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
Wednesday, December 17, 2025, 6:00 pm
Belmont Mill, Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Ruth P. Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Claude "Sonny" Patten, Selectman Travis O'Hara, Selectman Sharon Ciampi, TA Alicia Jipson, Executive Assistant/Assessing Administrator Colleen Akerman and Assistant Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz. Also present were Budget Committee Member Brian Gardiner and Library Trustee Shela Cunningham, and residents Robert and Ruth Racette of 315 Durrell Mountain Road.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6:03 pm and those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Review & Approve Minutes:

Minutes of Public Meeting 12/03/2025:

Selectman Jon Pike moved to approve the minutes of the public meeting held 12/03/2025; seconded by Selectman Sharon Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (4-0-1). Selectman Sonny Patten abstained.

Minutes of Non-Public Meeting 12/03/2025:

Selectman Pike moved to approve the minutes of the non-public meeting held 12/03/2025; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (4-0-1). Selectman Patten abstained.

New Business:

2025 Encumbrances:

The encumbrances are budgeted funds that will be used to finish projects that extend into the next year. The only additional encumbrance not included on the Board's list is $1,100 for the Cemetery Trustees. The funds will be used to pay invoices from Bailey & Associates for the survey at the Weymouth Cemetery and legal and county fees to register a deed. Encumbrances can be moved forward or let lapse into the General Fund. Selectman Pike urged that we don't own the sewer pipe on Route 140 so we aren't responsible for fixing it and we need to fight this. TA Alicia Jipson replied that all Winni River Basin Program (WRBP) member communities are responsible for 100% of the infrastructure costs, which is based on how much the communities use the system. Belmont is responsible for 98% of the Route 140 force main if it needs repair or replacement. That budget line is encumbered because we have not received their bill yet. They base their rates on forecasts and assumptions, and we have over-raised the budget for that line. The well maintenance can't be completed until the new well is completely operational and we are waiting for some parts. There is a gate that needs to be replaced at the

Highway Garage. We have the titles for the police cruisers but not the invoices or the cruisers themselves. The Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) program was not held in 2024 or 2025, but it is part of the default budget from 2023. It could be encumbered or we could let it lapse. It was the consensus of the Board to let the HHW funds lapse to the General Fund. There are some options for the Old Home Day (OHD) and Fireworks lines. We could give the funds now and not encumber them for 2026 and be done with funding for OHD. Old Home Day was not funded in the 2026 budget, and it is anticipated that it will be done completely on donations. Chairman Mooney recommended giving one of the lines but not both. Selectman Pike agreed. Selectman Ciampi would like to give both lines and then wash our hands of it. Selectman Pike said the group has done a great job and Selectman O'Hara would like to see OHD fully removed from the budget. Chairman Mooney proposed funding $7,500 only and not the $6,000 line. Selectman Patten agreed. Chairman Mooney suggested giving the American Legion their donation for the Memorial Day parade now. The default budget was higher than we have been budgeting for some lines such as health, phone and custodial and we have not spent as much. We have been using encumbrances from last year for heat and phones also.

Selectman O'Hara moved to approve the 2025 encumbrances as amended at the meeting, to not encumber the HHW funds and $6,000 for OHD; seconded by Chairman Mooney. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Selectman Sharon Ciampi temporarily stepped down from the Board.

BOS Member Sharon Ciampi – Requests for Warrant Article Consideration:
Increase Cemetery Trustees from 3 to 5 members:

Cemetery Trustees Chair Sharon Ciampi requested that the Board support a warrant article to increase Cemetery Trustees membership from three to five trustees. They have a couple of alternates and a lot of different projects they are working on. Alternates are not sitting voting members. Everyone is doing something different and alternates have to reapply every year. Last year the article failed by 257 votes. Selectman Pike brought up some past history with poor budgeting and planning and lack of use of our own town departments for things like fence repairs and tree work. The trustee membership was a different group at that time, and the former town administrator would not let the trustees use town department manpower for that type of work. There is new administration and department leadership in recent years, and everyone is working together on projects and budgeting as much as possible to save on costs for everyone. Selectman Pike was also upset about a tree contract from years ago that was paid but no work was completed. Trustee Chair Ciampi stated the Selectmen cancelled that contract and the Trustees were not aware that it had still been paid. Selectman O'Hara said if there are concerns about spending, it would be better to have more people on the committee. Trustee Chair Ciampi said she will petition this article if the Selectmen are not willing to support it. Chairman Mooney said the voters should decide, just like they do with the budget.

