

## Belmont police chief: Part-time status will not affect service to the town

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Written by Tom Caldwell

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By THOMAS P. CALDWELL, LACONIA DAILY SUN

BELMONT — Police Chief Mark Lewandoski says that, even though he will be putting in eight fewer hours as of March, his workload and duties will remain the same.

"The staffing stays the same, pretty much what it is now," Lewandoski said.

The chief, who has signed a five-year contract calling for part-time work after March 4, 2018, said he has reached retirement age and, "I had a decision to make."

He said several people in the community had urged him to stay with the police department, and members of the Belmont Board of Selectmen also wanted him to stay on.

To remain with the department and still be able to draw his pension, the New Hampshire Retirement System limits how many hours he can work, so his new contract with the town limits him to 32 hours per week.

Belmont is not the first town to enter into a contract with a retiring police chief, Lewandoski said. He cited Canterbury and Berlin as examples where the chief works on a part-time contract.

"It's not very common, but several departments have done that to retain the leadership and management that they have," he said. "People aren't lining up for the job today, and a lot of people are leaving for private-sector work, due to the dangers and the way society has been altered, or their perception of law enforcement. All in all, for me, it was a decision I had to think about, but given that I've got a great police department and good people here, it made it a lot easier to decide to stay. The community itself has been enormously supportive of us, and that helped a lot, too."

He said that, if the change would cause major disruptions in the police department, his decision would have been different. But, "We'll continue doing what we're doing."