increase the General Assistance Vendor Payments housing line from \$140,000 to \$150,000.

*Chairman Mooney moved to increase the 2026 General Assistance Vendor Payments housing line 01-4445-430 from \$140,000 to \$150,000; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

**Town Hall Food Drive:**

TC/TC Cashman promoted a food drive being hosted at Town Hall. There will be an ad in the Laconia Daily Sun this week. A huge donation was already made to St. Joseph's. Our community is eager to help others. Food pantries are seeing more elderly and young people than ever before.

**Public Comment:** None

**Next Meeting:** December 3, 2025 at 6:00 pm

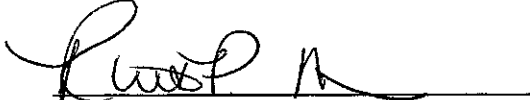
**Adjournment:**

*Selectman O'Hara moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 pm; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

Respectfully Submitted By:

  
Colleen Akerman, Executive Assistant

Approved by the Board 12/03/2025:



Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman



Jon Pike, Vice Chairman

Travis O'Hara, Selectman

Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman



Sharon Ciampi, Selectman