



**Minutes of the
Town of Belmont
REGULAR SESSION
of the
SELECT BOARD
March 18, 2024**

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: April 8, 2024
TIME: 8:55 AM

To view the recording of the meeting, please click [HERE](#).

Approved by the Select Board:
Monday, April 1, 2024

I. Call to Order: Mr. Epstein called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Select Board Members	Present	Staff Members	
Roy Epstein, Chair	Yes	Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator	Yes
Elizabeth Dionne, Vice-Chair	Yes	Jennifer Hewitt, ATA/Finance Director	Yes
Mark Paolillo, Member	Yes	Kelli King, Human Resources Director	Remote
Others Present			
Juliet Jenkins, Belmont Woman's Club	Remote	Wenhong Liu, Chinese American Assoc.	Yes
Kathy Keohane, Public Library Building Com.	Yes	Michael Gao, Chinese American Assoc.	Yes
Anne Marie Mahoney, DPW & Police Building Com.	Yes	Wi Zhang, Chinese American Assoc.	Yes

II. COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS. Chair Epstein made the following announcements:

- League of Women Voters Candidates' Night – March 21, 2024 – Remote Only
- Dancing with the Belmont Stars – April 5, 2024 at the Beech Street Center
- Eclipse Watch Party – April 8, 2024 at Town Field
- Mr. Paolillo announced that there have been thefts of political signs and pointed out that this is trespassing and theft, both of which are illegal.

III. COMMENTS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

- Geoff Lubien spoke about the Leaf Blower Bylaw and reminded residents about the components of the law. He asked if this could be added to the website and included in a mailer. He also spoke about contractors agreeing to the bylaw, and Mr. Epstein said there would be follow-up with contractors.
- Judith Feinleib spoke about political signs being stolen and asked the Board to send a letter asking residents for tolerance. There was a discussion of the problem and how to proceed.
- Mary Lewis asked about the accuracy of two points made in the League of Women Voters Voter Guide. Ms. Garvin said this would be addressed during her report.

IV. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

- Community Project Funding Award for \$1,000,000: Ms. Garvin announced the receipt of this federal grant, and explained how the funds would be used for the Community Path. There was a discussion of upcoming CPA projects and the help this award will provide.
- Tax Impact Update: Click [HERE](#) to see the document. Ms. Hewitt presented the tax impact of the override and other tax components. She highlighted that the information is based on FY24 values. There were questions and discussions about the tax impacts as well as the impacts if the override fails.
- Comments on 2022 IRS Fine: Click [HERE](#) to see the document. Ms. Garvin explained why this fine was incurred, how the notification was handled by her office, and actions taken to solve the problem. There was a discussion of the issue and how the new Treasurer quickly identified the problem.

Select Board Comment on Belmont Contributory Retirement Board Fifth Member Election

Mr. Epstein explained his view of the Select Board's concern with the makeup of the Retirement Board, particularly with regard to the role of the Select Board appointee and the Town Accountant.

He went on to speak about recent concerns about the investment strategy of the Retirement Board verses those of the State retirement system (PRIM). He welcomed the recent and unexpected announcement that the Retirement Board has decided to move Belmont's assets to PRIM. He also spoke about other management issues related to the Retirement Board that need review such as travel and other administrative expenses.

Ms. Dionne supported Mr. Epstein's comments and also spoke about her concerns and frustration with the actions of the Retirement Board as they relate to excessive administrative expenses.

Mr. Paolillo also supported Mr. Epstein's comments and asked about the transition to PRIM, which Mr. Epstein explained. Mr. Paolillo suggested that the Retirement Board provide an update on the investment and expense issues.

Statement by Elizabeth Dionne to Address Questions in the Community Regarding the Override

Ms. Dionne read her statement:

On February 26, 2024 the Select Board unanimously adopted a statement in favor of the override and warning about devastating cuts to Town services if the override fails.

I want to address a couple of questions I'm hearing about the Select Board's position on the override.

People have asked me if the mailers sent out by the yes campaign are true. The answer is yes, they are completely accurate. The Town had no involvement with drafting or distributing the mailers. But everything in the mailers is based on the budget presentations given at the town's February 8th Budget Summit, which was open to the public. Those can be viewed on the town website.

If the override fails, the first round of cuts in the FY25 budget would go to Town Meeting this spring. School and town employees whose jobs are at risk have already been notified. The cuts in FY26 would be much deeper and at a scale that would change Belmont permanently.

