Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 18, 2026 6:00 pm
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, DPW Director Brian Jackes, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Jennifer Cashman, Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz, General Assistance Director Donna Cilley, Fire Department Administrative Assistant Becky Beaulac, Firefighter Richard Raper, Firefighter Tom Ryan, Firefighter Jim Hayes and Firefighter Liam Foston.

Absent: Selectman Jon Pike.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6:00 pm and those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Review & Approve Minutes:

Minutes of Public Meeting 02/04/2026:

Selectman Sonny Patten moved to approve the minutes of the public meeting held 02/04/2026; seconded by Selectman Travis O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Public Hearing – Fire/Ambulance & Equipment Special Revenue Fund:

Chairman Ruth Mooney opened the Public Hearing at 6:01 pm.

Chairman Ruth Mooney stated this hearing is to take public comment, in accordance with RSA 31:95-c, on changing the purpose of the Special Revenue Fund known as the Fire/Ambulance Equipment and Apparatus Fund. To see if the Town will vote to amend the vote taken on Article 7 at the 1999 Annual Meeting to restrict all revenues from ambulance billings to be deposited in the Special Revenue fund known as the Fire/Ambulance Equipment and Apparatus Fund to instead restrict all but the first $149,500 of revenues from ambulance billings received during the 2026 budgetary year to be deposited in the Special Revenue fund known as the Fire/Ambulance Equipment and Apparatus Fund. The first $149,500 of revenues from ambulance billings will be deposited in the Town's General Fund to defray the cost items identified below. This restriction shall only be effective for the 2026 budgetary year if the article is approved at Town meeting.

Training Expenses $3,000
Medical & Supply Expenses $30,000
Ambulance Billing Fees $20,000

Overtime $40,000
Telephone $2,000
Conferences & Dues $1,500
Office Expense $12,000
Vehicle Repair & Parts $33,000
Fuel $8,000

This Public Hearing is only necessary for this article, and this is something that we must do every year by law because it is a Special Revenue Fund. The purpose of which we are allocating these funds is directly for the Fire Department and fall within the purpose of the special revenue fund. We are not defraying funds for any other purpose or department fund.

There being no public comment, the Chairman closed the Public Hearing at 6:03 pm.

Public Hearing – Library to Retain Funds from Income-Generating Equipment:

Chairman Mooney opened the Public Hearing at 6:03 pm.

Chairman Mooney stated this hearing is to take public comment in accordance with RSA 202-A:11-b, on the Town's desire to permit its library to retain money received from its income-generating equipment.

Chairman Mooney explained that NH public libraries are authorized under RSA 202A:11-a to hold funds from fines, lost books, photocopies, faxes, and services in a separate, non-lapsing account. Those funds can be used for general repairs and upgrading and for the purchase of books, supplies and income-generating equipment. These funds will be under the care and oversight of the Library Trustees.

There being no public comment, the Chairman closed the Public Hearing at 6:05 pm.

New Business:

Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz Pinning & Swearing In Ceremony:

Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz was sworn in by Town Clerk Jennifer Cashman and pinned by his wife, Elyssa Pickowicz.

2024 Audit Letter:

TA Alicia Jipson reported that we expect to have the final copy of the 2024 audit by the end of this week. Draft copies were provided to Board members with a copy of the management letter and Administration's response to the findings. There are no bad findings financially. There were a lot of changes in 2024 with staff turnover, and we hired a consultant to clean up some of the "old" items. Procedures have been updated since 2024 and the 2025 audit starts in April. Selectman Travis O'Hara had concerns about the reconciliations. TA Jipson said bank accounts are reconciled monthly and there are no missing funds or appropriations. The cleanup process was explained in the response letter.

2025 Annual Report Dedication:

The 2025 Annual Report was dedicated the Albert "Tykie" Akerstrom. Reports should be available Friday, February 27th.

Police Department Accreditation – Letter of Support:

Police Chief Steve Akerstrom was unable to attend the meeting this evening but he is looking for the Board's support to try again for accreditation. Former Police Chief Mark Lewandoski explained that this is for state, not federal accreditation. It ensures that the building is compliant and policies and cruisers meet certain standards. The process was started last year but there wasn't enough time to complete everything. Most of the policies have already been updated. The State requires the Board's approval to continue with this process. It will help with our insurance and it sets standards for policies that align with all other accredited police agencies in New Hampshire. In the past, every department had its own policies. This will help with grants as well. It was the consensus of the Board to provide the letter of support for State accreditation.

Per Diem Building Inspection Services:

Our Building Inspector was injured while on an inspection and will be in and out for an unforeseen amount of time. The Town Planner can perform some inspections, but she is not qualified for everything. The City of Laconia is willing to offer up to 5 hours per week of per diem inspections if necessary. This would be a backup to some workarounds that are already in place. Costs would come from the Building and Planning Department budget if we need to engage the services. It was the consensus of the Board to approve the per diem inspection services.

Selectman Patten requested the Building Inspector provide a monthly report for the Board.

Police Department Old Cruisers for Auction:

The Department has three police cruisers at end of life. They will need to go to auction or we could try Municibid, which other departments have used. Selectman O'Hara commented that last time Selectman Pike recommended going to auction. TA Jipson replied that we can require a minimum bid on Municibid. Chairman Mooney suggested tabling discussion until Selectman Pike can review the request. DPW Director Brian Jackes said two of the cruisers are at the DPW and one is at the PD. He can ask Selectman Pike to look at them before the next meeting to make a recommendation.