Selectman O'Hara moved to move a warrant article to the ballot, in favor of increasing the Cemetery Trustee membership from three to five members, supported by the Board of Selectmen; seconded by Chairman Mooney. Motion failed (2-2). Selectman Pike and Selectman Patten opposed.

Increase Veterans Credit Amounts:

Sharon Ciampi proposed increasing the Standard and All Veterans Credits from $500 to $750, which is the maximum allowed by law.

The Board discussed increasing Veterans Credits, with Assessing Administrator Colleen Akerman presenting different scenarios showing the impacts of increased credits. Mr. & Mrs. Robert Racette were present in support of increases to the credits.

A new state law no longer allows veterans to "stack" credits, so disabled veterans will lose $500 a year credit if the disabled veterans credit is not increased on the ballot.

Some Board members were concerned about taxpayers' ability to afford an increase when many are struggling. S. Ciampi said veterans are struggling too, and many are part of our aging population. She will do a petitioned warrant article if the Board does not support putting increases on the ballot.

Selectman O'Hara wants to protect the disabled vets from losing $500 in credit. He proposed increasing the $500 credit to $600 and the $1,900 credit to $2,300 and we could review this again next year. He does not want to have a big increase in one year. Chairman Mooney wants to find a good happy medium because a 50% increase is a big jump. Gradual increases would be better, so we don't get in a bind.

Chairman Mooney moved to move to the ballot a warrant article to increase the Standard and All Veterans Credits from $500 to $600 and the Disabled Veterans Credit from $1,400 to $2,300, where the total was previously $1,900 when "stacked"; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed (3-1). Selectman Patten opposed.

Selectman Ciampi returned to the Board.

Other New Business:

Taxes Collected as of 12/17/2025:

The Tax Collector's Office reported that we collected 92% of the $14.1 million dollars in property taxes that was committed.

Property Fraud Alert:

A notice has been posted on our website and on social media about property fraud, where someone attempts to sell land/property that they do not own. Property owners are being warned after some recent suspicious activity with Belmont real estate property that was reported to the Town Hall and the Belmont Police Department. Property owners can register for free for this program that was made available through the Belknap County Registry of Deeds. See propertyfraudalert.com.

Food Drive:

Town Hall continues to host a food drive for non-perishable items for St. Joseph's Food Pantry and the Community Action Program (CAP). We may continue this throughout the year.

Deliberative Session Scheduling:

The Town Deliberative Session is scheduled for 01/31/2026 at 10 am at Belmont High School. The last day to hold our session is 02/07/2026, which should be our snow date. The School District also has that for their snow date. They worked with us on a compromise that if we both need snow dates, they will hold theirs at 10 am and ours would be at 2 pm.

Tax Collector's Deed – 200 Daniel Webster Highway:

The Tax Collector's Office tax deeded the property at 200 Daniel Webster Highway, which is leased to the China Garden restaurant. It will be auctioned on 01/30/2026 at 2 pm.

Old Business:

2026 Budget Changes – Library Increase:

The Library Trustees would like to increase the library director's pay line budget by $10,000 as they are searching for a new one. This would total $12,075 with the corresponding FICA and other wage expenses. If the Board approves, it will go to the Budget Committee before the public hearing.

Selectman O'Hara questioned how the Trustees could start the salary so much higher than our previous director who had been here for so long. Library Trustee Shela Cunningham explained that Trustee Chair Mary Charnley could not be here tonight. The Trustees are not sure that they would need the $10,000 but they would like to have it available. They have a number of candidates. Selectman Pike asked if wages are the reason we lost the prior director. Trustee Cunningham said it was one factor, but the prior director found another position and the Trustees did not know that she would be leaving. There was discussion about how often the Trustees speak with the director and if there were discussions about salary. Trustee Cunningham was confident that communication was not an issue. Chairman Mooney asked if the Trustees have surveyed other towns of similar size for salary. They receive an analysis every year at budget time. TA Jipson explained if this increase is approved for the director's salary line and it is not used, it will go back to the General Fund; and if we go back to a default they will only have the funds from 2023 to offer.

Selectman Pike moved to approve an additional $5,000 in salary for the library director's salary budget line. Motion died for lack of a second.

TA Jipson stated that while the Board did not support an increase in the salary budget line, the Trustees may offer what they wish by finding more funding within the general expense line or their bank account.