The second question I have been hearing is, is it possible for Belmont to get to a better financial position?

The answer to this is emphatically yes. I ran for Select Board a year ago to help Belmont achieve financial sustainability. Since then, we have made tremendous progress in terms of putting the right policies in place and putting the right staff in place, to foster business growth. We have much more to do - we must keep working on zoning reform to encourage new businesses, we must keep paying down the town's pension liability, we must keep working creatively to reduce expense growth -- but there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

At this moment, the key to securing Belmont's future is passing the override. Destroying institutions is easy -- but rebuilding them is really hard and even more expensive. We must not be penny-wise but pound-foolish. An override will keep Belmont intact while we work with urgency to pay down the pension liability, grow the commercial tax base and find ways to reduce expense growth. It is not an exaggeration to say that the future of our community hangs in the balance. I hope residents will join me in voting yes.

Mr. Epstein emphasized that the Select Board is strongly in favor of voting yes on Question 1.

Mr. Paolillo spoke about his concerns about the potential cuts as well as the burden the override will put on some residents. He emphasized that the override is vital and spoke about the work that was done to create the budget and override recommendation.

Discussion and possible vote on Request from the Belmont Woman's Club for a One Day Liquor License (beer and wine only) for the Dancing with the Belmont Stars Event at the Beech Street Center on Friday, April 5, 2024 from 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

A Motion was made to approve the request from the Belmont Woman's Club for a One Day Liquor License (beer and wine only) for the Dancing with the Belmont Stars event at the Beech Street Center on Friday, April 5, 2024 from 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.

Vote to Accept Library Project Donations

Ms. Keohane explained the purpose of this agenda item saying they are on track for the fundraising for the library. She explained how the fundraising and transfer process works. She also provided a brief update of the project.

A Motion was made to accept donations in the amount of \$300,000.00 for the Belmont Public Library Building Project. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.

The Board took a short recess from 7:56pm to 8:00pm.

Select Board Session and Open as Park Commissioners

Mr. Epstein called the Park Commissioners session to order.

Discussion and Possible Vote to Accept Paws in the Park Regulations

Mr. Epstein outlined the changes that had been made to the regulations since the last meeting. There was a discussion of how the regulations would be implemented and enforced.

A Motion was made to accept Paws in the Park Regulations as presented. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.

Close Session as Park Commissioners and Return to Open Session as Select Board

Mr. Epstein closed the Park Commissioners session.

Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve Language to be Sent to the Legislature – An Act Updating the Tax Treatment of Recreational Lands in the Town of Belmont

Mr. Epstein explained that the Belmont Country Club receives a 75% reduction in property tax on its land, and explained the purpose of the proposed statute.

There was a discussion of the statute that originally provided the reduction, and Mr. Epstein explained how this proposal would need to proceed through the State Legislature, which was discussed.

Ms. Dionne explained the wording of the proposed special act.

A Motion was made to approve the language to be sent to the Legislature of An Act Updating the Tax Treatment of Recreational Lands in the Town of Belmont. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.

Q2 Report – Click [HERE](#) to see the document.

Ms. Hewitt explained that it is still early to look at Q2 but highlighted that the results of the early FY24 policy that incremented Q1 and Q2 tax bills by the estimated increase. This has resulted in a higher percent of collections by this time in the year than previously received.

She then touched on the income highlights of the report.

Ms. Dionne asked if the Board of Assessors had anything to do with setting valuations for Automobile Excise taxes, and Ms. Hewitt confirmed that the RMV manages this process.

There were various questions and discussion about the report.

Ms. Hewitt then highlighted the expenses for the quarter, which were discussed.

Ms. Hewitt spoke about the projections for the rest of the fiscal year, especially payroll, and explained how she plans to include revolving and enterprise funds in the report in the future.

Discussion and Possible Vote on Positions of Articles and Possible Amendments for the April 29, 2024 Annual Town Meeting

Ms. Hewitt explained that the goal of this agenda item was to give the Board a preview of what might be coming up. She added that the Warrant is closed so no further Citizen's Petitions can be submitted.

124 Police & DPW Committee: Ms. Mahoney outlined the work that was done that ended in 2020 and explained
125 that there are only 6 years left to plan for a replacement of the facility. She then outlined some of the work that
126 was done to finish the project and said that the Committee would be meeting on March 19, 2020 to close out
127 the work so Town Meeting could vote to dissolve the Committee. She then reviewed the entire project and how
128 it was financed.