Other New Business:

Police Department Swearing In for Officer Nathan Leahy:

Officer Leahy will be sworn in on February 23rd at 9 am at the Police Department.

Seasonal Load Limits Update:

DPW Director Jackes notified the Board that he expects load limits to be in effect the first week of March with the traditional 6-ton limit. He expects the posting to happen before the

next Board meeting. Roads are still solid but if we don't get low night temperatures it could happen early.

Absentee Ballots – Town & School Elections:

TC/TC Jennifer Cashman informed the Board that absentee ballots have arrived, and they have already starting mailing ballots. Identification is required to obtain an absentee ballot. The school has a separate ballot from the Town, but the Clerk's office has both. They will be testing ballots on February 26th at 4 pm.

General Assistance Request:

GA Director Donna Cilley explained that she has never requested funds for transportation or mileage, but she has calculated that she drives 6,000-7,000 miles per year in her personal vehicle for Town-related business. She is concerned about her personal vehicle and liability, particularly transporting people. She would like to request the opportunity to pursue a vehicle for GA transportation using opioid abatement funds, which can only be used for very specific purposes. Many of the people assisted by GA are recovering from substance misuse or have overlapping mental health conditions. There is currently approximately $40,000 in the fund. TA Jipson has researched allowable uses for the money and she believes that this is something that would be allowed. The Board would like to get Selectman Jon Pike's input on a vehicle. Selectman Patten asked about budgeting for fuel but this would not be funded from the budget; it would be part of the settlement monies we receive for free. Selectman O'Hara asked if one of our old police vehicles could be used for this purpose. DPW Director Jackes said that the cruisers are ready to be traded and it would need repairs to bring it up to specs. It was the consensus of the Board to pursue using opioid abatement funds for a GA vehicle.

House Bill 348 General Assistance Concerns:

GA Director Cilley explained that welfare offices run off RSA 165, which was originally created in 1601 and has only had some small improvements in the time since. Some changes are being proposed at the state level that would create a 90-day residency requirement prior to application, and require evidence such as a lease, vehicle registration or utility bill. Many of those who may need assistance will have a hard time providing the required evidence, such as a mom with young children who moved in with a boyfriend and isn't on the lease, and doesn't have her own vehicle, but is "kicked out" of her home. She has no utilities in her name, and the children are not enrolled in school. She may not have a license and doesn't pay any bills. There is also a proposal to limit the amount of funding per person, which would leave people out on the streets and our charitable organizations will be unable to sustain that type of fallout. She requested the Board ask the Chairman to send a letter in opposition and allow her to send a letter as well, with their permission. Chairman Mooney commented that they are trying to save money, but they are pushing more back on local taxpayers, and it puts more people out on the streets. Selectman O'Hara said he would agree to a letter of opposition with the caveat that we have questions that need to be answered. It was suggested to send a concise letter with a bulleted list of circumstances and consequences. GA Director Cilley thinks the bill should be tabled or rejected and worked on with NH welfare administrators to provide something that is viable for everyone. Selectman O'Hara asked when do we cut things off, and when does this not become a taxpayer issue. It was the consensus of the Board that GA Director Cilley send a letter

in opposition and note that the letter is sent with the support of the Belmont Board of Selectmen.

Old Business:

Other Old Business:

Fire Department Reinstatement – Kyle Behan:

Firefighter Kyle Behan has been reinstated to the Belmont Fire Department. He left on good terms.

NHDES Belmont Force Main Meeting:

There will be a meeting on March 18th at 9 am in Belmont with NHDES, the Commissioner, our engineers and the State engineers so that we can defend our case about phasing the replacement of the Route 140 force main. This will be our last opportunity to fight this. The Selectmen are encouraged to attend, and Selectman O'Hara asked that Councilor Joe Kenney and Senator Tim Lang also be invited.

Draft Informational Letters:

The Board reviewed three letters to be published in the newspaper, our newsletter and on our website. One is about the budget, one is about the tax impact, and one is about the fire truck grant. It was the consensus of the Board to approve the letters for publication.

Public Comment:

Belmont resident Ann Cheshire announced her run as a write-in candidate for the open seat on the School Board. She sat on the school's advisory budget committee this past year and has worked in schools for over 45 years.

It was suggested that we promote our grant vehicles with photo displays at elections. TA Jipson will check with our moderator. We received $575,000 in grant funds in 2025, and we have over $767,00 that were granted but not yet received.

The Town runs on an operating budget and does not "make" money. Voters' Guides are available to answer questions. Resident Tom Murphy suggested narrating the Voters' Guide and putting it on the Town's YouTube Channel in sections because no one wants to read anymore. Comments could be restricted and it would be another way to get information out. A high school or college student might want to do that.

Candidates' Night will be held on Wednesday, March 4th at 5:30 pm at Belmont High School.

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

Non-Public Session: **None**

Adjournment:

Chairman Mooney moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 pm; seconded by Selectman Patten. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Respectfully Submitted By: Colleen Akerman

Colleen Akerman, Executive Assistant

Approved by the Board 03/04/2026

Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman

Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman

Jon Pike, Vice Chairman

Sharon Ciampi, Selectman

Travis O'Hara, Selectman