Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 18, 2026 6:00 pm
Belmont Mill, Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Ruth P. Mooney, Selectman Travis O'Hara, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Sharon Ciampi, Selectman Mark Lewandoski, TA Alicia Jipson, Executive Assistant/Assessing Administrator Colleen Akerman, and General Assistance Director Donna Cilley. Also present were Budget Committee members Marsha Campbell, Don Hurd and Scott Bell.

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

Elected Officials Swearing In:

TA Alicia Jipson swore in newly elected officials for the following positions:

- Board of Selectmen – Travis O'Hara & Mark Lewandoski
- Budget Committee – Don Hurd, Marsha Campbell, Scott Bell

Organization of the Board and Committee Assignments:

Selectman Jon Pike moved to appoint Ruth P. Mooney as Chairman; seconded by Selectman Mark Lewandoski. Motion passed (4-0-1). Chairman Mooney abstained.

Selectman Lewandoski moved to appoint Travis O'Hara as Vice Chairman; seconded by Selectman Sharon Ciampi. Motion passed (4-0-1). Selectman O'Hara abstained.

Chairman Mooney moved to appoint Selectman Jon Pike as the Selectboard Planning Board Representative, coterminous with his Selectman's term; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed (4-0-1). Selectman Pike abstained.

Selectman Lewandoski moved to appoint Chairman Mooney as the Selectboard Budget Committee Representative; motioned died for lack of a second.

Selectman Ciampi moved to appoint Selectman O'Hara as the Selectboard Budget Committee Representative; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed (4-0-1). Selectman O'Hara abstained.

Selectman O'Hara moved to appoint Selectman Ciampi as the Selectboard Heritage Commission Representative; seconded by Selectman Lewandoski. Motion passed (4-0-1). Selectman Ciampi abstained.

Selectman Ciampi moved to appoint Selectman Lewandoski as the Selectboard Conservation Commission Representative; seconded by Selectman Mooney. Motion passed (4-0-1). Selectman Lewandoski abstained.

Meeting Day and Time Calendar:

Currently meetings are held on the first and third Wednesdays of the month with the first meeting at 10 am and the second meeting at 6 pm. Selectmen Pike and O'Hara agreed the current schedule is working.

Chairman Mooney moved to continue to hold Selectmen's meetings on the first and third Wednesdays of the month with the first meeting at 10 am and the second meeting at 6 pm; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Review & Approve Minutes:

Minutes of Public Meeting 03/04/2026:

Selectman Pike moved to approve the minutes of the public meeting held 03/04/2026; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Minutes of Non-Public Meeting 03/04/2026:

Selectman Pike moved to approve the minutes of the non-public meeting held 03/04/2026; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

New Business:

Town Meeting Update – TA Jipson:

TA Alicia Jipson provided an update on the Town Meeting/voting. TC/TC Jennifer Cashman was unable to attend the meeting today but provided a letter with feedback about the process. The election was a success and we were well prepared. The new ballot machine worked great and we had 100 more voters than last year, and 27 same day new voter registrations. The three union contracts were approved and the operating budget passed. Some articles were not approved such as the capital reserves for the Mill renovation, municipal facilities, property revaluation, IT and the contingency fund. An official request for a ballot recount on the operating budget was submitted by 12 registered voters, and the recount will be held this Saturday, March 21st at 11 am on the 4th floor of the Mill. The rules of the recount are posted on the Town website, and notices were posted at Town Hall, the Post Office, the Library, and in two places on the website, as well as mailed to all who signed the petition.

TA Jipson provided the following additional information about the election:

The approved Operating Budget was $12,071,283, plus the addition of the 3 union contracts of $228,240, and the separate and special warrant articles of $3,063,096 was a total 2026 voter approved appropriation of $15,362,619. The 2025 voter approved appropriations

were $14,047,544. That is a difference of $1,315,075 or a 9.3% increase over three years: about 3% each year for the last 3 years, not the $5 million fake number running on Facebook.

The 2025 total appropriation of $14,000,0000 plus the war credits and overlay, less revenue and surplus resulted in $8,100,000 to be raised by taxes last year. The estimate to be raised by taxes in 2026 is $9,800,000. The failed warrant articles totaled $650,000 that was not collected for savings or raised by taxation: Mill Renovations $300,000; Municipal Facilities $200,000; Information Technology $50,000; Property Revaluation $80,000; and Contingency Fund $20,000.

The article to sell the Mill failed 619-310 and both articles to increase the veterans' credits were approved. Voters don't want to sell the Mill but don't want to put money into maintaining it. Selectman O'Hara commented that he can't understand the article about the property revaluation because it is going to mean such a big budget increase in one year instead of saving for it. It is required by law. There were concerns about the Fire Department building with the facilities funding being voted down. TA Jipson stated she did a walk through at the Mill with a reporter and there will be an article in the Concord Monitor on Saturday or Monday.

Budget Committee member Ron Mitchell recommended getting more information out with photos of the condition of the Town Hall building and the Mill so that everyone can see it. There was some discussion about safety and security at Town Hall, threats to employees, ventilation issues, and the need for security when things are moved to the Mill building. Mr. Mitchell suggested we shouldn't be putting more money into the current Town Hall building that has a dirt floor basement. Selectman Lewandoski proposed creating a video that could be posted online with a narrated walk-through. There were other suggestions to offer tours of the facilities such as during National Night Out. There is no easy solution and although we watch for grants there hasn't been anything that fits.

MS-232 Statement of Appropriations:

The Board has the original document that needs signatures. It has been voted on and approved and only needs the signatures to get uploaded to the State portal.

Union Contract Signing:

The Board signed the Police, Fire and DPW union contracts that were approved by the voters.

Wage Approvals:

The Board signed the wage approvals for non-union wages.

Beautify Belmont April 18th with Pickup on April 20th:

Parks & Rec Director Danielle St. Onge is organizing crews to work on cleanup of the beach, parks and other Town areas. Beautify Belmont will be held on April 18th with bag collection on April 20th. Bags are available at Town Hall or DPW.

LCHIP Incentive Payment Acceptance:

Every year we receive a stewardship grant for the Currier Sanborn Conservation Area for $550 for annual monitoring to remain in compliance.

Selectman O'Hara moved to accept LCHIP funds in the amount of $550.00 for the annual reporting for the Currier-Sanborn Conservation Area, with funds to be deposited into the Conservation Fund; seconded by Selectman Lewandoski. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Noise Ordinance Review & Update:

In 2023 a warrant article was approved to exempt farming and agricultural from the noise ordinance per RSA 21:34-a but it was never included in our ordinance that it is an exemption. This update will close the loop. The ordinance was written in 2010 and amended in 2023 but it was never approved and signed by the Board. It was reviewed by Land Use and can be signed to formally adopt the updated RSA, or it can be addressed at the next meeting. Chief Akerstrom stated they became aware of this due to a dog that was scaring off coyotes and barking after 10 pm, and they are exempt from the noise ordinance. It is different than a "regular" dog barking. A citation can't be issued because the dog is doing what it is supposed to do and State statute says they are exempt.

Selectman Lewandoski moved to approve the 2023 noise ordinance as presented; seconded by Chairman Mooney. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

The Board signed the ordinance.

There was some discussion about fireworks and permitting in Belmont. Citations can be issued if there are unpermitted fireworks. Permitting procedures were reviewed and the Fire Department will send copies of the fireworks permits to the Police Department. Selectman Lewandoski asked about an increasing doubled fine schedule such as $150 for first offense, $300 for second, $600 for third. Another local community is doing this now. More education about permits may be needed. Sometimes fireworks are in a neighboring municipality and we can't control that. Right now, the fine is $100 per occurrence in Belmont but it can be revisited again before warm weather.

Letters to Editor from BOS:

Selectman Pike asked that a thank you to the voters, elected officials, and town employees be placed in the paper. The Board reviewed the draft and signed the letters for publication in the Daily Sun, Winnisquam Echo and Concord Monitor.

Brian Jackes Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Reappointment:

Selectman Ciampi moved to reappoint Brian Jackes to serve as the Belmont alternate representative to the Transportation Advisory Committee with a term to expire April 4, 2028; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Other New Business:

Fire Department Grant:

Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz reported that two department members, Lt. Tom Ryan and FF Jim Hayes, took it upon themselves to look for grants and applied for one for forestry gear. We were approved for a 50/50 match up to $2,000 for items including pants, helmets and hose. Some of the hose we have in service is from 1983. Selectman Pike said they did a good job and the Board should send a thank you letter for their initiative. TA Jipson asked where the matching funds will come from but that has not been determined yet.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the grant and move forward with the process if the matching funds come from the Fire Department budget; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

NHDRA Equalization Ratio:

Assessing Administrator Colleen Akerman reported that the State of NH DRA determined our 2025 equalization ratio is 85.1%, compared to 95.1% for 2024. This is a 10% decrease in assessed value compared to market value. For example, a property worth $500,000 was only assessed at $425,000 for 2025. In 2024, a property worth $500,000 was assessed at $475,000. $50,000 in assessed value was lost from 2024 to 2025 on a $500,000 property.

Assessing Admin Akerman presented additional information about the housing market from a recent NH Housing conference. Panel members included NH Housing Finance, Governor Ayotte, NH Association of Realtors, Mortgage Bankers Association, State Housing Agency Council, Whitney Consulting (Assessor), NH Fiscal Policy Institute and Waterstone Mortgage.

