

**MINUTES  
TOWN OF BELMONT  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM  
Monday, January 26, 2009  
7:00 PM**

**CALL TO ORDER**

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:02 by Chairman Firenze in the Selectmen's meeting room. All selectmen were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

**Belmont's Sesquicentennial (150th)**

Mr. Richard Betts and Ms. Victoria Haase from the Sesquicentennial Committee (Belmont 150) appeared before the Board to request permission to hang 25 panels in the hallway of Town Hall outside the Selectmen's Room (the hooks will be suspended without damage to the walls). The panels will reflect 150 facts in honor of Belmont's 150 years of incorporation. The panels were presented to and accepted by the Board of Selectmen.

**QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS**

Dr. Lorraine and Ms. Claire DeMilia appeared before the Board to discuss a \$50.00 violation they received as a result of the sidewalks on their commercial property not having been shoveled. Chair Firenze explained the by-law which requires owners of commercial property to clear their sidewalks and said that the town has been instructed to enforce this by-law.

**ACTION BY APPOINTMENT**

**OPEB Plan Discussion**

Town Treasurer Floyd Carman appeared before the Board to discuss the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) liability. The total projected liability is \$166.6M. The town, said Mr. Carman, has put \$650,000 into the OPEB fund over the past two years (\$500K in FY08 and \$150K in FY09). Mr. Carman recommends that the town have a policy in place of making an annual contribution to the OPEB fund. He suggested the amount of the contribution should be 10% of available free cash, less any amount set aside for the next budget cycle (e.g., \$800K in recent years). Selectman Jones recommended December 31<sup>st</sup> as a "lock in" date by which the OPEB contribution amount is determined.

With regard to the enterprise funds, Treasurer Carman advised that the town figure out their accrued liability and add that on, as those enterprises need to pay a yearly amount also.

The Board and Treasurer Carman discussed the appropriate rate for the enterprise funds to contribute to OPEB. Selectman Jones raised the concern that if we accept large amounts from enterprise funds, we will cost shift from tax payers to rate payers. If they are paying into OPEB at 200 times more than what is recommended, this could be one of the major reasons why water and sewer rates are so high. A “town-wide funding strategy” is needed, said Selectman Jones.

The Board and Treasurer Carman discussed where to put this money for investment purposes. Chair Firenze requested that this issue be placed on the Warrant Committee’s agenda, after the information regarding impact to utility rates is received.

### **Renewal of Licenses**

Chair Firenze read aloud the names of the establishments requesting to renew their licenses: Andros Diner, Aram’s Coffee Café, Bowtie Limousine, Brighams of Belmont, Chicken Express, Full Spectrum Motorsports, Grigorian Brothers Corporation, Kitchen on the Common, Linda’s Donuts, Ooh La La Fudge, Osaka Restaurant, Savino’s Grille, Select Café, Stone Hearth Pizza, TCBY, and Thyago’s Pizza.

Mr. Younger confirmed that all are in compliance and that there are no outstanding issues.

*The Board moved:* To renew the licenses of the above-named establishments as read by Chair Firenze.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

### **One Day Liquor License, Powers Music School**

Ms. Helen Clapp Stevenson appeared before the Board to request a one-day liquor license for Powers Music School for February 8, 2009. All the paper work is in order.

*The Board moved:* To grant a one day liquor license for the Powers Music School.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

### **Wellington School Update – Wellington Building Committee (WBC)**

Mr. Mark Haley, the Wellington Building Committee Chair, and Ms. Pat Bruschi, Chair of the Permanent Building Committee, appeared before the Board to give an update on the Wellington School reconstruction project. Mr. Haley reminded the Board that the Wellington was placed on the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) “short list” in the fall of 2007. Since then, after negotiations with the MSBA, the proposed school size was reduced from 675 to 575 students, including 75 LABBB students. There

will be 5 classes in each level from kindergarten through grade 4. The WBC had hired a project manager in 2005, but due to contract issues with the MSBA, the WBC needed to hire a new one in December 2008. There is now a new schematic design which is based on a smaller school (e.g., fewer students). The new building is expected to cost about \$40M and this covers only construction costs. After the state's contribution, the building cost to taxpayers should be about \$24M. There are a number of costs that MSBA will not reimburse for, including the relocation of students, the removal of contaminated materials on the site, etc. Thus \$28-\$30M could be the actual taxpayer burden.

