

Minutes for January 26, 2024 Meeting of the Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee

Attendance

Present

- Chris Doyle (Chair)
 - Susan Burgess Cox (vice chair)
 - Claus Becker (Scribe)
 - Patricia Brusch
 - Deepak Garg
 - Larry Link
 - Mark Paolillo
 - Jung Yueh
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- Daniel Dargon (Assessing Administrator, Assessors Office)
 - Matthew Haskell (Town Administration)
 - Chris Ryan (Director, Office and Planning and Building)
 - Jennifer Hewitt (Assistant Town Administrator)
 - Donna Tuccinardi (Town Accountant)
 - Brandon Fitts (Dir. Recreation)

Absent

- Aaron Pikcilingis

Meeting called to order at 07:30 o'clock by Susan Burgess Cox. The committee was reminded that the topic of the meeting was to discuss capital requests from Belmont's IT, Accounting, Assessing, and Recreation departments.

Dave Petto (Director of Information Technology) explained the request for \$60,000 in financial year 2027 to provide additional disk storage capacity for the town. Belmont currently has four servers which we own. Two servers are replaced every five years. Backup systems are separate, owned by a service provider, and back up both to the premises and to the cloud. These safeguards allow us to be recovered and back to business after one hour.

A total of \$325,000 has been requested to restore network redundancy following the loss of the town's extra loop. Mr. Petto explained how glass fiber connections degrade over time and how we now have a single point of failure. Eliminating this, he argued, is important to protect ongoing business. This investment would reestablish hubs at Chenery and at the high school. The investment benefits from the start of the construction of the community path in 2026, which will provide a low-cost way to connect underneath the tracks.

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DATE: March 11, 2024
TIME: 2:41 PM

The committee discussed whether network connection should be funded like a utility in line with water or sewer, as opposed to a sequence of on-offs.

Mr. Petto left the meeting at ~07:40 o'clock.

Brandon Fitts (Recreation Director) represented General Government investment-requests in the area of recreation. He explained how programming during the school year and summer has grown in attendance. He requested funds to develop a general plan that would include a review of available programming space, such as the fields and playgrounds. This review would include checking soil quality, inspecting the state of benches and play structures, and more. The output could guide which renovations are needed in the short, medium, and long term, and form the basis of future requests for CPC-funded projects, he asserted.

The committee understood the utility of the request, but thought the amount requested (\$100,000 in financial year 2025) was surprisingly high, and questioned if such a request belongs in the capital budget. Further, since recreation is a revenue-generating activity for the town, the committee suggested that perhaps the revolving fund would be more appropriate since it would allow the Department of Recreation to take in funds and spend it along the year, in a flexible way.

The committee discussed if a small surcharge should be added to provide a financial cushion and funds for planning.

Mr. Fitts left the meeting at ~08:20.

A proposal to purchase artificial turf (\$150k, FY 2025) for the new Municipal Rink and Sports Facility was presented. The Committee was told this would not include facilities for storage of said turf.

Jennifer Hewitt introduced Chris Ryan (Director, Office and Planning and Building). Dr. Ryan was recommending \$150k be invested in the financial year 2025 in support of the development of a comprehensive plan for Belmont, a road map for the next decade. This would replace the latest plan that dates to 2010. He explained that this plan could cover most town activities, e.g. land use, housing, economic development, transportation, use of public facilities and more. It would also provide a strategic framework and list challenges and priorities.

The committee questioned if this work would duplicate the work of other committees and was told that other plans (e.g. Vision 2021) would be consolidated within.

The committee strongly supports planning and the conversations this activity would force, but questions if this proposal should be seen as *capital*.

Alternative routes of funding were discussed, such as if it should be made part of the override. Mr. Paolillo noted that in the past such plans have sometimes been funded as operations, sometimes as capital and suggested that the Kendall Fund, grants, and other sources might provide funding. It was decided that Ms. Brusch and Mr. Paolillo would meet to discuss.

Dr. Ryan left the meeting at ~08:34

Jennifer Hewitt introduced assessor Daniel Dargon (Assessing Administrator, Assessors Office) who recommended \$250k be invested in FY2025 to replace Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) system which is used to manage Belmont's property tax assessment process. Current software will not be supported much longer as the developer is retiring. Mr. Dargon told the committee that they are looking at two vendors. The committee asked about compatibility, validation, and verification of the new software. We were told it would be compatible with other town software as well and state databases. Transition would be over several years to ensure the old and new system gives same result. Ms. Hewitt confirmed that IT was involved in the decision-making process. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts does not provide a recommendation. 2026 assessments would be run on the new system.

Mr. Dargon left at 08:52.

Donna Tuccinardi (Town Accountant, Belmont Accounting Department) recommended an investment of \$50k in FY2026 to redesign the Town's chart of accounts. She explained how this would enhance forecasting and efficiency, and how improved reporting could have downstream benefits. The new system would be online in 2026. The committee was persuaded of the utility of these improvements.

Donna left 09:02

There were no minutes to approve.

No members of the public were present, and no one had questions.

The committee agreed to meet again Feb 1st and Feb 8th.

Meeting was adjourned at ~09:15.