

**Minutes of the
Town of Belmont
REGULAR SESSION
of the
SELECT BOARD
September 14, 2023**

Approved by Select Board:
September 28, 2023

**RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: October 10, 2023
TIME: 8:59 AM

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

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	Others	
Mark Paolillo, Member	Yes	Dante Muzzioli, Rink Building Committee	Yes
		Mark Haley, Chair, Rink Building Committee	Remote

Public Input Session on future Belmont Rink and Sports Facility Operations and Programming

Chair Epstein explained the purpose of the session. He also recommended that residents who could not attend send their questions, comments, or concerns to the Select Board or Ms. Garvin.

Mr. Epstein also announced a Public Hearing on Monday, September 18, 2023 on potential changes to the Stormwater Bylaw, and possible vote on the proposed changes.

Ms. Garvin provided some background information about the efforts that had been made to learn about and understand the issues around rink management. She then reviewed the history of the rink project and some potential uses of the facility during the off-season and in-season.

Ms. Garvin reviewed the pros and cons of the two operating models:

- 3rd Party Vendors: Procurement process, loss of control, higher ice rental costs, less flexible schedule, multi-year contract.
- Town Operated Rink: More Town control, probably subsidy needed from town to sustain operations, greater control of the schedule, maintain a small-town feel.

The Select Board discussed the issues related to the two options. Ms. Garvin recommended having the Town operate the Rink and then if that is unsuccessful, engage a 3rd party vendor.

There was a discussion of the issues involved in each option.

- Sheryl Grace asked if any of the 3rd party vendors run non-ice space summer programming and do any of them not charge high schools for ice time. Ms. Garvin said the company she spoke to does charge high schools for ice time and all models she has seen close down the ice during the summer. She explained that her staff is still trying to find other rinks to talk to.

Ms. Grace then asked if there could be a broader concept of sports facility management that includes the rink and fields. Ms. Garvin said she has spoken with the new Superintendent about comprehensive field management, but ice rinks are unique. Combining them in the future is possible.

- Charlotte Ternier asked about the status and timeline of demolishing the existing rink. Mr. Muzzioli explained that they expect the demolition to happen around October 15, 2023. The hope is to have construction completed by November 2024, although there are supply chain issues which may delay it to early 2025.
- Kristen Zecchi asked that a broader range of ice-based activities be considered, as her daughter is a figure skater. She said she pays \$20-25/hour for ice time and recommended they look at Stoneham as an example of a well-run ice rink. Ms. Garvin said she had met with the Stoneham manager who was very helpful.

- Rick Semerjian expressed support for having a 3rd party manage the rink because of their skills and depth of knowledge of how to do this. He also asked about the naming rights and made some recommendations.

Mr. Paolillo said there have been no discussions about naming rights although placing Mr. White's plaque in the new facility or elsewhere in Town has been discussed. Naming will be discussed at a future date.

- A chat question asked where figure skating fits into the plan for the rink. Mr. Epstein said right now it is undetermined, offered some possibilities, and said there should be a way to include that use.

Mr. Paolillo said the issue of how to run the facility is primary and outlined some of the major programming needs. There was a discussion of how to approach these questions.

Mr. Epstein asked that non-hockey ice users (such as figure skaters) let Ms. Garvin know about their interest so the Board can get an understanding of the level of demand for these activities.

Ms. Dionne asked if the Director of Recreation should be involved at this time. Ms. Garvin said the Recreation Director will be part of the programming of the space and will work with whoever is managing the facility.

- A chat comment said figure skating may be \$25/hour, but hockey is about \$275/hour. Sheryl Grace explained the economics of drop-in ice time pricing. This issue was discussed.
- Sonia Gupta explained that her daughter and other figure skaters in Belmont travel far, very early in the morning, to get ice time and they are very interested in having a local resource. She said there are a variety of prices for teams, private time with coaches, drop-in skating, etc. and advised opening the rink to non-residents for these purposes. There was a discussion of the various non-hockey skater types.
- Ellen Schreiber suggested the Town look at opportunity rather than the current status to make programming decisions. She said she feels this facility could be fully utilized without rentals, and there are opportunities for non-ice activities. She recommended thinking about how to fairly allocate ice time. She then spoke about the issues around non-ice activities and encouraged keeping the facility as flexible as possible.

Mr. Epstein asked about the boards and glass being removed during off-season. Mr. Muzzioli said there is no storage for these items, removal is very labor-intense, and there is the risk of damage during the move. There was a discussion of this issue and what could fit in the facility with the boards and glass intact.

Mr. Haley expressed his support for having the Town manage the rink, as most of uses will be Town-based. After these needs are met, then a discussion of how to increase the revenue should occur. He spoke about the efforts to design the rink with flexibility to accommodate a variety of uses. He also spoke about the possibilities of naming rights.

Ms. Schreiber pointed out that there will be about 10,000 square feet of space in the rink, and outlined some of the uses that could fit into that sized space. She then spoke about possible new activities that could be offered in the space. She expressed support for having the Town manage the facility.

There was a discussion of opportunities for non-ice activities that might not be immediately obvious because people have not thought about the scope of the space.

Ms. Dionne asked why removing the ice during the summer is recommended. Mr. Haley explained that if there were enough rentals to cover the cost of the ice, they would do that. But right now there does not appear to be a demand. There was a discussion of having year-round ice and flooring for non-ice activities. Mr. Haley said the Building Committee would provide information about the costs and the types of flooring available to cover the rink floor during the off-season and find out if the cement underfloor must be polished.

There was more discussion of the off-season being multi-sport, as the facility was presented as a skating AND sports facility to Town Meeting.

- Dante Muzzioli, speaking for himself, said the beauty of the existing rink is that it served the community for a long time. He then spoke about the opportunities for the new facility and expressed his support for having it run by the Town. He also supported using the facility for non-ice activities during the off-season.

The Board discussed whether or not to have a Town employee as the rink manager or hire an outside consultant to do it. Ms. Garvin said an employee is more feasible because of the scope and demands of the role.

Mr. Paolillo asked when the decision about management must be made. Ms. Garvin said it would be part of the FY25 budget process, so the decision needs to be made by the end of this calendar year.

Mr. Epstein asked that people let the Select Board know of summer activities that people would like to see in the new facility.

The Board discussed the economics of building and running the rink.

- Ellen Schreiber pointed out that rink management companies do not operate hybrid facilities.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting of the Belmont Select Board Committee, and the motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Peghiny, Recording Secretary