Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 15, 2026 6:00 pm
Belmont Mill, Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Ruth P. Mooney, Selectman Travis O'Hara, Selectman Jon Pike (6:16 pm) Selectman Sharon Ciampi, Selectman Mark Lewandoski, TA Alicia Jipson and Executive Assistant/Assessing Administrator Colleen Akerman. Also present was Budget Committee Member Susan Roache. Via Zoom:

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

A moment of silence was held in honor of Ken Knowlton who served the Belmont community in many capacities.

The Chairman requested that audience members avoid whispering during the meeting as the acoustics in the room make the sound travel and it is difficult to hear the Board members.

Review & Approve Minutes:

Minutes of Meeting 07/01/2026:

Selectman Travis O'Hara moved to approve the minutes of the meeting held 07/01/2026; seconded by Selectman Mark Lewandoski. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

New Business:

2026 Budget Update:

TA Jipson reported the status of the 2026 budget after providing spreadsheets to the Board. Current spending is at 46% of the budget and the target for today is 58%; we are running 12% below target. Last year we were consistently under budget each month. Some budgets are inching towards being overbudget, but others are underspent. There are concerns about overtime in some departments, but it is important to be staffed for public safety and emergency needs, and some of the bargaining agreements require specific staffing levels even when employees are out sick, on vacation, or there are unfilled positions. Spending increases in the last quarter with some contracts and other disbursements at year end. TA Jipson expects to have additional details about the budget to review at the joint meeting next week. Department heads were asked about any unforeseen expenses and the Fire Department responded that physicals have been more expensive than budgeted because the company we have been using went out of business. They also need to replace some fire hoses that are from the 1980s. The department is trying to work those expenses into their budget.

The first issue 2026 tax bill was due July 14th and we are at 94% collected, which is a great number. Only $759,000 was uncollected. First issue water/sewer bills are 95% collected and shut off notices have been sent; second issue water/sewer bills are at 74% collected.

Shaker Regional School District Superintendent Tursi declined the invitation to next week's joint budget meeting because they have not scheduled their collective bargaining meetings or any of their other budget meetings yet. They have also not closed their books yet to see if they have any fund balance. He would like to come see the Board in late August or September.

Chairman Mooney liked the budget spreadsheet provided and Selectman Ciampi requested a larger font.

Heating Fuel & Electric Contracts:

The Town's current contract with Irving ends in August. Oil last year was $2.547, and propane was $1.505 per gallon. This year the numbers are $4.227 for oil and $1.57 for propane. Using the same numbers we budgeted for this year would be an $11,142 increase to the 2027 budget. Prices are probably not going to come down, and Finance Director Steve Forster recommends locking in the price today rather than waiting.

Chairman Mooney moved to authorize TA Jipson to sign the Irving contract for July 2026 to August 2027 for oil $4.227 and propane $1.571 per gallon; seconded by Selectman Lewandoski. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

We can lock in our electric supply rate with Constellation, which is now at 0.1189. The rates have increased during our most recent contract from 0.069 to 0.12. Finance Director Forster recommends locking in the price on this as well. The Eversource distribution rate is separate from the supply rate from Constellation.

Chairman Mooney moved to authorize TA Jipson to sign the Constellation contract for a supply rate of 0.1189 for 48 months; seconded by Selectman Lewandoski. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

NH Retirement Employer Rates Update:

Employer NHRS rates change mid-year. The rates will be updated from the end of June as follows:

- Regular: 12.75 % to 11.51%
- Police: 30.95% to 26.71%
- Fire: 29.15% to 26.13%

Overall, that is a decrease of about 10% from July to January 2026 and all of 2027 will be at the reduced rate.

DPW Auction of Decommissioned Truck:

DPW Brian Jackes was unable to be here this evening, but he submitted a letter to the Board that they have satisfied the requirements of the Clean Fleets grant and sold the equipment

from the decommissioned truck for auction. He requested that some of that revenue be earmarked for a small landscape trailer, which is in stock at a local vendor who has the best price.

