Town of Belmont

143 Main Street, P.O. Box 310, Belmont, New Hampshire 03220-0310
Telephone: (603) 267-8300 Fax: (603) 267-8327

Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 12, 2026, 6:00 pm
Belmont Mill
Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Tracey LeClair, Members Ron Mitchell, Marsha Campbell, Don House, Mark Roberts, Paul Maggioli, Lee Cheshire, Scott Bell and Doug Trottier; Executive Assistant Colleen Akerman; Finance Director Steve Forster; Town Planner Karen Santoro and Town Clerk/Tax Collector Jennifer Cashman. Also present was Selectboard Chair Ruth P. Mooney. Via Zoom was Town Administrator Alicia Jipson.

Absent: Members Don Hurd (excused) and Selectmen's Representative Travis O'Hara (excused).

Chairman Tracey LeClair opened the meeting at 6:00 pm. Audience members were requested to refrain from whispering during the meeting and reminded that this is a public meeting for the committee to work with department heads. There is no mandate for the committee to accept public comment, and a public hearing to accept comment will be held in January.

Resignation:

Budget Committee Member Susan Roache submitted a letter of resignation.

Tracey LeClair moved to accept the resignation as submitted; seconded by Paul Maggioli. Motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Minutes Approval – 11/05/2026:

This item was tabled until the next meeting because not all members received the minutes for review. Executive Assistant Colleen Akerman will re-email the minutes to all members again.

Department Budgets:

Land Use (8):

Town Planner Karen Santoro presented three budgets: Land Use, Conservation Commission and Building Inspection. Functions of the Land Use and Building departments blend together. There were changes to the Land Use and Conservation Commission budgets to move LU Technician wages from Conservation Commission back to Land Use. Lots of projects are coming to completion and subdivisions are being built out. The Mile Hill subdivision approved in 2006 finally broke ground. There are 18 lots in Belmont and 33 in Laconia. Knotty

Way continues to build out. There are lots of single-family homes and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) as well as other smaller projects. Some recent changes to State law allow residential multi-family units in Commercial and Industrial zones and we have our first application that is working through the Planning Board right now. Building and Code Enforcement are busy. Town Planner Santoro invited members to visit the Land Use Office anytime.

The Land Use budget had some small changes from 2026, including a reduction of $13,500 for the Master Plan update. The 2027 Master Plan line is budgeted for the remainder of the Master Plan bill of $3,500. Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC) is working on many Master Plans right now. S. Bell asked about the postage increase, which covers certified mail costs. The departments try to email as much as possible to save on postage but there are legal requirements for certified notices that must be met. We do receive revenue in when applicants pay for certified mail costs. Computer equipment is all the same age and things are failing at the same time. Other budgeted items include legal and professional fees, LRPC annual membership, training and mileage, law books, and office supplies. The increase in the printing line is because the Selectmen have started the process to move the Land Use department to the Mill building and a large printer like we have at Town Hall will be necessary at the Mill building. There was additional clarification that the LU Technician salary line increase is due to moving wages between budgets.

Ron Mitchell moved to approve the 2027 Land Use budget of $480,560 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by Mark Roberts. Motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Building Inspection (9):

The Building department budget is pretty flat. The Code Enforcement salary line is kept open with $1 if the positions are split again in the future. The clerk is part-time, 20 hours per week. The decrease in line 441 was due to sharing a printer between two offices instead of leasing two different printers. Training and mileage are down because more courses are offered online now. We are on track for about 250 building permits this year, and that includes small projects as well as single-family homes and ADUs.

Doug Trottier moved to approve the 2027 Building Inspection budget of $137,796 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by Don House. Motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Conservation Commission (10):

The Conservation Commission manages several properties to maintain open space for residents. There is a focus on managing invasive species, which can't realistically be eradicated. The Commission is working with a forester to create some management plans to maintain and utilize our conservation properties. R. Mitchell commented on the paving at the Village Spur Rail Trail parking area near the bridge. He requested our LU Technician develop a landscape concept to beautify the area. There was clarification that the last two line items were flipped in 2026, so there is not really an over expenditure.

J. Fleck moved to approve the 2027 Conservation Commission budget of $11,256 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by S. Bell. Motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Town Clerk (11):

Town Clerk/Tax Collector Jennifer Cashman reviewed three budgets: Town Clerk, Elections & Registration and Tax Collector. This year is her third anniversary. She has worked hard to improve efficiencies in her office and address long-standing financial issues. The office has stability and continuity, and residents are happy with their customer service. Two deputy budget lines have increases to promote staff, which is deserved, and to meet State regulations, which was supported by the Selectmen. Their department has collected significant overdue back taxes of $610,000 this year and set up payment arrangements to help many residents avoid the tax deed process. Only 1 property was tax deeded this year, which was a substandard landlocked lot valued at $400. There were 3 elections and a recount this year which were managed successfully. The department provides motor vehicle registration, vital records, voter registration, and dog licensing services. This year they hosted their first rabies and microchip clinic in cooperation with the NH Humane Society, and they now have a dog of the month program which will culminate in a dog of the year award. The office participated in the career day at Belmont High School and used the new voting booths to hold an election for students to pick our Old Home Day theme. TC/TC Cashman attended the New England Municipal Clerks Institute with a scholarship, and her assistants obtained training scholarships as well.

