

Approved the Select Board:
Monday, January 22, 2024

Minutes of the
Town of Belmont
REGULAR SESSION
of the
SELECT BOARD
November 15, 2023

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA

DATE: February 21, 2024
TIME: 9:32 AM

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

I. Call to Order: Mr. Epstein called the meeting to order at 8:33am.

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	Jay Marcotte, DPW Director	Yes
Others Present		Chris Ryan, Town Planner	Yes
Kathy Keohane, Library Trustees	Yes	Brandon Fitts, Recreation Director	Yes
Corinne McCue Olmsted, Library Trustees	Yes	David Blazon, Director of Facilities	Yes
		Wesley Chin, Health Department	Yes
		Adrienne Allen, Board of Health	Remote
		Ellen Cushman, Town Clerk	Yes
		Peter Struzziero, Library Director	Yes
		Glenn Clancy, Town Engineer	Yes

Introduction

Ms. Garvin emphasized that the budget being discussed is draft and there will be changes.

Department of Public Works – Jay Marcotte

Ms. Garvin explained that there are two major activities with this budget: inputting the Town Engineer portion and the decision to restructure the entire department because of several key retirements. Various staff will be reallocated and there will be a review of the reporting authority. One side of DPW will be Operations, and the other side will be Engineering.

Mr. Marcotte explained the opportunity to look at restructuring into the more standard structure of Operations and Engineering. He then explained that Engineering will handle basically all construction (sidewalks, stormwater, etc.) and Operations will handle maintenance, upkeep, emergency work, etc. He then explained the structure and job positions that are being proposed. Ms. Hewitt pointed out that Sewer & Water costs are not reflected in the DPW budget.

There were questions and discussion about the budget impacts of the restructuring as well as the challenges facing the DPW Department.

There was a discussion of the increased costs of trash collection and how to mitigate the increase.

Ms. Garvin pointed out that there have been increased complaints about the condition of sidewalks and suggested that funds for this be included in the override.

Mr. Marcotte explained that they are working with consultants who will provide up-to-date conditions of sidewalks. They will look at the high priority, high risk areas first to repair in FY25.

There was a discussion about the importance of sidewalks and funding them. Mr. Clancy recommended that there be a meeting early next year to talk specifically about sidewalk and pavement issues.

Mr. Paolillo asked for an update on the incinerator site.

Building and Planning – Chris Ryan

Ms. Garvin explained that the biggest change in this department is its existence, and then explained the employees structure in the department.

Mr. Ryan explained the roles and responsibilities of an admin position that will be created to fill one that is going to the DPW.

Ms. Garvin spoke about the Union negotiations that impact these positions and budget.

Ms. Dionne said many people would like to see an Economic Development position in town, although it is premature to discuss in detail at this point. How to proceed with this idea was discussed as well as how to fill the gap in the meantime.

Ms. Garvin highlighted some of the budget issues that are being worked on for the budget which were discussed.

Recreation – Brandon Fitts

Ms. Garvin explained that they are focusing on recruitment, retention, and succession for FY25 and the changes to the Recreation budget reflect this.

Mr. Fitts spoke about the growth of the department over the last few years. He explained that most of the changes in the budget are due to it moving from a General Fund budget to a Revolving Fund. He then reviewed the details and benefits of his proposed budget.

Ms. Hewitt explained the challenges of the change to a Revolving Fund, including continued transparency. She then reviewed the details of the Recreation budget and how it interacts with the General Fund budget.

Mr. Fitts explained that due to increased demand for services, there are employees who are paid far below the normal rate (and one is even lower than the lowest rate on Belmont's schedule). He then made some recommendations about how to resolve this problem and enhance retention.

Ms. Garvin explained how the budget supports the goal of succession planning.

There was a discussion of the recommendations and the budget in general.

Facilities – David Blazon

Mr. Blazon said the budget he is proposing is as close to level-funding as he could make it. He explained the savings that are included, the increase due to the rink, as well as several cuts to offset contractual obligations for custodial work.

Ms. Garvin pointed out that this budget has grown in the last six years and part of his budget will be on the override.

Mr. Blazon said the new position is a Project Manager, and explained the benefits of this role.

There was a discussion of the budget, including it in the override, and the new position.

There was a discussion of the projects currently happening in town, and Mr. Blazon's involvement in them as well as the challenges facing the department.

Health – Wesley Chin

Ms. Garvin said the largest portion of the budget is the funding for a Public Health Agent who was previously funded by ARPA. She explained that the town had promised to eliminate this role once the ARPA funding went away. She asked for the Boards opinion on how whether or not to continue funding it.

Mr. Chin explained the role and benefits of the Public Health Agent (Lindsay Sharp). He then reviewed some of the activities Ms. Sharp does and said this allows him and the Assistant Director (Diana Ekman) to focus on more complicated matters. He added that Ms. Sharp is also trained to provide backup to Mr. Chin and Ms. Ekman. He went on to outline other major benefits of having this position.

There was a discussion of the benefits of the position and whether or not, and how, to fund it.

Ms. Allen spoke about the quality of Ms. Sharp's performance and the benefits to the town. There was a discussion about Ms. Sharp's employment.

Ms. Dionne asked if the Health Department is adequately staffed to inspect restaurants, and Mr. Chin outlined what the department does for a new restaurant.

Ms. Hewitt advised that the Board of Health had increased its fees due to the increasing costs of inspections.

Town Clerk – Ellen Cushman

Ms. Cushman expressed concern about her staff being able to meet the requests that are being asked of them. She then reviewed the many duties and challenges of the Office of the Town Clerk, especially around elections and public records requests. The costs and burdens of public records requests was discussed, including fees charged for this service.

Mr. Epstein left the meeting at this point (9:58am).

Ms. Cushman provided an update on the new polling location that is needed due to the library construction. This will be a temporary location until the new library is built.

Library – Peter Struzziero, Kathy Keohane and Corinne McCue Olmsted

Ms. Olmsted explained that the budget reflects a full year in the temporary spaces but at the end there will be a ramp-up to get into the new building and set up systems.

Mr. Struzziero provided an overview of the proposed library budget, which was discussed.

There was a discussion of creating a town-wide technology department.

Mr. Struzziero and Ms. Keohane spoke about the staffing problems the library is facing filling positions.

Next Meetings & Upcoming Topics

1. Friday, November 17, 2023 – 8:30 AM – Budget Meeting
2. Thursday, November 30, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Joint Meeting – Budget Summit II
3. Monday, December 4, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Regular Meeting
4. Monday, December 11, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Regular Meeting
5. Monday, December 18, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Regular Meeting
6. Wednesday, December 20, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Joint Meeting- Budget Summit III

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 10:14am.

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Peghiny
Recording Secretary