Selectman Pike moved to accept $5,150 for the sale of auctioned Town property (the DPW decommissioned grant truck) and to earmark $2,725 of the revenue for the purchase of a utility trailer for the Department of Public Works; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

The remainder of the unanticipated revenue will go into the general fund.

190 Gardners Grove Road FEMA Violation Update:

There was a meeting held last week with FEMA, Selectman Lewandoski and Town Staff about the status of a FEMA violation at 190 Gardners Grove Road. Town Planner Karen Santoro and Code Enforcement Officer Glenn Caron visited the property after that meeting to speak with the property owner about the violation. The property owner received the letters from the Town but never opened them and that is why we have not received a response from them. They have requested 30 days to review the information and consult with their attorney and let us know what their plan is.

The Board will need to decide what to do because FEMA says that we have no choice but to fight this in court if the property owner does not remediate to FEMA's satisfaction, and we will lose because we don't have any standing. If we lose, FEMA would consider the violation closed. Any remediation by the property owner would need to be approved by FEMA before any work is started. Belmont is at risk of losing all federal funds for flood insurance for 29 homes in Town as well as other federal funds. The Town must demonstrate to FEMA that we are doing what needs to be done based on the violation of the law because we are the enforcers for the regulations. If we go to court and lose, all property owners retain their flood insurance except for 190 Gardners Grove Road, and we get to continue to receive federal/FEMA funding for programs. We will have a hefty legal bill but in the long run it will save us money and the other property owners will be able to keep their flood insurance.

Resident Susan Pilliod asked what the remediation would entail. It would involve moving mechanical equipment upstairs and a way for water to pass through the lower levels. The property owner does not want flood insurance.

It was the consensus of the Board to allow 30 days for the owner to review the data, and to speak with their legal counsel and FEMA. The Board will make a decision after the owner lets us know what they will do.

Other New Business:

Apparel Impact:

The Board received information in their packets about this organization that does textile recovery and recycling to keep items out of landfills. They would like permission to place their sheds or boxes in high visibility areas on Town property, or other properties such as storage facilities or churches. The Town would benefit by receiving wardrobes for 20 people per year,

which includes 5-7 outfits with shoes, that General Assistance or school nurses could request. There was some conversation about the pros and cons of different locations around Town including the bank building and the Casino. The company will come out weekly to inspect and empty them so they will not become eyesores. It was the consensus of the Board to support the initiative and move forward to find some locations for this program.

Old Business:

200 Daniel Webster Highway Auction Update:

The property at 200 Daniel Webster Highway went to auction a few months ago. The high bidder backed out, and the next highest bidder was still interested. They are having some issues with financing and asked for an extension. They have been notified that August 15th is the final date for closing or they will lose their deposits. The Town continues to collect rent from the restaurant and receives deposits each month from the bidder. The buyer pays the auction house, so we have not lost any funds for those costs.

Fire Department Safer Grant Update:

The SAFER grant ended in March 2026, and we applied for an extension. There are still issues at FEMA and they are working through the extension approval. The Board needs to give final approval if we want to extend it for 8 months to March 2027. There is written approval that we can move 2 people into those positions to help alleviate some budget issues.

Selectman O'Hara moved to move forward with the SAFER Grant Period of Performance extension to 02/28/2027; seconded by Selectman Lewandoski. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

WRBP & Route 140 Forcemain Update:

Underwood Engineering and WRBP reviewed the State's task order for this project, and the Town does not get to review the design until it is 90% complete. It should be 30%. Underwood's formal opinion is that 30/60/90 % is standard. We hired Underwood to help us obtain a phased project and it worked. They completed test pits and other work on our behalf. The question now is do we want to retain them to do oversight on the kickoff and the 30/60/90% review. Chairman Mooney asked who inspects all of the work being done, which is the State's engineers. This $10,000 contract with Underwood would only be for the design phase to advise us on the crucial steps and be our voice at the table but not to do field inspections. Underwood could also help us forecast the budget because the State has not done that yet. They could be a good advocate for us.

