Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 18, 2026, 9:00 am
Belmont Mill, Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Ruth P. Mooney, Selectman Travis O'Hara, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Sharon Ciampi, TA Alicia Jipson, DPW Director Brian Jackes. Also present were NHDES WRBP Reps Sharon McMillian, Ted Diers, Rene Pelletier, WRBP Advisory members, Wes Anderson, Glenn Brown, Trish Stafford, Jason Bordeaux, Nate Gurette, Mike Stein of Wright-Pierce, David Cedarhold from Underwood Engineering, Paul Busby of Busby Construction, Woody Fogg.

Absent: Selectman Mark Lewandoski.

The Chairman opened this joint meeting with the Winnipesaukee River Basin Program (WRBP) at 10:00 am.

Call to Order:

The meeting began with introductions from various attendees, including Ruth P. Mooney, the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, and representatives from engineering, education, and environmental sectors. The discussion focused on a sewer main issue on Route 140 that has been causing problems for several years. The group agreed to start with introductions before proceeding to the main agenda, which included addressing the Route 140 force main.

Project Overview:

The meeting provided an overview of the Belmont Force Main project, highlighting its age, capacity, and recent issues, including multiple breaks since 2014 leading to sanitary sewer overflows. The team discussed a 2023 desktop evaluation by Wright Pierce, which identified eight alternatives and recommended a combination of replacement and lining, focusing on three river crossings and areas with narrow right-of-ways. The plan involves lining existing pipes in some areas and installing parallel new pipes where space allows, with the aim of minimizing disruption by keeping the existing force main operational during construction.

Risk & Analysis:

The Board discussed the results of a corrosion assessment of the Town's force main, which showed significant corrosion in some areas but minimal corrosion in others. They considered both a single-phase and multi-phase replacement project, with the State's engineers recommending a single-phase approach due to cost concerns. The Town's residents were unlikely to approve a bond for the full project, so the Board explored the possibility of a phased approach. They also discussed the current condition of the pipe, noting that while some sections showed signs of corrosion, others were in good condition. The board concluded that while immediate action was

needed for the worst affected areas, the rest of the pipe could potentially last 15+ years with proper maintenance.

Project Timeline:

This project will need to be coordinated with NHDOT for construction timing and requirements, particularly for the work on Route 140 and permits.

Financial Overview:

Engineers from Wright Pierce estimated the costs to replace and rehabilitate the 2.5-mile force main at approximately $10 million for a single-phase project. The Town of Belmont expressed significant concerns about the high costs and the feasibility of bonding such a large project, given previous failed bond attempts and current budget constraints.

The project would be bonded by the state once expenses reach a certain amount, with costs being passed on to communities through existing billing categories. They clarified that if a community defaults on payments, they would need to increase rates to cover costs, as this would not trigger a default for the bond. The group also addressed concerns about funding, noting that while the state currently has no free money for the project, grant applications are being pursued to offset costs. They reviewed sewer rate data from the state dashboard, which showed annual rates for residential and non-residential users, though the exact numbers may not match what communities are currently charging.

Costs for single-phase and full-project scenarios were analyzed. The Board agreed to begin design and construction contract preparations for phase one, which is expected to be completed by 2027, with potential construction starting that year. They also plan to continue pursuing grants to offset costs.

The Board discussed the financial responsibility for infrastructure projects, including the potential impact on Belmont's budget. They acknowledged the presence of a significant aquifer and the associated risks to groundwater, emphasizing the need for conservative risk analysis. The group agreed on the necessity of beginning design work for phase one of the project, with the understanding that it might not be completed all at once. There was concern about the potential for major breaks, particularly around July 4th, and the urgency to avoid such scenarios was emphasized. The Board also touched on the process of measuring flow and adjusting rates based on population and user data.

The Town has spent $60,000 on test pits and corrosion reports, and some Board members expressed concern that these assessments were not part of the initial evaluation. They agreed that a significant section of the pipe needs replacement soon, and there are advantages to designing the entire phase one at once, even if construction isn't completed all at once. The Board considered reducing the pipe size and changing the pumps, which could potentially save money, but this alternative was not examined in the original assessments. They concluded that more information is needed before proceeding with engineering, as there are still many unknowns that could increase the project's cost.

Decision Item:

The Board discussed the phased approach for a sewer project, with concerns raised about the cost and timeline. They emphasized the need to consider the community's opinion and the financial impact on ratepayers. The engineers agreed to review the options and communicate their findings back to the Board. The group also touched on the potential for future infrastructure issues and the process for reviewing final design plans before bidding.

The conversation ended with agreement that while action is needed soon due to ongoing permit violations and risk to nearby drinking water wells, further analysis of alternative approaches and cost-reduction options will be considered before moving forward with engineering design work.

Adjournment:

Chairman Mooney moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 am seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).

Respectfully Submitted By:

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Alicia Jipson, Town Administrator

Approved by the Board ____/____/2026:

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Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman

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Travis O'Hara, Vice Chairman

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Jon Pike, Selectman

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Sharon Ciampi, Selectman

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Mark Lewandoski, Selectman