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Minutes

Town of Belmont

Board of Selectmen

Selectmen's Meeting Room

Monday, March 11, 2019

8:00am

APPROVED
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
DATE: 4/8/2019

CALL TO ORDER:

A meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 8:09am by Chair Adam Dash. Vice Chair Mark Paolillo and Selectmen Tom Caputo were present. Town Administrator Patrice Garvin was present.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- A ceremony will be held March 14 in the Selectmen's Meeting Room to accept the AARP designation of Belmont as an age friendly community.
- A public forum to meet the Library Building Committee and Architectural team will be held March 13, 7pm in the Library Assembly Room.
- A cardboard drop-off event will be held March 30 from 9am-12noon at the DPW. Please flatten the cardboard in advance to help keep the line moving; cardboard should be dry.

COMMENTS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS:

[There were none.]

ACTION BY CONSENT:

Vote and sign the Warrant for the Annual Town Election to be held April 2, 2019

Ellen O'Brien Cushman joined the meeting. She encouraged residents to vote for a range of positions in the upcoming election, including Town Meeting Members, Board of Selectmen, School Committee, and more. Polling stations would be open 7am-8pm on April 2 at the usual locations – contact the Town Clerk's office for questions or further details.

Motion: To vote and sign the Warrant for the Annual Town Election to be held April 2, 2019. (Vote passed 3-0)

Approve One Day Liquor License Application from the Belmont Gallery of Art for an art reception to be held on March 16, 2019

Motion: To approve the one day liquor license as stated above. (Vote passed 3-0)

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; Possible acquisition of land

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)

Health Insurance Discussion

Jessica Porter (Director, HR) and Susan Shillue (President, Cook & Company Insurance Services Inc.) joined the meeting. Since the previous Board meeting on February 8 there had subsequently been an Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC) meeting, which was attended by union representatives.

S. Shillue recalled that at the previous meeting with the Board she had presented potential changes to the Town's benefit levels to match the current GIC plan. Implementing these changes would save ~8%. She presented the breakdowns of the projected savings. The largest savings would result from adding a prescription drugs deductible (~3%); the next largest from changing deductible levels (~1.5%).

The IAC had requested specific utilization data on the breakdown of primary care visits versus speciality visits at different tiered providers. The Committee had also requested a breakdown of prescription drug costs. T. Caputo clarified that the savings outlined by S. Shillue were actuarial projections – the actual realized savings would depend on utilization.

Feedback from the IAC included: 1) request for more education on other programs that could offer potential savings, e.g. seeking urgent care versus emergency; 2) see what Blue Cross or Tufts could offer to compete with Harvard Vanguard. With regards to 2), S. Shillue said that changing providers would only impact the administration fee (a small portion of overall cost) because the Town was self-insured.

P. Garvin had structured the FY20 budget to factor in an 8% increase; any negotiated changes to the benefit levels would show up as less of a hit on the Health Insurance Trust fund.

[A. Dash opened discussion to the public; there were no comments.]

Executive Session: To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personnel; All Unions

[The Board decided to forego this Executive Session.]

BUDGET MEETINGS:

Facilities

Steve Dorrance (Director, Facilities) joined the meeting.

- A. Dash noted increases in FTEs and a request for maintenance/repair funds.
- S. Dorrance said that Facilities was structurally short of employees. His request this year was for an additional FTE, a facilities coordinator; the work was currently being spread among existing staff. S. Dorrance expressed that, even with adding this position, he still did not have adequate time for long-term maintenance planning, which he considered a priority.
- A. Dash noted a jump in work orders over the last 2 years; S. Dorrance said it was because they had staff actually addressing the issues now.



- Certain line items (e.g. additional equipment requests, pavement maintenance) were down substantially year-over-year due to the fact that they had not been funded. P. Garvin explained she could not sustain the requests after meeting all the contractual obligations first.
- Oil heating costs were down substantially (63%). S. Dorrance was concerned about the upcoming renegotiation of natural gas contracts (expiring in November) and the potential for increased costs.
- T. Caputo asked about \$215k in contract services for the Schools and whether there was value in bringing in full-time employees to perform this work. S. Dorrance said he would prefer to bring in-house if possible; P. Garvin said that health insurance, pension and OPEB costs had not yet been analyzed for these positions.

Library

Peter Struzziero (Director, Belmont Public Library) and Gail Mann (Secretary, Board of Library Trustees) joined the meeting. P. Struzziero had provided a one page summary of the budget changes – overall the request was for a 2.9% increase.

- The biggest increase was 3.5% in the book budget.
- Total salaries were down due to some recent retirements.
- The Board discussed with P. Struzziero the shift towards digital content. Currently digital accounted for 20% of materials expenses, and was incrementally increasing each year. P. Struzziero did not feel the Library was meeting the full demand for digital resources.

Council on Aging

Nava Niv-Vogel (Director, Council on Aging) joined the meeting. She was grateful to P. Garvin and Glen Castro for separating out health insurance costs, as the COA has such a small budget that it makes a large impact. N. Niv-Vogel highlighted a 2.2% increase in the budget which provided level services, and relied on \$540k of outside funding.

- N. Niv-Vogel provided some updates from the COA: Belmont was recently designated by the AARP as an age-friendly community; the DOT funded van had been in use the past year; increased the amount for the Senior Tax Work-off program, and the number of participants had increased; recent Express Lane Eligibility proposal was put forth, a program designed to provide information to seniors about benefits and how to obtain them.
- N. Niv-Vogel identified a pressing need for more social work presence. A joint application with Watertown for money through the Community Compact had fallen through. Police and fire services had been reporting a higher volume of senior calls. The request was for a 30 hour position, but with an emphasis on flexibility to be available to respond to off-hours requests.
 - o A. Dash encouraged the COA to submit the position as a supplementary request.
 - o M. Paolillo suggested looking into the possibility of sharing a position with the School department, which also was in need of additional social work resources.
- There was discussion about rentals of the Beech Street Center. A. Dash noted rentals had declined; N. Niv-Vogel thought that rentals were on track to raise the same amount of money as the previous year. She said the building looks cleaner recently due to the new facilities team. Fees for rentals had not increased, despite the fact that two custodians were now required for large events (previously only one was used for any sized event).

Town Clerk

Ellen O'Brien Cushman (Town Clerk) joined the meeting. Overall, the modest increase to the budget of 0.4% was a result of a smaller number of elections being held compared with last year.

- The number of visits to the Town Clerk office was up to 19k from 14k the previous year. E. Cushman said that residents like the extended Monday night hours and there was a lot of activity during these hours.
- The 'Next Request' public records request portal handled ~2000 requests, and was successful in reducing labor while promoting fast response times (2.4 days versus a state average of 10 days).
- T. Caputo asked if there were further opportunities for digitization. E. Cushman said that certified documents are often still required to be in physical form, however she was looking into ways to incorporate online orders/payments.

Assessors

Dan Dargon (Assessing Administrator) joined the meeting. The only changes in the budget were a result of salary step increases.

- A. Dash asked about the change in FTE from 4.0 to 4.2; this was from part-time positions where the numbers of hours varied from year-to-year.
- M. Paolillo asked how often assessments are conducted. D. Dargon explained they are conducted every year, with an in-depth assessment every 5 years. There is a one year lag in the assessment. D. Dargon said that part of the Bradford development may come online in the fall.
- P. Garvin highlight new growth at \$740k; D. Dargon said the Board of Assessors would soon be providing an update on this number.

Human Resources

Jessica Porter (Director, HR) and Shawna Healey (HR Generalist, HR) joined the meeting.

- An administrative position had been reclassified up a pay grade, but this had minimal impact on the budget because the number of hours had been reduced. Another position had opened up recently due to a retirement, and had been posted at 20 hours per week.
- J. Porter anticipated a very busy year, as contracts were expiring June 2020 and negotiations would begin in the fall.