Selectman O'Hara moved to retain Underwood for oversight of the design portion of the Route 140 Forcemain project; seconded by Selectman Lewandoski. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Other Old Business:

Reminder of Joint Meeting with Budget Committee 07/23/2026 at 6:00 pm:

The Selectmen and the Budget Committee will hold a mid-year joint meeting on Thursday, 07/23/2026 at 6:00 pm. The school will not attend as they have not yet started their budget process.

Public Comment:

Resident Susan Pilliod asked if there are any issues currently facing the Town that residents should be aware of. Chairman Money mentioned the Route 140 Forcemain project because the Town's 1,600 sewer users will have to pay for this in their bills. It will be a 30-35 year bond that has not yet been determined by the State of New Hampshire and we have no control over it. Ms. Pilliod asked if users can disconnect from the sewer. Unfortunately, once you are connected you cannot disconnect, and most of the Village properties would be unable to support any septic. Silver Lake users have also not finished paying off their sewer bond, so their bills are already higher than other users.

Ms. Pilliod asked about the Board's top priorities between now and the end of the year. Chairman Mooney said keeping the budget in check and working through overtime issues because we have to provide public safety services. Chairman Mooney is also concerned that we should already have another ambulance on order because they take two years to get and there is not enough money in our ambulance special revenue fund for a new ambulance. The fire department also needs new fire hoses.

Ms. Pilliod asked if there is an update on the Mill. Chairman Mooney stated that as discussed at the last Board meeting, the Town will be meeting with the contractor to move the Planning Department over to the Mill as a top priority. They are also looking at the fireproof vaults, which many towns don't have; they have fireproof safes. There is no timeframe yet for the move because we have not met with the contractor.

The goal is to move everyone at Town Hall to the Mill and turn the current Town Hall into Parks & Recreation and potentially a space for the American Legion to use, which will open up more opportunities for grant funding at that building. The Mill building already used up all of the big grant opportunities during the original restoration, but it also had lots of strings attached. The American Legion would not likely pay rent because they are an asset and do a lot for the Town.

Budget Committee member Susan Roache asked where the funds will come from to move Land Use to the Mill because the $300,000 was voted down this year. There are no firm costs yet because we have not met with the contractor, but the funds would come from the Facilities Capital Reserve Fund, which is for all Town buildings. There was discussion about property taxes, the composition of the Town budget and concerns about the school budget. It was suggested that residents participate at the school meetings in addition to the Town meetings.

The option for a bond to complete the Mill renovations versus using the Capital Reserve Fund was reviewed. Bonding would take 30+ years to pay off and would include the cost of interest whereas small amounts set aside to for a few years would cost about $50 per year for a property valued at $250,000, there would be no cost of interest, and when the move is complete those funds needed to make the move would no longer be requested.

Selectman O'Hara said another big thing the Board is doing is looking at getting more information out to the public through an app so that we can create a better understanding of what the Board does, which will stir up some questions to get out there.

Chairman Mooney asked about the cost for demolition of the bank building which is in very poor condition, as well as the retaining wall that is bowing out. TA Jipson reported that the cost in 2022 was $38,00 for both. Chairman Mooney said the property was originally purchased for the land; not the building. There was discussion about the safety of the building.

Town Hall is not unsafe and using the building for Parks & Recreation and a Senior Center after Town Hall moves to the Mill would open up many more grant opportunities for renovations at the current Town Hall building.

BOS Future Agenda Items:

Selectman O'Hara is concerned about HB 1300 which places a mandatory question on the ballot about tax caps.

Board & Committee Reports: None

Next Meeting: August 5, 2026 @ 10:00 am

Non-Public Session: None

Adjournment:

Selectman Lewandoski moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:54 pm; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Respectfully Submitted By:

Colleen Akerman, Executive Assistant

Approved by the Board 08/05/2026:

Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman

Travis O'Hara, Vice Chairman

Jon Pike, Selectman

Sharon Ciampi, Selectman

Mark Lewandoski, Selectman