There was additional discussion about the Selectmen's recommended budget and the changes in the deputy lines. TC/TC Cashman also noted that overtime was moved to the Elections and Registration budget to be properly accounted for.

R. Mitchell moved to approve the 2027 Town Clerk budget of $148,413 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by P. Maggioli.

J. Fleck had concerns about the deputy increase in the budget and wanted to ensure that Staff would receive their promotions and increases within the Selectmen's recommended budget. The original request was 6% increase for the department, but the Selectmen only agreed to the deputy promotions and increases using the deputy clerk lines instead of the main wage lines.

Motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Elections & Registration (12):

T. LeClair complimented TC/TC Cashman on this year's recount. TC/TC Cashman invited everyone to attend ballot testing, which is open to the public. L. Cheshire asked how many machines we have, which is only 1. The machines are expensive and we had a $7,000 grant toward the purchase of our current unit. Our moderator is pushing for poll books for electronic check-in. We had large crowds at the last election and no one was complaining; people talked

to each other in line. This year there were ballots kicked back for manual counting because the State used thinner paper for the ballots and ink leaked through. T. LeClair noted the increase in postage which was moved from the other budget. The chip coding is expensive, especially for a Town election. There is also an expensive file needed for the required accessible voting system, which anyone can use to cast their votes, and it prints the hard copy ballot marked for you.

J. Fleck moved to approve the 2027 Elections & Registration budget of $32,085 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by L. Cheshire. Motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Tax Collector/Finance (13):

TC/TC Cashman and Finance Director Steve Forster presented the Tax Collector/Finance Budget.

Finance Director Forster gave some background on the evolution of the Finance Department over the last two to three years. He and our Finance Clerk have cleaned up a lot of things and become more efficient with processes, which has been noticed during our annual audits. All of our department heads work well with the Finance Department, providing invoices and necessary POs for timely processing. We have a dedicated team. A committee of 5 was assembled to interview and demo software replacements for our obsolete DOS-based finance, tax and utility software. We agreed on a local company with the Selectmen's approval. The cost is less than ½ of the next competitor. It is going to be stressful to change but the company is very comfortable with the transition process, and we are hoping for a 1st or 2nd quarter transition. The cost is about $40,000 for the transition, compared to some that were $150,000. That cost will be paid from the 2026 budget, and the annual fee is the only budgeted cost for 2027. R. Mitchell asked about the PO process, which is required for any invoices over $500. We use Wex for gas tracking for every Town vehicle and reconcile from an extensive monthly spreadsheet. Mileage and time stamps are provided, and codes are required for each card. The Town does not pay State or Federal tax on gas. There are not many finance expenses other than salaries. The overtime line was increased for 2027 for coverage for a planned medical absence and that might also be covered with some comp time.

D. Trottier moved to approve the 2027 Tax Collector/Finance budget of $388,705 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by R. Mitchell. Motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Selectboard Chair Ruth Mooney complimented TC/TC Cashman for the great job they did working hard on election day. We had over 200 new registered voters. TC/TC Cashman thanked Chairman Mooney for staying until the end to count and reconcile ballots.

Property Taxation (14):

Assessing Administrator Colleen Akerman presented the property tax budget, which includes salary, postage, costs for software services for tax cards and online mapping, assessing services for annual building permit pickups, abatements and utilities as well as conferences and training and office equipment. There was some discussion about the lack of available assessing professionals to provide services to municipalities.

J. Fleck moved to approve the 2027 Property Taxation budget of $152,839 as recommended by the Selectmen. The motion was seconded by D. Trottier. Motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Other Old Business: None

Adjournment:

D. Trottier moved to adjourn at 7:42pm; seconded by R. Mitchell. Motion passed unanimously (10-0).

Respectfully Submitted By: Colleen Akerman

Colleen Akerman, Executive Assistant

Approved by the Committee: 11/19/2026

Tracey LeClair
Chairman Tracey LeClair

Jessica E Fleck
Vice Chair Jessi Fleck

Selectman Travis O'Hara

Ron Mitchell

Marsha Campbell

Mark Roberts

Paul Maggioli

Don Hurd

Don House

Scott Bell

Lee Cheshire

Doug Trottier