Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 21, 2026 6:00 pm
Belmont Mill, Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Ruth P. Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Travis O'Hara, Selectman Sharon Ciampi, TA Alicia Jipson, Executive Assistant/Assessing Administrator Colleen Akerman, DPW Director Brian Jackes, Police Chief Stephen Akerstrom, and Interim Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz. Also present was Budget Committee Member Brian Gardiner. Via Zoom was Budget Committee Member Susan Roache.

Absent: Selectman Claude "Sonny" Patten.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6:02 pm and those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Review & Approve Minutes:

Minutes of Public Meeting 12/17/2025:

Selectman Travis O'Hara moved to approve the minutes of the public meeting held 12/17/2025; seconded by Selectman Jon Pike. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Minutes of Non-Public Meeting 12/17/2025:

Selectman Pike moved to approve the minutes of the non-public meeting held 12/17/2025; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

New Business:

Selectman O'Hara – Future Grant Funding Opportunity Discussion:

Resident Preston Young made a brief presentation about federal grant opportunities to get water and sewer infrastructure to Route 106 so that we can start discussing how to develop Route 106, spur commercial growth and increase the tax base. Mr. Young presented information to the Board on the USDA Water & Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program, highlighting the potential funding and the Town's eligibility in many areas. It was the consensus of the Board to explore the grant application process, but they acknowledged the need for detailed planning and collaboration. Mr. Young suggested the same grant funding may be available to help with Route 140 as well.

Conservation Commission Appointment – Tabatha Lord from Alternate to Full Member:

Selectman Sharon Ciampi moved to approve the appointment of Tabatha Lord as a Full Member of the Conservation Commission with a term to expire 03/31/2028; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

NHDOT All Way Stop Consideration – NH Route 140 & Main Street, and Main Street at Gilmanton Road and Church Street:

The Board discussed traffic safety concerns at two different intersections of Route 140 and Main Street. Some of the concerns included potential traffic backups and the impact on emergency vehicle traffic. The Board was amenable to accepting the state's recommendation to convert both intersections to all-way stops. Additional signage will be added to help prevent accidents with the changes. There is a State program we could qualify for to provide the all-way stops. This would be a good interim measure to try before moving to signals. The all-way stops are anticipated to be a temporary measure while the intersection signal project is developed at Route 140/Main Street/Nelson Court.

Selectman O'Hara moved to accept the State's recommendation received by email, to convert the intersections of Main Street/Route 140/Church Street and Main Street/Route 140/Nelson Court to all way stops; seconded by Chairman Mooney. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Firefighter Kyle Behan Resignation:

Interim Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz announced the resignation of Firefighter Kyle Behan, who will be joining his family's business. They are sad to lose him, but he will be staying on as a call firefighter.

Fire Chief Retirement and Interim Fire Chief Appointment:

Former Fire Chief Deb Black has retired and the Board previously appointed Assistant Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz as the Interim Fire Chief.

Selectman O'Hara moved to appoint Interim Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz as the Fire Chief; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Interim Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz accepted the appointment. There will be an official ceremony in the future.

2026 Budgets and Warrants:

TA Jipson provided three copies of the default budget and warrant for the Board to sign. The Budget Committee has signed the MS-575 for the budget itself. There are 41 warrant articles with one petitioned article to sell the Mill building.

Selectman O'Hara is opposed because he thinks it would be a waste of taxpayer money to sell it now with everything that has gone into it. There would be no place for General Assistance or Parks & Rec offices, and no meeting space for Town Boards. It would be a poor financial decision.

Selectman O'Hara moved to not support the petitioned warrant article to sell the Mill building; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Candidacy Filing Period for Elected Officials 01/21/2026 to 01/30/2026:

Candidacy filing is open from today, January 21st, through Friday January 30th at 5 pm. The office is open one hour extra for candidacy filings only.

Belmont Old Home Day Trophy – Albert Akerstrom Jr. Memorial Parade Trophy:

Town staff found an Old Home Day trophy plaque from many years ago, named after Albert Akerstrom Jr. The Board was asked for guidance on whether the trophy should be donated to the Akerstrom family, or the award revived. Selectman Pike recommended the trophy be revived and placed somewhere in the halls of the Mill building. It was the consensus of the Board to revive the award.

DES – WRBP Route 140 Response Letter – Next Steps:

The State responded to our last communication. They said Underwood's report was incomplete and Wright-Pierce recommends a complete pipeline replacement, but they could support a two-phase plan. The biggest thing to discuss is what do the phases look like, and what are the estimated additional costs to phase. WRBP does not think Wright-Pierce's estimate of $2,000,000 extra is correct. There are no signs the line is bad past the breakage point and we can keep pushing back. Selectman Pike noted his concerns about the driveway constructed on Route 140 in the area of the breaks. DPW Director Brian Jackes noted the Underwood report says the line could last 15 more years. The Board discussed funding options, potential grant opportunities and adding water lines on Route 140. TA Jipson has been working the USDA Rural Development office, but they have high staff turnover which makes it difficult to work with them.

At this time, the State is looking for Belmont to commit to Phase 1 design work. TA Jipson intends to set up a meeting with herself and NHDES, the two engineering firms, DPW Director Jackes, and some of our Selectboard members. Selectman O'Hara has some contacts at the State level and will reach out to Councilor Joe Kenney. If we do nothing, the State will do the project and bond out the $10,000,000 which will need to be repaid through user fees. A suggestion is to go in for half of the project now and look at the other half in 5 years or more. This would help spread out the costs. We need to buy some time and if we can prove there are no other breaks once the Phase 1 work is completed, the remainder of the work could potentially be put off while we work on additional funding.