The average age of a first-time home buyer in NH is 40, and the annual income to afford a median home is $170,000. Over the last 10 years, income has increased 58% but single-family homes increased by 125%, condominiums 128% and manufactured homes 320%. High demand workers such as police officers, electricians, carpenters, mental health professionals and childcare workers do not earn enough to afford an average 1- or 2-bedroom apartment on their own. Nurses are the only in demand profession that can do so. The lowest income households of less than $35,000 per year spend the highest percentage of their income, 6%, on property taxes, while the highest income households of more than $150,000 per year spend the lowest percentage, 2-4%. There is no one big fix. It is going to take many small efforts combined to help reduce housing demand. This includes: ADUs and Manufactured Homes on individual lots, both of which Belmont has to offer; and reduced parking per NH State Law. Other efforts could include reduced lot sizes, removing barriers for condominium ownership (FHA regulations, insurance company requirements, structural inspections), increasing road lengths, reducing or removing hardship variances, encouraging employment in the trades, looking at where construction materials are manufactured (reduce tariffs), and government reforms to offer grant funds. 63% of local revenues for municipalities are raised by taxes for towns, schools and counties.

Buyers and sellers set the market values which drive assessments, which are applied consistently to assessed values through an entire community. Revaluation at market value is required by law. Exemptions and credits can help ease tax costs. Taxes are a reflection of the

economy, and our neighbors set the values. Assessors interpret the sales data to generate equitable assessed values.

Well #1 Replacement:

The well #1 replacement was funded with ARPA funds and it is coming to fruition. The demolition of the old well will start April 6th and the new well #4, which is close to well #1, will be put online April 16th. Well #1 will be capped and never used again. Connections for the new well will be made to the existing pipes and will happen over a 2-week period. We received $500,000 from ARPA for this well project.

Legislative Updates from NHMA:

The Board received updates in their packets that were printed last week. NHMA reports to us on bills and their positive and negative effects and if they recommend any action on the part of the municipality. HB 1704 would have been harmful for labor relations and that was crushed, as was another bill to get rid of NHMA.

Old Business: None

Public Comment: None

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 1st , 2026 at 10 am.

Non-Public Session:

Those present and voting were Chairman Ruth P. Mooney, Selectmen Travis O'Hara, Jon Pike, Sharon Ciampi and Mark Lewandoski. Also present were TA Alicia Jipson, Executive Assistant Colleen Akerman, Fire Chief Donald Pickowicz and General Assistance Directory Donna Cilley.

Chairman Mooney moved to enter non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II c and d at 7:29 pm seconded by Selectman Lewandoski. Roll Call 1: J. Pike – aye, M. Lewandoski – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).

Fire Chief Pickowicz spoke with the Board about repeated calls to one specific address in Town over the last couple of years, outreach opportunities and the need to consider establishing a policy to prevent abuse of services for lift assists. It is important because when firefighters are tied up for non-emergency services such as lift assists, they are unable to provide necessary emergency care for more urgent patients. Selectboard members could see the need for a policy like this and urged connecting the resident(s) with the General Assistance Director. The Board will review the draft policy before making any decisions.

Fire Chief Pickowicz left the meeting.

General Assistance Director Donna Cilley joined the meeting.

GA Director Cilley informed the Board she uses her own vehicle over 6,000 miles per year for Town business such as overseeing shelter units held by the Town and transporting people and

their belongings. She has never asked for mileage or fuel reimbursement but there are real costs, and risks to using a personal vehicle for these types of Town services. She proposed using Opioid Abatement funds to purchase a vehicle for GA use. The Attorney General's office said the proposal is compatible with the allowed uses for the funds because of the population being served. TA Jipson presented information from our insurance carrier about coverage related to work activities. She also suggested an update be made to the GA Director's job description, and that the Board consider putting some rules and procedures in place to reduce the risks of harm. Selectman Pike will shop around for an AWD SUV with a 3-year warranty. He checked out the old cruisers, but they are worn out and ready for auction.

Selectman O'Hara moved to exit non-public session at 8:02 pm; seconded by Selectman Lewandoski. Roll Call 2: S. Ciampi – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, M. Lewandoski – aye, J. Pike – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (5-0).

Selectman O'Hara moved to authorize the expenditure of opioid abatement funds to purchase a 4-door, AWD vehicle with a 3-year warranty for the General Assistance Department in an amount not to exceed $30,000; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Roll Call 3: M. Lewandoski – abstained, S. Ciampi – aye, J. Pike – aye, T. O'Hara – aye, R. Mooney – aye. M. Lewandoski abstained due to a potential conflict of interest (4-0-1).

Adjournment:

Chairman Mooney moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 pm seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Respectfully Submitted By:

Colleen Akerman, Executive Assistant

Approved by the Board 04 / 01 /2026:

Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman

Travis O'Hara, Vice Chairman

Jon Pike, Selectman

Sharon Ciampi, Selectman

Mark Lewandoski, Selectman