Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Budget Workshop Minutes
Wednesday, October 6, 2026, 9:00 am
Belmont Mill, Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Ruth P. Mooney, Selectman Travis O'Hara, Selectman Sharon Ciampi, TA Alicia Jipson, Executive Assistant/Assessing Administrator Colleen Akerman, Finance Director Steve Forster, Town Clerk/Tax Collector Jennifer Cashman, DPW Director Brian Jackes, and Parks & Rec Director Danielle St. Onge. Via Zoom was Town Clerk/Tax Collector Assistant Devon Tibbetts.

Absent: Selectman Jon Pike and Selectman Mark Lewandoski.

The Chairman opened the public meeting at 9:00 am and announced that although this is a public meeting, it is a workshop and not intended to solicit public comment. The Budget hearing to accept public comment will be held in January. Agendas will be available on the website.

Town Clerk (7):

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Jennifer Cashman presented the Town Clerk's 2027 proposed budget of $148,475.

TC/TC Cashman reported it is the third anniversary of her term of office. She provided statistics about funds collected this year through her office such as motor vehicle registrations, utilities, taxes, dog licensing, vital records and liens. The department has successfully obtained scholarships for employee certifications and training. Some budget updates were made to reduce advertising, postage and overtime in this budget and move them to the Elections & Registration budget to appropriately account for where expenses originate. Requests were made for increases in salaries beyond the recommended Board increase of 4%, which were justified with information and data provided by TC/TC Cashman, including significant collections on outstanding revenues from water, sewer and property tax billing. Wages are split between two budgets for Town Clerk and Tax Collector duties.

The Board considered waiting for all members to vote. Selectman O'Hara suggested he would be interested in considering merit raises in the future but that has not been done here before.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2027 Town Clerk's budget request as presented, excluding the salaries to be reviewed at a future date with the full board; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Elections & Registration (8):

TC/TC Cashman presented the Elections & Registration 2027 proposed budget of $32,085.

This budget has an increase due to overtime moved from the Town Clerk's budget, as well as additional required postage for verifying the voter checklist every year and absentee ballot postage. The budget also fluctuates based on the number of elections and there will be 4 in 2027. Chip coding is expensive and we are required to have an assistive voting system. We are going to try to obtain donated meals for the ballot clerks. Selectman Ciampi asked what minimum wage was, and if ballot clerk wages of $12 per hour should be increased. Minimum wage is $7.25 and the Supervisors of the Checklist did not request any wage changes.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2027 Elections & Registration budget request of $32,085 as presented; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Tax Collector/Finance (9):

TC/TC Cashman and Finance Director Steve Forster presented the 2027 Financial Administration proposed budget of $388,768.

Some changes were made to the printing line for tax bills and the monthly registry of deeds fees. The audit cost was reduced because our records have been cleaned up after some staff turnover in 2023 and 2024. The auditors are also using a new efficient system where requested documents are scanned and uploaded in advance of the auditors' one week visit to Town Hall. During their visit, they go to the TC/TC Office and the Finance Department to pull random documents for review with no advance warning. Finance Director Forster complimented department heads on their cooperation and prompt submission of invoices. The library also participates in the audit. There is another mandatory audit for healthcare that we must complete that is about $900 this year.

The finance department overtime line will need to be increased for staff coverage this spring. An employee will be out for a short period, and additional coverage will be necessary, which could be the finance director working overtime at straight time or earning comp time, or hiring someone to do some data entry. Finance department salaries were increased at the recommended 4%. There was an increase in the software line. There were questions about training and mileage, but some scholarships were received this year, and one conference was not attended this past spring.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2027 Tax Collector/Finance Administration budget as presented excluding the salaries to be reviewed at a future date with the full board; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Parks & Rec and Beach (1):

Parks & Rec Director Danielle St. Onge presented the Parks & Rec and Beach proposed 2027 budgets of $193,398.

2026 went well but some events such as the Mill Street Market were not successful. Summer camp is over and the Gunstock program has kicked off. Trunk or Treat with the Police Department will be in a few weeks. It is hard to predict the summer camp budget because we don't know the school schedule yet and if we will have 7 weeks or 8 weeks. We have two lifeguards who plan to stay for next year. Overall, there is a decrease in the budget. Wages were based on working formulas and a small increase was given to the camp director. The equipment line includes funds for automated locks for the Sargent Park bathrooms that can be controlled remotely so that they can be open more often. There was only one major clog there this year, and the Porta-potty at the beach was not vandalized this year. Some things were moved around in the budget between events and programs for one-time activities versus ongoing programs. Wages were increased at the suggested 4%.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2027 Parks & Recreation and Beach budget request of $193,398 as presented; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Patriotic Purposes (2):

Parks & Rec Director St. Onge presented the Patriotic Purposes proposed 2027 budget of $14,100.

