

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

2019 APR -2 PM 2:03

Minutes

Town of Belmont

Board of Selectmen

Selectmen's Meeting Room

Friday, March 1, 2019

9:00am

APPROVED
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
DATE: 4/1/2019

CALL TO ORDER:

A meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 9:08am by Chair Adam Dash. Vice Chair Mark Paolillo and Selectmen Tom Caputo were present. Town Administrator Patrice Garvin was present.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS:

[There were none.]

COMMENTS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS:

[There were none.]

ACTION BY CONSENT:

Executive Session: To consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body.

Motion: To enter executive session as described above. (Vote passed 3-0. Roll call vote: Adam Dash, Mark Paolillo, Tom Caputo).

Motion: To come out of executive session. (Vote passed 3-0. Roll call vote: Adam Dash, Mark Paolillo, Tom Caputo).

Discussion on Open Meeting Law Complaint

P. Garvin relayed that a complaint had been lodged from a Patrick Higgins, because minutes from July of 2018 had been approved at the January 28, 2019 meeting. P. Garvin explained that when she started as Town Administrator the Recording Secretary position was vacant and there was a backlog in the minutes; she had since filled the Recording Secretary position and progress was being made to bring the minutes up to date.

George Hall (Town Counsel) stated that his office would draft a response to the complaint. He noted for the record his concern over the potential for town departments to be burdened with frivolous complaints under Open Meeting Law, and for detrimental impact on volunteer government. He suggested the Board raise these issues with State legislators.

Motion: To direct Town Counsel George Hall to draft a response in regards to the Open Meeting Law complaint. (Vote passed 3-0)

P. Garvin noted that health insurance costs had been removed as line items from the individual department budgets, and moved into a single overall line item. This was to better understand changes in health insurance costs across years. The approach would skew percentage changes in the budgets of individual departments. The Board requested to see updated figures showing changes that controlled for the fact that insurance had been removed as a line item.

P. Garvin stated the goal of the budget was to maintain a certain level of reserves in order to preserve the Town's AAA bond rating, given that there would be another bond call next year for the new school project. Her instruction was for departments to submit level service budgets, with increases due only to obligations (salaries/contracts). M. Paolillo requested to discuss at a later time the list of supplementary requests that had not been funded.

Fire Department

David Frizzell (Fire Chief) and Wayne Hayley (Assistant Fire Chief) joined the meeting.

Chief Frizzell had highlighted three areas of note with respect to the budget:

1. Compensation: The level of compensation needed to be looked at in order to competitively recruit and maintain staff.
2. Civil Service system: This was the State agency that currently oversees Belmont Fire Department's hiring/staffing practices. Many police and fire departments were leaving the system and it was increasingly seen as outdated and unnecessary; the union was in favor of leaving. Leaving the Civil Service would require a Town Meeting vote.
3. OSHA requirements: Previously municipalities were not required to maintain compliance, but this had changed as of February 1, 2019. Chief Frizzell was still in the process of determining which elements would be enforced and potential impacts to the budget, but ultimately it would add some financial/time burden.

A. Dash asked about the increase number of permits; Chief Frizzell stated the increase was driven by smoke alarm permits resulting from home sales.

T. Caputo asked about the increased number of events in the past year (fires, false alarms, etc.). Chief Frizzell stated that there can be variance from year to year of up to 100 calls. Projected increases in demand from new developments (Royal Belmont, Uplands) had not materialized.

P. Garvin stated that controlling for insurance costs, the Fire Department budget had increased ~3% year-over-year.

Belmont Emergency Management Association

There were no changes from the previous year; Assistant Chief Hayley had been in the position for only a month. He would assess how things go this year, and see if any needs were identified for next year's budget.

Police Department

Rich McLaughlin (Police Chief), Jamie MacIsaac (Assistant Police Chief), and Edward Pendergast (Police Communications Manager) joined the meeting.

R. McLaughlin highlighted certain costs associated with the temporary Police Station relocation for the upcoming year. He also reviewed the successful activities of the Chenery Resource Officer, which was a supplemental request the Board had funded last year.

P. Garvin stated the police budget had been level-funded with an increase of roughly 2% over last year (omitting insurance costs). After discussion with the Police Chief, the request for three new cruisers had been approved.

The Board discussed capital items in general, and whether they should be separated out from individual departmental budgets. P. Garvin explained she had requested capital items to be left in the individual budgets for this year, to facilitate level-funding. She had called out the capital items for the information of the Capital Budget Committee, and going forward would work with the Financial Task Force to develop a long term capital plan that would eventually see capital items removed from the individual department budgets.

R. McLaughlin raised with the Board the challenge faced by the Police Department in recruiting crossing guards. Even after increasing pay and cutting back on hours, not all crosswalks were getting covered and officers were increasingly relied on to fill the gaps.

Community Development

P. Garvin highlighted a supplemental request for a full-time traffic engineer. G. Clancy explained that with traffic being a central issue in Town, a lot of tasks that were currently being outsourced to consultants could be performed in-house more cost effectively. However, he was also comfortable deferring the request, in order to see how things develop over the year with respect to some of the newer initiatives, such as the new TAC and the Town-wide traffic study.

M. Paolillo felt strongly that the request should be funded immediately, given that Community Development was being asked to address an increasing number of traffic issues in Town, and given that the department was already overburdened. A. Dash was not opposed to the request, but wondered if there would be enough long-term work to justify the position. He also noted that consultants can bring a valuable third-party objective assessment in certain situations. T. Caputo asked about the trade-off between adding funds to the budget versus an additional FTE position.

The Board requested additional information on the proposed position and would discuss the potential to fund it as a supplemental request.

Recreation Department

John Marshall (Assistant Town Administrator / Recreation Director) and June Howell (Recreation Program Supervisor). A. Dash noted this was the first time Recreation had its own separate budget – previously it had been under DPW.

J. Marshall stated that for his first year doing the budget he would mostly focus on assessment and capturing/analyzing data to inform the establishment of enterprise funds. He requested support to raise

the limit on the revolving fund at Town Meeting in order to fund the creation of several new programs; A. Dash was supportive.

J. Marshall noted challenges upcoming in FY 20 with the loss of the pool and fieldhouse.

[Tom Caputo left the meeting.]

Accounting

Chitra Subramanian (Town Accountant) joined the meeting. P. Garvin stated that after taking out health insurance there was a 2% increase from the previous year due to salaries. She noted that mileage reimbursements from other departments had been included in the Accounting budget; these had now been moved back to the respective departments. P. Garvin highlighted a request for \$6,000 in additional professional/technical expenses that had not been approved.

Information Technology

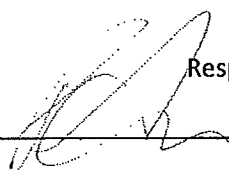
David Petto (Director, IT) joined the meeting. P. Garvin described a major change of moving phone funding (~\$77k) from the facilities budget to the IT budget. Aside from this, the budget for IT was level-funded apart from contractual obligations.

D. Petto discussed recent IT initiatives, including upgrades to storage, the progress of Windows 10 upgrades, and an AI program that monitors network traffic to detect security breaches.

A. Dash asked about the impact to the budget of capital projects in Town. D. Petto stated that IT was working with Belmont Light on fiber construction; any associated costs were from labor costs, and these were already included in the budget.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: To adjourn. (Vote passed 2-0)

 Respectfully Submitted,

Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator