



Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Public Hearing Minutes Wednesday, September 10, 2026 10:00 am 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 Police Chief Steve Akerstrom. Also present were Budget Committee Members Tracey LeClair and Susan Roache, Planning Board Member Mike LeClair and Zoning Board Member Dennis Grimes. Via Zoom was Town Clerk/Tax Collector Assistant Devon Tibbetts.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6:00 pm and those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. Attendees were requested to refrain from whispering during the meeting because the acoustics are not good in this room.

Chairman Ruth P. Mooney explained the speaking rules for this evening.

Public Hearing to Demolish Town-Owned Property at 154 Main Street per RSA 41:14-a:

Chairman Mooney stated this is a public hearing to hear public comment pursuant to RSA 41:14-a for discussion and to receive public input to demolish town-owned property located at 154 Main Street, also known as Map 122, Lot 008.

The Chairman opened the public hearing at 6:02 pm.

Nikki McCarter of 75 Wild Acres Road had concerns about procedural defects with state statutes and the National Register of Historic Places; the process for obtaining quotes for demolition; and conflict with the Town's Master Plan.

Dennis Grimes of 21 Gilman Shore Road advocated saving the bank building because it has a lot of good bones and should be refurbished and reused for a library expansion or parks and recreation.

Rhonda Cairns of 15 Oak Drive suggested selling the property. She was informed that the Planning Board does not think that is a good idea. Ms. Cairns would like to see something come to Town that would bring tax relief.

Tracey LeClair of 321 Brown Hill Road introduced herself as being the Budget Committee Chair and a member for over a decade. She was not on the committee when the Town obtained this land and building but she knows that the intent was to keep it as Town property and not have a business or apartment building in the middle of the downtown area. It should not be left sitting

as a hazard and it would cost more money to transform it than to demolish it. Ms. LeClair said the library is not interested in the building, and the Heritage Commission was in favor of taking it down.

Kevin Tash of 48 Horseshoe Drive asked if the fill for the project would be the sand that we use on the roads. Selectman Lewandoski stated that the Town owns a pit and has access to sand and gravel and the DPW has enough material available to slope the property. Mr. Tash also asked about drainage and engineering.

Selectman Lewandoski stated that we have a cost for demolition and disposal of \$36,000 for the building and \$2,000 for the wall. That is a price that will only be good for this year. The other vendor has a cost in the mid-\$40,000 range not including the wall. The building needs a roof and HVAC and there is a document from 2019 with a feasibility study. There are past minutes that note no asbestos was found in the building, but we are unable to locate that documentation and NHDES and Spears Brothers will require an asbestos survey.

Terry Coyman of 23 Drouin Drive asked if there was a complete budget. There will be \$2,500 for the asbestos survey and if there is no asbestos, there will be \$38,000 in demolition and removal costs. The numbered stone on the site will be moved and retained. No outside contractors would be needed for the slope work.

Nancy Naughton of 7 Sawicki Lane questioned why the Town spent money to purchase a building and let it go into disrepair. Selectman Lewandoski noted that when he voted it was to purchase the land not the building. If we sell the property, we can't regulate what goes in there. Ms. Naughton asked why the building was not demolished years ago. Current Board members and staff are unable to answer that.

Norm Duval of 118 Sunset Drive had questions about the costs associated with the demolition project and suggested plans to bring businesses to Town because taxes are not sustainable. He would like to see the plans to move Town Hall to the Mill and the future plans for the current Town Hall. He would suggest selling the bank building to stop spending and start receiving some money.

Ed Williams of 14 Leavitt Road stated the prior votes were to buy the property that included the land and the building and there was no option to purchase the land only.

Sue Pilliod of 504 Province Road had concerns about the costs because we don't have a firm number until the asbestos survey is completed. There was a question about deed restrictions if the building was sold, but that would be a planning department question. Ms. Pilliod asked if there was a contingency or funds set aside for concealed or unexpected conditions or additional work. Selectman O'Hara responded that the Selectmen would need to authorize other work and there is a capital reserve fund that could be used. Chairman Mooney mentioned that an underground fuel tank was found and already removed, the water and sewer are already shut off and we are not aware of anything else that needs to be done.

Selectman Pike spoke about the prior charettes and the 2019 feasibility study that looked over the town's building needs and involved professionals and volunteers. We didn't borrow money and it was a mistake of the prior Board that we did not go out to bond for the Mill building. Selectman Pike mentioned grants the Town has obtained, the library's expansion needs, and looking to the future to bring commercial business to Town.

Diana Lacey of 233 Union Road was in favor of selling the building. She said we can't be guilty for not being here for prior decisions and we can't go back. The Town purchased the bank building with the land. Ms. Lacey had concerns about everyone's budgets and stated that federal grants received are still taxpayer money, commercial exemptions are subsidized by residents and how often would the green space downtown be used. We could also put a fence around the building and wait to do something with it.

Travis Toner of 31 Hackett Road asked how long this project has been discussed and where the money would come from. This Board started discussions in mid-July and funds will come from the Municipal Facilities Capital Reserve Fund, and the Environmental Contingency Fund if asbestos removal is necessary. The funds are available with no tax increase. Mr. Toner asked about a maintenance plan and was informed that we have a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). He was also concerned about why the building was never taken care of and the value diminished.

Bob Hunt of 344 Brown Hill Road suggested the building be rehabbed for the library. The library is not interested in the building and that decision is up to the Library Trustees who are elected by the voters. It is not the Board's decision; the library project will go before the voters.

Donna Cilley of 83 Jodi Drive spoke about the history of the charettes and building committees and that there was no purpose found for the bank building. The library expansion is needed because of the amount of use, and Town Hall moving to the Mill will leave the current Town Hall open for parks and recreation and a senior center. Town Hall departments are so intertwined it would be difficult to break them up in different locations. The Town doesn't want to spend any money, and things drag on until there is a crisis. The bank building is deteriorated.

Mike LeClair of 321 Brown Hill Road spoke in favor of removing the building. He said although he is a Planning Board member, he is not here as a representative of the Planning Board. The planning board does not work with deed restrictions; they do site plan review. Mr. LeClair encouraged people to attend their meetings. A lack of people at meetings leads to the assumption that we are doing a good job. A lawyer would be required to consult on any deed restrictions. The library would have difficulty managing two separate buildings and children back and forth, as well as extra staff and cameras. He appreciated all of the people in attendance this evening and listening to the different opinions and viewpoints.

Barbara Binette of 171 Main Street was in favor of removing the building. At the time of the original vote to purchase the property she thought it could be used for Town Hall. She is disappointed the building was left to run down and asked for a rough estimate to restore the building to put people at ease.

Nikki McCarter spoke a second time about statutory obligations and a project review by the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). TA Alicia Jipson questioned the request for more information because the project number received in an email from Ms. McCarter references a property in Portland, Oregon, not Belmont, New Hampshire. The Factory Village is eligible for the NRHS, but it is not listed. The Town is not breaking any RSAs. Ms. McCarter asked about a Master Plan mandate to preserve street scapes and adaptive reuse evaluations. The Planning Board reviews the Master Plan, which is from 2002. There are goals discussing defining the district or complementing the area with green space.

Mike LeClair explained that the Master Plan review includes holding charettes and presenting to the Selectboard and other groups in Town, but no one comes to the Planning Board meetings.

Kevin Tash asked about having Town employees tear down the building which brought up concerns about equipment, rental costs and disposal costs. Mr. Tash suggested it could be cost-effective if the bricks and stones are resold.

Travis Toner asked about the plan for the adjacent road but that is not part of this demolition project.

Dennis Grimes asked about a professional asbestos inspection, which will be \$2,500. He again suggested repurposing the building and expressed concerns about telling people about things before tearing the building down. Selectman O'Hara noted that this has all been previously discussed at public Selectboard meetings.

Tracey LeClair mentioned that the library mentioned at a Selectboard meeting within the last month that they are not interested in the bank building. They are sticking with their plan, and the architect presented it at the last meeting.

Ed Williams suggested "let's kick this down the road more or put it up for sale." The Town will not be responsible for it after it is sold.

Diana Lacey agreed that we can kick this down the road. It took 8 votes to get the high school approved. We have an aging community which can't sustain us for the future. She again suggested selling the building and looking for grant money to do a Main Street like Laconia or Tilton.

Selectman Lewandoski commented that it hurts us that we don't have water and sewer in certain places.

Selectman Ciampi reported the Library Trustees receive funding from the Duffy Fund only if the library stays in the current building. At one time they did ask the Town to hold off on demo of the bank until they could study it, but they determined it would not be effective. They do not want to jeopardize use of the Duffy Fund.

Gary Grant of 244 Hoadley Road supported demolition of the building because the building has been neglected. He requested more solid plans and costs for the project.

Donna Cilley said the history of trying to retain businesses on Main Street is less than favorable. It is off the beaten path. She hears that people don't want to spend money but why take care of a building with no specific purpose. We will pay now or pay later. There was concern about what happens if there is big asbestos remediation required. Chairman Mooney suggested we would not have the money and the project would stop.

Diana Lacey proposed giving residents a vision or something to want. What we are doing is not working. Chairman Mooney commented that if the building is torn down and we make green space now it doesn't mean that down the road it couldn't be sold or something couldn't be built there.

Norm Duval asked about how to get information about projects like this. There have been many discussions during public meetings, which are available on our YouTube channel, or meeting minutes area available on our website.

The CIP goes before the Planning Board as well, and all of the departments go to the budget committee. The Planning Board gets the first look.

Ed Williams said we are worried about taxes and the tax rate is concerning.

The School Board is looking for 3 Belmont volunteers to be on their advisory budget committee.

Mike LeClair asked to clarify some language because the word historic is overused. There is no historic district or overlay for the special zoning layer that would be required to protect architecture. There would be extra rules and design guides that Belmont does not have.

The Town has heard that there is a petitioned warrant article to bring this to the voters to decide but we do not have the details of the petition language and if there is any money attached to it. If there is no money and the voters choose to save it, the building would sit for another year until there is an article to put money into saving the building. Chairman Mooney said if there is a petition submitted it is a public document that can be viewed by anyone.

Mike LeClair again commented about the word historical and repeated information about the NRHP and it does not appear that the bank building qualifies. The village district was made eligible, but was not ever listed. The Library, the Mill, the Bandstand and the Gale Building are the only listed historical buildings in the Village. The Heritage Commission found no historical reason to keep the building after tabling their first meeting to do more research.

Dennis Grimes asked about direction from the Town and what the priority is. It is to get Town Hall moved to the Mill building. Mr. Grimes suggested a comprehensive report about what needs to be done and what the cost is. Chairman Mooney said the voters determine our direction. We are trying to get to the Mill, but the voters don't vote for funding.

All of the bank hearing documents are available on the home page of our website.

The Board is trying to be proactive instead of reactive. The most recent feasibility study in 2019 recommended tearing the bank building down within 1 to 3 years.

Kevin Mitchell of 69 Wild Acres Road supported removing the bank building. The building is an eyesore, and it is dangerous. The cost is minimal and would not affect the tax burden. The longer we wait the more it will cost.

Second Public Hearing: September 22, 2026 @ 6:00 pm

Board Decision Meeting: September 30, 2026 @ 10:00 am

It was noted that if a petition surfaces then this process stops and we would not hold a second hearing. If the petition surfaces after the second hearing the process stops and it would move to the voters to decide.

Chairman Mooney closed the public hearing at 8:00 pm.

Adjournment:

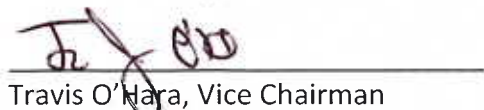
Selectman O'Hara moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 pm; seconded by Selectman Pike. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Respectfully Submitted By:


Colleen Akerman, Executive Assistant

Approved by the Board 09/16/2026:


Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman


Travis O'Hara, Vice Chairman


Jon Pike, Selectman


Sharon Ciampi, Selectman


Mark Lewandoski, Selectman