There is an increase of 8%, but the other budgets decreased 2%. The department accounts for less than ½ of 1% of the total Town budget. Old Home Day ran smoothly with good volunteers the day of the event, but there is no one volunteering on the committee. One person showed for one meeting. There are complaints but no one is stepping up. We provide what we can pull off. Old Home Day can't be shouldered by one person, and it is not supposed to be a Town-run event. Taxpayers and residents need to help and participate if they want Old Home Day to continue. Last year fireworks were encumbered so this year's line was unspent. The funds can lapse to the fund balance, or we can encumber them again and make the line be $1. It would be a gamble if there is a default budget. TA Jipson suggested putting $1 in the Old Home Day Contribution line in case it is needed. We are not comfortable yet that there are consistent donations for fireworks. Chairman Mooney thought attendance was down, but it was a hot day.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2027 Patriotic Purposes budget request of $14,101 as presented; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

General Government Buildings (6):

DPW Director Brian Jackes and Foreman Kyle Dodge presented the General Government Buildings Department proposed 2027 budget of $560,407.

This Budget includes the grounds people, building maintenance, the mill building, fuel and contracts. We are still waiting on quotes from a few vendors for the generators, pest control and the elevators. The alarm company will keep the same contract, but the emergency rate is expected to increase. The fuel market is volatile, and it is hard to pinpoint usage and pricing but enough was included to cover some fluctuations. The part time line was increased for next year for a longer window of help into the fall for cleanups. The overtime budget was increased for

union wage increases. Custodial services will be necessary for the Land Use department when they move to the Mill. We are waiting for a final quote on those services. DPW Director Jackes also noted a new line for pager stipends to cover an on-call employee for after hours and weekends. Union employees are required to receive a stipend to be on-call to respond to any after hours issues at any of our Town facilities.

The current total after adjustments for the stipends is $566,635. We also do not have the insurance numbers yet for health, life, disability and dental.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2027 General Government Buildings budget request of $566,635 with future insurance updates and review of custodial services; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Highway Administration and Highways & Streets (3):

DPW Director Jackes presented the Highway Administration 2027 proposed budget of $119,500 and the Highways & Streets proposed 2027 budget of $1,569,489.

The biggest change in the budget is the result of a proposal to bring in a supervisor for the water and sewer departments to help with administration and keep things moving. Previously the DPW Director was 50% highway and 25% water and 25% sewer. Realistically it has been 90% water and sewer. It is not fair to our system users or our taxpayers to not give the full 50% of work for the highway department. The water and sewer demand is increasing and Pennichuck is doing less and less. We would like to take back hydrant flushing and checking the gate valves but still keep them for treatments. If there is a supervisor one person could get their grade 2 license to take some of the system back and save money. It would be safe to go back to the way it was before our last water department employee left. We would cover the distribution stuff and Pennichuck would only do the treatments. That gives us more control and the costs go down. It is proposed that the director's salary be 80% highway and 10% water and 10% sewer. The water/sewer focus would be grants and reporting. We need to be appropriately staffed, and regular maintenance should come from the budget instead of from capital. We want to maintain the current level of service without making any cuts and the budgets were built to maintain the service we have been providing. We could do less and save money, but we want to do more. There was no additional salary increase beyond the recommended 4%.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2027 Highway Administration budget request of $119,500 as presented; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

It has been a busy year for the Highway Department and a lot of paving was done. We prepped the roads ourselves and then had a paving contractor finish. Tree work and mowing were completed along with shoulder work and potholes. The Assistant Director wasn't employed for the full year last year so that is an increase, and the position is 100% highway funded. It is a non-union position with the recommended 4% increase. Overtime was increased based on a 3-year history averaged and multiplied by today's overtime rate. We are also moving the stipend to a separate line item out of the overtime line. TA Jipson noted our three biggest departments have been underbudgeting overtime and we need to budget correctly. The DPW

Director plans to track the overtime perpetually to properly budget for overtime and any union changes. This year there is also a 3-hour minimum call out instead of 2 hours.

