

DATE: February 21, 2024
TIME: 9:35 AM

Approved by the Select Board:
Monday, January 22, 2024

**Minutes of the
Town of Belmont
Joint Open Meeting of the
Select Board
with the School Committee,
Warrant Committee and
Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee
Budget Summit II
November 30, 2023
7:00pm**

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

Call to Mr. Epstein called the meeting of the Select Board to order at 7:00pm.

Order: Mr. Lubien called the meeting of the Warrant Committee to order at 7:01pm.

Ms. Moriarty called the meeting of the School Committee to order 7:01pm.

Ms. Doyle called the meeting of the Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee to order at 7:02pm.

Select Board Members	Present	School Committee Members & Staff	Present
Roy Epstein, Chair	Yes	Meghan Moriarty, Chair	Remote
Elizabeth Dionne, Vice-Chair	Remote	Amy Checkoway, Secretary	Yes
Mark Paolillo, Member	Yes	Jeffrey Liberty	Remote
Warrant Committee Members			
Geoffrey Lubien, Chair	Yes	Jamal Saeh	Yes
Paul Rickter, Vice-Chair	Yes	Jung Yueh	Yes
Conor McEachern, Secretary	Yes	Amy Zuccarello	Yes
William Anderson	Yes	Jill Geiser, Superintendent of Schools	Yes
Tom Caputo	Yes	Lucia Sullivan, Asst Superintendent of Schools	Yes
Fitzie Cowing	Absent	Anthony DiCologero, Schools Director of Finance	Yes
Sue Croy	Yes	Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee (CCBC)	
Deepak Garg	Yes	Chris Doyle, Chair	Yes
Anne Helgen	Absent	Claus Becker	Yes
Robert McLaughlin	Absent	Patricia Brusch	Yes
Melissa Morley	Absent	Susan Burgess-Cox	Yes
Lynn Peterson Read	Yes	Deepak Garg, Ex-officio Designee – Warrant Comm.	Yes
Matthew Taylor	Yes	Jill Geiser, Non-Voting, Superintendent of Schools	Yes
Marie Warner	Yes	Jenniffer Hewitt, Non-Voting – ATM/Finance Director	Yes
Jack Weis	Yes	Lawrence Link	Remote
Roy Epstein, Ex-officio Designee, Select Board	Yes	Aaron Pickilingis	Remote
Meghan Moriarty, Ex-officio, School Committee	Remote	Mark Paolillo, Ex-officio Designee - Select Board	Remote
		Jung Yueh, Ex-officio Designee - School Committee	Yes
Staff Members			
Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator	Yes	Jennifer Hewitt, ATA/Finance Director	Yes

FY25 Budget

Revenue Discussion Recap: Mr. Garvin thanked the individuals and departments for their work on the budget and putting the Summit meeting together.

Ms. Garvin presented on the following topics (click [HERE](#) to see the slides):

- FY2025 Revenue Updates: Changes to FY25 Revenue Forecast: Ms. Garvin explained that there has been a lot of discussion of how much Free Cash to add to the budget, and it has been decided to add \$3,000,000 to the FY25 budget and those following after. She then reviewed the other changes since

the last Summit including New Growth, Cannabis Excise Taxes, Enterprise Receipts and Local Receipts for a total change of \$620,800.

She then reviewed the impacts of adding \$620,800 to the FY25 Revenue Forecast, explaining that her office feels this is a solid number and one they will recommend.

Ms. Garvin then shared information on one-time funding sources that have helped increase the General Stabilization Fund to \$3,593,737, and explained what it is important to build up this fund.

She then reviewed the Potential Use of the \$7,269,537 in available Free Cash for FY25 for:

- Operating Budget (\$2,447,305),
- OPEB (\$552,695),
- General Stabilization (\$0),
- Opioid Stabilization (\$107,020 restricted to this use),
- Capital Stabilization (\$1,500,000),
- Override Offset (\$2,662,517)
- Fuel Tanks (\$0).

- FY2025 Rollover, Level-Service and Override Budgets – Shared Services, Schools, and Municipal.

Ms. Garvin explained that this is a new way to look at budget items that the Schools and Town share, and pointed out that there is a 1.2% increase in this budget item for FY25.

Health Insurance: Ms. Garvin then reviewed how the Health Insurance Trust was maintained during the pandemic when rates were very low. The rates are now going up, and the proposal is to have a 4% increase in the Health Insurance budget line. They are being told that the true increase is somewhere between 6%-14% so the goal is to take money from the trust to keep it at 4% this year and look at other options for following years.

Facilities Department: Ms. Garvin explained that this department has slowly grown and explained that it needs staff to support all the projects that are happening in town. The proposal is the addition of a Project Manager (1 FTE).

Capital: The recommendation is that \$500,000 be added to the override for sidewalks and discretionary capital, and Ms. Garvin explained the reason for this recommendation.