WRBP Advisory Board & NHDES Joint Community Meeting – 01/22/26 Belknap Mill 6:30 pm:

There will be a joint meeting tomorrow evening, January 22nd at the Belknap Mill, 25 Beacon Street East, Laconia at 6:30 pm. The purpose is to discuss community concerns and WRBP management with NHDES. There will be 10 communities attending with Town Administrators, Selectboards, State representatives, Senator, and the public. Chairman Mooney and Selectmen Pike and O'Hara agreed to attend with TA Jipson.

Other New Business:

Water Department Update:

DPW Director Jackes reported on multiple water issues we have had recently. There was a big break on School Street as well as a big issue on Westview Drive. He showed the Board the

pipe that was damaged and removed from Westview Drive. Selectman O'Hara commented that it looked like pipe that would be used for lawn irrigation. The original pipes predate any zoning and regulations. The line serves one business and seven homes. Two of the homes had pressure issues after the repair and equipment was brought in to help continue to provide water service to those two properties. It is not advisable to do the repairs now with the high chance for additional breaks and the cold weather complicating things. The department is working on estimates to fix the lines to Town standards, and they are trying to find some emergency grant funding.

Per Diem Contracted Work for Public Works:

Currently our DPW Director is a one-man show. There have been discussions about bringing back former DPW Director Craig Clairmont as a project manager for a few things such as water line breaks or well 4. There is a drafted agreement and there will be no commitment for a specific number of hours. He can manage a few projects, supervise, and provide some mentoring, which would alleviate some of the pressure of not having an Assistant DPW Director at this time. DPW Director Jackes was reminded that he is the Director now and he needs to make any important decisions. Mr. Clairmont will need to stay in the "project lane" and report to the DPW Director.

Selectman Pike moved to approve hiring Craig Clairmont as a per diem contracted project manager for the Department of Public Works; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed (3-0-1). Chairman Mooney abstained due to her relationship with Craig Clairmont.

Fire Department Reallocation of Old Radios:

Chief Pickowicz requested the Board's approval to repurpose their old radios to the DPW. Although the Fire Department can't use them anymore, they can be used by DPW.

It was the consensus of the Board to approve repurposing the Fire Department radios to the DPW.

Fire Department Partnership with Pumping Company:

Chief Pickowicz requested the Board's approval to work with NESTA, a training company for pumping. This company would provide free simulation training for our department members in exchange for using our fire truck as a prop. Photos will be displayed online with Belmont's name on the truck. Training is held locally on Route 106 at an indoor facility.

It was the consensus of the Board to approve the partnership with NESTA.

Fire Department Equipment Auction:

Last fall the rescue truck was placed for auction, and it recently sold for $7,700, and the boxes sold for $500. The department will be asking the Board to support repurposing those funds for tools such as rescue ropes and PPP fans. Selectman Pike asked the department to keep a detailed accounting of the receipts and invoices. TA Jipson will include this on the next agenda in order to have all of the documents so the funds can be earmarked.

Old Business:

Reminder of 200 DW Highway Property Auction 01/30/2026 2:00 pm:

The auction of this property is on schedule for Friday January 30th at 2:00 pm. The restaurant would like to remain as tenants but that is under the control of the winning bidder. Back taxes and fees will be paid from the proceeds, and the former owner will receive the balance.

Other Old Business: None

Public Comment: None

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 4th, 2026 at 10:00 am

Non-Public Session:

Those present and voting were Chairman Ruth P. Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Travis O'Hara and Selectman Sharon Ciampi. Also present were TA Alicia Jipson and Executive Assistant Colleen Akerman. Also present was DPW Director Brian Jackes. Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz entered the meeting later.

Chairman Ruth P. Mooney moved to enter non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II A & L at 7:37 pm; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Roll Call 1: J. Pike – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (4-0).

DPW Director Brian Jackes presented a request for restructuring personnel in the Water & Sewer Departments.

Selectman O'Hara moved to approve a promotion and wage increase for the Utility Technician position; seconded by Selectman Sharon Ciampi. Roll Call 2: S. Ciampi – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, J. Pike – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Director Jackes left the meeting.

The Board spoke about the final settlement authorization for property litigation for 82 Plummer Hill Road.

Selectman O'Hara moved to authorize legal counsel to sign off on the final settlement offer for 82 Plummer Hill Road; seconded by Selectman Pike. Roll Call 3: S. Ciampi – aye, J. Pike – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz entered the meeting.

The Board discussed the Fire Chief promotion with Chief Pickowicz.

Chief Pickowicz left the meeting.

Selectman O'Hara moved to exit non-public session at 8:16 pm; seconded by Selectman Pike. Roll Call 4: T. O'Hara – aye, J. Pike – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Adjournment:

Chairman Mooney moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 pm; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Respectfully Submitted By: Colleen Akerman

Colleen Akerman, Executive Assistant

Approved by the Board 02/04/2026:

Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman

Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman

Jon Pike, Vice Chairman

Sharon Ciampi, Selectman

Travis O'Hara, Selectman