Town Administration

P. Garvin said the overall budget was up 0.9% - salaries were up 3% and expenses had been cut by 2.4%.

- P. Garvin reviewed the restructuring undertaken in her office: the Assistant Town Administrator position had been used primarily for the Recreation Director vacancy; the budget analyst position had been reclassified to budget director.
 - o John Marshall (Assistant Town Administrator) said he had been spending roughly 30% of his time getting up to speed on the Town Administrator functions, but would shift to 80% recreation / 20% Town administration going forward. The plan was to get Recreation Enterprise funds up and running.
- An unfilled part-time salary position had been cut from the office.



Treasurer

Floyd Carman (Town Treasurer) joined the meeting and reviewed his responsibilities in the role of Treasurer, Tax Collector and Parking Clerk. The overall budget, including Parking Clerk, amounted to ~\$704k, an increase of \$30k from the previous year.

- Increase to the non-Parking Clerk budget was \$15k; of this, \$3k was discretionary (postage/printing costs), the rest was contractual obligations.
- An increase of \$15k in the Parking Clerk budget was due to replacement of motors for electronic parking meters, which were no longer being supported by Verizon. Not replacing these motors would mean the meters would lose their credit card pay-by-plate functionality.
- F. Carman highlighted what he saw as the main challenges for the Town: online security; maintaining AAA bond rating; obtaining the full \$80m reimbursement from the MSBA for the High School project; obtaining debt exclusion for the Library project; continuation of substation decommissioning; facing a potential April 2020 override.
- F. Carman reviewed the recent bond calls with Moody's and S&P for the High School project where the Town obtained two AAA ratings. Belmont is one of 9 communities to receive AAA ratings from both agencies, and this had resulted in \$3m savings on the financing.

Health

Wes Chin (Director, Health Department) and Diana Ekman (Assistant Director, Health Department) joined the meeting. W. Chin provided an overview of the divisions and responsibilities of the Health Department. The budget had increased 1.1% over last year.

- An increase from 4.9 to 5.5 FTEs was a result of filling the Youth Coordinator position and adding a summer health intern.
- A. Dash requested an update of funding provided last year that extended hours of the Veteran's Services Office. Bob Upton (Veteran's Services Officer) said the additional hours help been helpful, allowing for an increased case load.
- W. Chin identified hoarding problems as a challenge faced by the Health Department.

Department of Public Works

Jay Marcotte (Director, DPW) and Mike Santoro (Assistant Director, DPW) joined the meeting. A level service budget had resulted in a 2.1% increase. Recreation had been taken out of the DPW budget.

- A. Dash asked about the implementation of the new trash/recycling contract. J. Marcotte said this was the first year of the five year contract; in the first 6 months there had been a noticeable reduction in trash and increase in recycling.
 - o J. Marcotte noted this was the first time ever there was a fee paid for processing recycling (\$105k); China was not accepting as much recycling and this had impacted the market.
- The snow budget was projected to go over; M. Santoro said that ice storms were the reason for this, as they were more costly than large snow events.

- J. Marcotte identified the biggest challenge for the budget as tree removal - that and additional snow funds would be included as supplemental requests. P. Garvin suggested to request State assistance for tree removal, which had been successful last year.

TOWN ADMINISTRATORS REPORT:

P. Garvin mentioned an upcoming invite for ground-breaking at the High School project, sometime at the end of May.

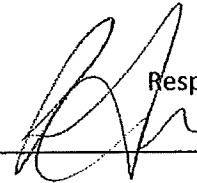
BOARD OF SELECTMEN COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS:

A. Dash had attended the recent LBAC and Warrant Committee meetings. At the Warrant Committee meeting there was a review of CPC projects.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: To adjourn. (Vote passed 3-0)

Respectfully Submitted,



Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator