Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 4, 2026 10:00 am
Belmont Mill, Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Ruth P. Mooney, Selectman Claude "Sonny" Patten, Selectman Travis O'Hara, Selectman Sharon Ciampi, TA Alicia Jipson, Executive Assistant/Assessing Administrator Colleen Akerman, Town Planner Karen Santoro, DPW Director Brian Jackes, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Jennifer Cashman, Police Chief Stephen Akerstrom, Police Captain Evan Boulanger and Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz. Also present was Budget Committee Member Brian Gardiner. Via Zoom was Town Clerk/Tax Collector Assistant Devon Tibbetts.

Absent: Selectman Jon Pike.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 10:00 am and those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Review & Approve Minutes:

Minutes of Public Meeting 01/21/2026:

Selectman Travis O'Hara moved to approve the minutes of the public meeting held 01/21/2026; seconded by Selectman Sharon Ciampi. Motion passed (3-0-1). Selectman Sonny Patten abstained due to his absence from the meeting.

New Business:

Accept $7,736 from Sale of Municipal Property – FD Earmark $7,656 for Purchase of Life Safety Equipment:

Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz presented this proposal to the Board at their last meeting and the vote was delayed until the funds had been received.

Selectman O'Hara moved to accept $7,736 from the sale of municipal property and earmark $7,656 for life safety equipment as presented by the Fire Chief; seconded by Chairman Ruth P. Mooney. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Deliberative Session Recap:

TA Jipson reported the meeting last Saturday went well with about 50 people in attendance and about half of those being Town staff and officials. There were a couple of clerical corrections and Article 13 was amended for the new lower cost of the fire truck. A motion to amend the article to include a note that $500,000 in grant funds would be lost if the article was defeated was approved by Legal to be included on the ballot. There were some

concerns about online discussions about the Town budget. The Board may need to make some hard decisions if the budget is defeated.

The School Deliberative session will be held tomorrow (02/05/2026) at 6 pm at Belmont High School. There was some discussion about a new bill that would allow students to attend any school if there was capacity.

Voters' Guides are available at Town Hall and the Library as well as on the Town website. If there are any questions, please contact the Town Administrator or Board of Selectmen members. Town Staff and Officials will not respond to questions on FaceBook. Please call, email or ask in person. Selectman O'Hara said there is a lot of misinformation out there.

Police Department New Hires:

Police Chief Stephen Akerstrom reported they are ready to hire two new officers and background checks have been completed. One officer is certified in New Hampshire and needs to resign his current position. The other is a State of New York officer who will need to get a law package update in May, but he needs to find housing. It is the intention that he will become Belmont's new K-9 Officer. We have a K-9 cruiser already and there is a replacement fund for the dog that will use no tax dollars to acquire/train a dog.

Selectman O'Hara moved to approve hiring Nathan Lahey and Kenneth Faath to the Belmont Police Department; seconded by Chairman Mooney. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

There are currently three vacancies remaining in the department. Chief Akerstrom is working to fill all three.

Other New Business:

Water Main Break in Laconia on Court Street:

Belmont North's Water System on Route 3 has been affected by a water main break on Court Street in Laconia. They hope to have water restored later today.

Police Detail Rates:

Chief Akerstrom proposed an increase to the detail rate for private vendor contracts as it has been three years since the last increase. They checked with other area departments and recommended an officer rate of $75/hr., which is paid by the vendor. Cruiser and administrative fees are separate from this rate. The current rate is $90 total with $60 for the officer, $15 for the cruiser and $15 for admin fees. Details are for when an officer is needed on site for cable or utility work, etc. This is time worked on their days off beyond their regular shifts. If they are scheduled for a regular shift they cannot work a detail. Details are limited so that approval is needed if an officer would have more than 20 hours of overtime in a week, which is for the safety of the officers. There was discussion about the new total rate, which would increase from $90 per hour to $105 per hour with this change. Selectman O'Hara asked how this would impact retirement costs. Administrative fees pay for the retirement costs, and not all officers qualify so it is not consistent. Chairman Mooney recommended an increase to the admin rate also to help offset costs.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve an increase in the Police Department's special detail rate for the officer's hourly portion from $60 to $75, the admin fee from $15 to $20 and the cruiser fee remaining at $15, for a total of $110 per hour; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Police Department E-Bike Request:

Chief Akerstrom requested funds be expended from the asset forfeiture account for two new e-bikes. The e-bikes would help out on the WOW Trail/Town Beach area and in downtown. One would be kept at the station and the other would be kept at the Belknap Marketplace where it would also be charged. The funds requested include a hitch hauler. Once there are more officers on staff, it would give flexibility to have an officer patrolling regularly at the beach and on the trail. The e-bikes can do 30 mph and will increase response times on the trail, especially. Selectman Patten asked how many other towns have e-bikes. The Sheriff's Department and Laconia PD have them. We also still have mountain bikes that will be kept. There will be no taxpayer expense because these funds come from drug seizure monies. All officers who will use the bikes go through a week-long course. Captain Boulanger said it is a strenuous test. No motorcycle license or registration is required.