Schools Budget Presentation: Ms. Moriarty thanked the School Committee for their work on the budget since the last Summit and said it had been previewed to the Warrant Committee and the public and they had received good feedback. The full School Committee has not yet met to consider these recommendations.

Ms. Checkoway thanked the individuals and committees who have worked on the budget effort.

Ms. Checkoway and Mr. DiCologero then presented on the FY25 Override Budget for Level Services (Click [HERE](#) to see the slides):

- Rollover: Mr. DiCologero explained how the rollover was determined, including required increases:
 - Salary & Wages (inc. Non-Base/Temp, and Step/Degrees increases) - \$50,325,314.
 - Benefits for New Staff: \$0
 - Special Ed Tuitions - \$9,284,758
 - Special Ed Transportation - \$1,938,933
 - Special Ed Contractor Services - \$1,421,995
 - Operating Expenses - \$2,702,262
 - Equipment - \$281,060

For a total increase of \$3,067,341 which represents a 4.88% increase from FY24. Ms. Checkoway reviewed the items that are included in the rollover.

- Reallocations: Ms. Checkoway then reviewed the Reallocations that would happen to better use staff and stay within the level-services guideline.

- Needed Increases: Ms. Checkoway then reviewed the needed increases to maintain level-services, and the reasons for these increases.

She summarized that the total Level-Services Budget for FY25 is \$66,472,383.

Ms. Checkoway then presented on the FY25 Override Budget Program Restoration & Improvements that the department would like to see but are dependent on the funding available with an override. She then explained why these recommendations are being made. She noted that many are administrative positions, and explained why these positions are important to provide support to Educators. She then outlined each of the recommendations. Including these Needed Increases would change FY25 budget to \$67,823,383.

Planning for Future Growth: Ms. Checkoway outlined the goals of the Committee to build the programs and resources.

Multi-Year Forecast: Mr. DiCologero explained how the forecast was calculated. Ms. Geiser reviewed Future Growth & Next Steps.

Expenses, Town & Schools: Ms. Garvin explained that the municipal side of the budget includes (click [HERE](#) to see the slides – start on slide 9):

- General Government - \$5,673,180
- Public Safety - \$14,533,776
- Public Services - \$9,750,975
- Human Services - \$3,416,607

The budget reflects a 3.9% increase after factoring Recreation's move to a Revolving Account. It includes an increase of 2 FTEs which will build back to pre-FY22 conditions, which she explained.

Ms. Garvin said that key retirements has provided an opportunity to restructure between departments, and she explained the details of the restructuring proposed for FY25:

- Recreation - transitioning to Revolving Fund.
- Community Development transitioned to Planning & Building and DPW Engineering.
- Rink Manager - new rink opening in early 2025.
- Library - new building opening in Fall 2025.
- Treasurer - realigning staff functions and reducing excess.

Ms. Garvin then presented the Multi-Year Revenue & Expense Summary which shows the budget gaps through FY27 based on the presented budgets:

- FY25: (\$8,602,446)
- FY26: (\$12,417,638)
- FY27: (\$15,242,833)

She then showed the history of the overrides since 2021 and reviewed Next Steps including meeting dates (shown below).

Mr. Epstein pointed out that the Select Board determined that an override would still be necessary even if the Schools continued with the basic level-services budget because available reserves are not sufficient to cover the costs.

He then discussed the issue of future budget shortfalls and what override(s) would be needed to address the gaps and highlighted some of the key issues.

Ms. Dionne joined the meeting at this point (8:00pm).

The participants then asked various questions and discussed the information provided, the implications of the information, how to determine the override amount and get it approved, how to reduce expenses and increase revenue, come to consensus on the budget, and how to proceed.

Next Meetings

Future Budget Summits (dates tentative):

- December 20, 2023 – Budget Summit III
- January 11, 2024 – Budget Summit IV

Future Select Board Meeting Dates (others may be added, as needed):

- December 4, 2023 – 7:00 PM - Regular Session
- December 11, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Regular Session
- December 18, 2023 – 8:30 AM – Regular Session
- December 20, 2023 – 7:00 PM – Budget Summit III
- January 5, 2024 - Preliminary budgets recommended by Town Administrator and Superintendent for both Override and No Override in traditional budget detail.
- January 11 - Summit IV - presentation of budgets by Town Administrator and Superintendent
- January 18 - Public Forum on transitioning Assessors from elected to appointed.
- January 22 - Special Town Meeting (remote) - transition of Assessors at Annual Election
- January 24 - Governor's budget released
- January 29 - Select Board meeting; final determination of override values for April 2, 2024

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting of the Belmont Select Board, and the motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:12pm.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting of the Belmont School Committee, and the motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:13pm.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting of the Warrant Committee, and the motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:14pm.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting of the Belmont Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee, and the motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:14pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Peghiny
Recording Secretary