129 The Board thanked Ms. Mahoney for her leadership of the Committee and the hard work of the Committee.

130 Senior Tax Workoff Program: Ms. Hewitt explained that a new law has increased the value of the work off
131 annual cap from \$1500 to \$2000. The Town Administrator's office is trying to determine if the Select Board can
132 make this change or if it must go to Town Meeting.

133 Mr. Epstein asked that there be a fiscal impact study done on the change.

134 There was a discussion of this change, and how it works and is funded as well as other tax relief opportunities
135 for seniors.

136 Siobhan Gallagher said there is an income requirement for the Senior Tax Workoff Program and asked if the
137 implied pay rate could be raised.

138 **Discussion and Possible Vote on Request from the Belmont Chinese American Association to Host the**
139 **Third Annual 5k and 2k Races on Sunday, May 5, 2024**

140 Ms. Liu, Mr. Gao, and Ms. Zhang outlined the plans for the races and what is new for this year.

141 *A Motion was made to approve the request from the Belmont Chinese American Association to host the*
142 *third annual 5K and 2K races on Sunday, May 5, 2024. The motion was seconded and passed*
143 *unanimously by 3-0 vote.*

144 **Discussion and Possible Vote on Request from the Belmont Center Business Association to Host**
145 **Town Day on Saturday, May 18, 2024 from 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM**

146 The Board discussed how it would be involved in the event this year (including Ms. Dionne once again in the
147 dunk tank).

148 *A Motion was made to approve the request from the Belmont Center Business Association to host*
149 *Town Day on Saturday, May 18, 2024 and to close Leonard Street from Channing Road to Pleasant*
150 *Street from 7:00 AM - 6:00 PM. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.*

151 **Discussion and possible vote on committee appointments and reappointments:**

- 152 • Education Scholarship Committee

153 Ms. Hewitt explained how these scholarships are funded.

154 *A Motion was made to appoint Finnian Weigand to the Education Scholarship Committee for a*
155 *2-year term to expire June 30, 2026. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by 3-*
156 *0 vote.*

- 157 • Housing Authority

158 Mr. Epstein explained why this position is now an appointment rather than elected, and there was a
159 discussion of how people are nominated for this committee.

160 Ms. Page explained the timing of the appointment and that only the resident position is appointed and
161 the requirements of the appointments.

162 There was a discussion of how to proceed, and the Board decided it would like to meet with all the
163 candidates at the March 25, 2024 meeting.

164 **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

165 *A Motion was made to enter Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining*
166 *or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of*
167 *the public body and the chair so declares; Joint Public Safety Dispatchers, International Association of*

168 *Fire Fighters, Local 1637. The Select Board will return to Open Session. The motion was seconded and*
169 *passed unanimously 3-0 by a roll call vote.*

170 The Select Board went into Executive Session at 9:03pm.

171 *A motion was made to return to Open Session. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously 3-0*
172 *by a roll call vote.*

173 The Select Board returned to Open Session at 9:24pm.

174 **Discussion and Possible Vote to Ratify Contract**

175 Ms. King provided an overview of the proposed contract.

176 *A Motion was made to approve the Joint Public Safety Dispatchers, International Association of Fire*
177 *Fighters, Local 1637 contract dated July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2026. The motion was seconded and*
178 *passed unanimously by 3-0 vote.*

179 **Other Business Not Anticipated by the Chair - None**

180 **Approval of Minutes**

181 February 26, 2024 & March 4, 2024 Regular Sessions: Ms. Dionne said on the March 4, 2024 minutes, line
182 233 Mr. Morganstern first name is Ira, not Mark.

183 *A Motion was made to approve the February 26, 2024 Regular session minutes as amended and the*
184 *march 4, 2024 Regular session minutes as amended. The motion was seconded and passed*
185 *unanimously by 3-0 vote.*

186 **Next Meetings & Upcoming Topics**

- 187 a. Monday, March 25, 2024 – 7:00 PM – Regular Meeting
188 b. Monday, April 1, 2024 – 7:00 PM – Regular Meeting
189 c. Friday, April 5, 2024 – 8:30 AM – Reorganizational Meeting
190 d. Monday, April 8, 2024 – 7:00 PM – Regular Meeting

191 **Adjournment**

192 *A motion was made to adjourn the meeting of the Belmont Select Board Committee, and the*
193 *motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:31pm.*

194
195 Respectfully submitted by,

196 Susan Peghiny
197 Recording Secretary
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