Selectman Ciampi complimented the tree management this year because it has helped with power outages. The power companies have also been more proactive. There was discussion about the significant increase in costs for plow blades and salt. There are also fuel surcharges on many items. It is proposed to replace a loader in the lease purchase line and then rotate equipment and truck replacements to not have a heavy burden in one year. The grader will also need to be replaced in the future because we can't get parts for it anymore. The excavator could be downgraded in the future. Selectman O'Hara also noted we have saved money on our dump trucks. We do not pay tax on fuel, but the rates are uncertain.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2027 Highways & Streets budget request of $1,569,489 as presented with future insurance updates; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Street Lighting & Highway Block Grant (3):

TA Jipson presented the Street Lighting 2027 proposed budget of $7,500.

There were no changes. The Highway Block grant numbers will be set by the state later this year, and they are a warrant article not a budget line.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2027 Street Lighting budget request of $7,500 as presented; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Water Department (4):

DPW Director Brian Jackes presented the Water Department 2027 proposed budget of $517,277.

The director's buget line was decreased and a new supervisor was split 50/50 with water and sewer as discussed previously. The salary for the supervisor is about equivalent to the Assistant DPW Director because they will have more responsibility with two departments. The Assistant DPW Director only focuses on highway and it is very productive. It will give more flexibility for projects and inspections. We have asset management grants, but we need time to work with the programs and keep things updated. Recordkeeping has been neglected because we need staff hours. There will be a lead water line project that will need to be completed soon. The pager stipend was split out of the overtime line to its own budget line. Overtime has been expensive because of water main breaks. Chairman Mooney asked if rates will need to increase and TA Jipson said they may. She will need to do the calculations to make a determination. It was not necessary in 2026. Selectman O'Hara stated other municipalities have two separate departments, and we ask a lot of our DPW Director to manage everything. An extra person will help, and we are not currently staffed to handle some of the state and federal demands such as for the lead line project. The lease purchase line includes a new truck because the current one is a 2017 with 100,000 miles and it is their main attack vehicle. We need to start planning and have a replacement schedule. The lease purchase would be split with water and sewer and

should be on a five-year rotation. We will need another vehicle for a third person so this would solve that problem. The vehicle will also plow out pump stations. Vehicles like this should not be a capital purchase. The cost is anticipated to be $75,000 but it is hard to get firm numbers for March.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2027 Water Department budget request of $517,277 as presented with future insurance updates; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Sewer Department (5):

DPW Director Brian Jackes presented the Sewer Department 2027 proposed budget of $899,589.

This budget includes the new supervisor and the technicians, who are union. The pager stipend was moved out of overtime to a new budget line. Postage was decreased but training was increased because we need to have some certifications. TA Jipson expressed concern about the WRBP invoices because they give us a budget, but it is not accurate. We decreased capital from 5% to 2% via legislation, but we may be overbudgeting because of WRBP. Some could be encumbered or moved to capital if necessary. There are concerns about funding for the new Route 140 forcemain but we have already received $2,000,000 in grants, which leaves $4,000,000 to be bonded out. We could still try to find other grants. There are three more study commission meetings to separate WRBP from NHDES and that would give us more control over how to fix the line in the future. TA Jipson will double check the WRBP numbers. There were also some funds encumbered from last year, so some lines look unspent or underspent. A rate increase may not be needed.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2027 Sewer Department budget request of $899,589 as presented with future insurance updates; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Property Taxation (10):

TA Alicia Jipson presented the 2027 Property Taxation proposed budget of $152,839.

This budget includes the Assessing Administrator/Executive Assistant's wages, the Vision contract for our property tax cards, GIS and the new MTS integration. There is also a line for KRT for abatements and appeals and another line for assessing pickups in the spring. The utility appraisal contract goes until 2029.

Chairman Mooney moved to approve the 2027 Property Taxation budget request of $152,839 as presented with future insurance updates; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Adjournment:

Chairman Mooney moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:39 am; seconded by Selectman O'Hara. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Respectfully Submitted By:

Colleen Akerman, Executive Assistant

Approved by the Board ____/____/_____:

Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman

Travis O'Hara, Vice Chair

Jon Pike, Selectman

Sharon Ciampi, Selectman

Mark Lewandoski, Selectman