Selectman Patten moved to expend $11,589.11 from the asset forfeiture account for the purpose of purchasing two e-bikes for the Police Department with no funds to come from taxpayers; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Old Business:

200 DW Highway Property Auction Update:

The property at 200 Daniel Webster Highway was auctioned last Friday with a winning bid of $700,000 made by Kevin Hutchinson. He commented that he would like to keep the restaurant there. TA Jipson noted errors in reporting by the Laconia Daily Sun because the back taxes and fees owed to the Town were significantly more than stated by the newspaper. The amount is approximately $175,000, not $22,000. The revenue will be recorded for the sale of municipal property and will be used to offset taxes for 2026. By law, the remainder goes back to the prior property owner.

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

At their last meeting, the Board approved the State's recommendation to go with all way stops at two Main Street intersections. There were some questions sent back to the State and the Board was provided their response. All legs with new stops will have message boards as advance notice a few weeks before and the boards will stay for a few weeks after the transition. There will be new signs with conspicuous orange flags and the stop bars will be added and refreshed on the pavement. The flashing overhead beacon will be converted from yellow to red in all directions. Selectman O'Hara still had concerns about congestion in some areas. Chairman Mooney was concerned about the Fire Station. Chief Akerstrom proposed adding a stop sign on Dearborn Street at Johnson Street. It may help alleviate drivers using that road and force drivers to reduce their speed. There was discussion about making Johnson Street one-way or making a

one-way at one end of the road, surveying residents in the neighborhood, and checking the MUTCD for guidance.

Governor & Council Approval of $500,000 Fire Truck Grant – Granite State Clean Fleet program:

TA Jipson reported we received official notice that the $500,000 fire truck grant has final approval. We will need to wait for voting to see if the rest of the financing will be approved. There have been questions about why the ambulance fund wasn't used for this purpose and it is because we will need to order a new ambulance soon and if we keep taking money from the ambulance fund for other things we will have to bond out a new ambulance. We need to build the fund up so that we will have the funds for a new ambulance soon. It takes a couple of years to receive an ambulance once it has been ordered.

Other Old Business: None

Public Comment: None

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 18th, 2026 at 6:00 pm

Non-Public Session:

Those present and voting were Chairman Ruth P. Mooney, Selectman Claude "Sonny" Patten, Selectman Travis O'Hara and Selectman Sharon Ciampi. Also present were TA Alicia Jipson, Executive Assistant Colleen Akerman, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Jennifer Cashman and DPW Director Brian Jackes.

Chairman Ruth P. Mooney moved to enter non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II A &C at 10:44 am; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Roll Call 1: S. Patten – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (4-0).

TC/TC Jennifer Cashman presented a request for interest forgiveness on back taxes on property at 26 Leisure Lane. Regular payments have been made to reduce the amount of back taxes owed and current taxes are up to date. TC/TC Cashman reviewed the interest amounts and the years due with the Board.

Chairman Mooney moved to waive up to $5,000 in back interest and the remainder to be applied to principal for the property at 26 Leisure Lane; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Roll Call 2: S. Ciampi – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Patten – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (4-0).

TC/TC Cashman left the meeting.

DPW Director Brian Jackes and the Board discussed starting the process to hire an Assistant DPW Director and a water/sewer employee. The Board agreed that TA Jipson should start advertising now.

DPW Director Jackes left the meeting.

The Board discussed wages for the new Fire Chief.

Selectman O'Hara left the meeting.

Selectman Ciampi moved to agree with TA Jipson's recommendation as presented for the new Fire Chief's salary; seconded by Chairman Mooney. Roll Call 3: S. Patten – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (3-0).

Selectman Ciampi moved to exit non-public session at 12:09 pm; seconded by Selectman Patten. Roll Call 4: S. Ciampi – aye, S. Patten – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (3-0).

Adjournment:

Chairman Mooney moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:10 pm; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Respectfully Submitted By: Colleen S Akerman

Colleen Akerman, Executive Assistant

Approved by the Board 02/18/2026

Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman

Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman

Jon Pike, Vice Chairman

Sharon Ciampi, Selectman

Travis O'Hara, Selectman