Fire Department Fire Truck Warrant Article:

Assistant Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz presented documents for the Board to review. The department would like to increase their original request to $425,000 for a warrant article for the new truck. A few changes were made that will bring the spec truck more in line with how our department operates. It is still well below many of the other truck options, and we have $500,000 in "free" grant money. Selectman O'Hara commented that this is a great opportunity and Chairman Mooney said this is the last year to do this because the grant is running out. If we

don't get this truck, we will be down more equipment, and it will affect response times and insurance rates for residents. The Board discussed five-year financing with the first payment to be made in 2026, which will save over $30,000 over the life of the loan. We would also be able to sell the 1998 truck chassis. There were concerns about the need to finance a new ambulance in the near future because of the time it takes to order and receive them.

Selectman O'Hara moved to approve the new modifications to the FD fire truck buildout and to put forward a warrant article to raise and appropriate $425,000 with an estimated yearly lease payment of $95,000 for 5 years; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

The Laconia Daily Sun will be doing an article about this grant program with TA Jipson, DPW Director Brian Jackes and Assistant Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz.

Other Old Business:

Town Hall Holiday Luncheon:

TA Jipson requested the Board close Town Hall for one hour for staff to enjoy a holiday luncheon.

It was the consensus of the Board to close Town Hall on Monday, December 22nd from 12 pm to 1 pm for the staff holiday luncheon.

Town Hall Holiday Schedule:

Town Hall will be closed at 12 pm on 12/24, closed all day 12/25 and 01/02, and the Town Clerk/Tax Collector's Office only will be closed on 12/26.

390 Jamestown Road Property Update:

This property is being auctioned (not by the Town) for a second time because the original bidder backed out. The property sold for $270,000 and we are owed $120,731. The property has been liened since 2014 and it will be great to receive these back taxes.

SAFER Grant Extension:

The Board, TA Jipson and Assistant Chief Pickowicz discussed the two grant firefighter positions, which are slated to go away in March 2026. They have been funded in the 2026 proposed budget. There is $279,000 in grant funds we haven't used, but we can request an extension. It has been hard to staff the positions knowing they may not be funded if we go into a default again. Assistant Chief Pickowicz said that things are changing and they never downplay staffing. There are lots of back-to-back calls that benefit from the additional staffing. Chairman Mooney said we should be very transparent with hiring and that it doesn't hurt to request an extension because the positions don't have to be filled.

It was the consensus of the Board to request an extension for the SAFER grant for two firefighters.

Public Comment:

Mr. Racette of 315 Durrell Mountain Road informed the Board there is a gravel pit in Gilford that is trucking lots of material over Belmont's road. The Board explained we have a settlement through the courts to get $5,000 a year to go towards road repairs.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 7th, 2026 at 10:00 am

Non-Public Session:

Those present and voting were Chairman Ruth P. Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Claude "Sonny" Patten, Selectman Travis O'Hara and Selectman Sharon Ciampi. Also present were TA Alicia Jipson and Executive Assistant Colleen Akerman.

Chairman Ruth P. Mooney moved to enter non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II a, c & e at 7:42 pm; seconded by Selectman Patten. Roll Call 1: J. Pike – aye, S. Patten – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).

TA Jipson reported that the 10 communities that comprise the WRBP sent a letter of no confidence to the State and NHDES. The State is proposing a meeting with all of the WRBP communities, Town Administrators and Boards of Selectmen in January. We are still waiting for the State's response to Underwood's analysis response. Selectman O'Hara suggested that now is the time we should reach out to Councilor Joe Kenney.

The Board discussed ongoing property litigation and made a decision to accept a settlement offer.

The Board reviewed a tentative employment agreement.

The Board made a decision to extend an employment offer.

TA Jipson's employment contract is up for renewal, and she presented a new three-year contract with no changes.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve a new three-year employment contract with TA Alicia Jipson; seconded by Selectman Patten. Roll Call 4: T. O'Hara – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, S. Patten – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (4-0).

Selectman O'Hara moved to exit non-public session at 8:11 pm; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Roll Call 5: S. Patten – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (4-0).

Selectman O'Hara moved to seal the minutes of this non-public session because, if discussed in public, it would likely adversely affect the reputation of a person or persons, other than a member of this board; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Roll Call 6: S. Ciampi – aye, S. Patten – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (4-0).

Adjournment:

Chairman Mooney moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 pm; seconded by Selectman Patten. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Respectfully Submitted By:

Colleen Akerman, Executive Assistant

Approved by the Board JAN 21 2026

Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman

Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman

Jon Pike, Vice Chairman

Sharon Ciampi, Selectman

Travis O'Hara, Selectman