Mr. Haley said that the WBC hopes to receive its MSBA funding agreement by mid to late February and would like to have the Board's support to place a debt exclusion question on the ballot for the April election. If that were to pass, the Wellington could be bid on in the late fall of 2009. Mr. Haley added that it is hoped that the construction costs would have come down by then.

Chair Firenze said that he supports getting this to the voters as quickly as possible and supports the project as long as it remains a reasonable project. Firenze stated that he would like to see that the total cost per student for the new building is consistent with other communities and that the new Wellington is an acceptable educational facility commensurate with the needs of Belmont. Selectmen Jones and Leclerc stated their full support for a new Wellington as well as for placement on the April ballot.

### **Govt. Structure Committee Update – Committee Members**

Dr. Paul Solomon, Mr. Bob McLaughlin, Ms. Anne-Marie Mahoney, and members from the Government Structure Committee (GSC) appeared before the Board to discuss their report of Preliminary Recommendations. Chair Firenze noted that the committee was put together to look specifically at the organization of the town. Dr. Solomon explained that the Committee's goals were to increase the efficiency of town government and to increase the participation of citizens in town government. The committee has been meeting twice monthly since May 2008 and has held two public meetings. The Government Structure Committee will make its final recommendations in April.

Highlights of the Preliminary Report include the suggestion to strengthen the role of the Town Administrator such that he/she has the authority to appoint, remove, and discipline all department heads. The Board of Selectmen would become a policy board and would perhaps be increased in size. Regarding Committee appointments, the Board would appoint members of certain permanent Committees, and the Town Administrator would appoint to all other committees, with the exception of temporary committees, which would be appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Regarding Town Meeting (TM), the GSC recommends reducing the number of members serving over a three-year period. This might encourage more people to run for TM. It is recommended that 27 TM members represent each of the eight precincts thus reducing the total number of TM members by 72 or 25%. The GSC recommends that the Warrant be closed two weeks prior to TM. It further recommends for the town to consider a "Town Meeting Member Association" which would bring TM members together to discuss issues, view specific sites, etc.

Regarding the Belmont Light Board, the GSC recommends the elimination of the practice that the Board of Selectmen serves as the Belmont Light Board. The Board of Selectmen would appoint a five person Light Board consisting of people who have specialized knowledge and expertise in the retail distribution of electricity. The GSC would also recommend a “recall provision” in Belmont’s government in which any elected officials could be recalled, under specific circumstances.

In summary, Mr. McLaughlin noted that the major shift to town government would be to empower and strengthen the Town Administrator position. This concept, he added, centralizes control over the budget and personnel, which will increase efficiency for the town. Selectman Jones said that it sets the stage for consolidation of functions. The town does not need two entire lines of Department heads in HR, Buildings, IT, etc.

The Board then discussed the Light Board issues. The Board of Selectmen would retain the power to appoint Light Board members. Regarding Permanent Building Committees (which are appointed by the Town Moderator), Chair Firenze stated that the autonomous nature of them is something he is not comfortable with and he would like to put limitations on them. This was discussed as well. The Board then thanked the GSC and said that they look forward to reading the final report in April.

### **Committee Appointments – Belmont Vision 21 Implementation Committee, Solid Waste and Recycling Committee**

The Board opted to hold off on making committee appointments for the above named committees. Chair Firenze said he would like to meet with the committees and he asked Mr. Younger to have them appear before the Board at separate meetings.

### **Recreation Commission**

*The Board moved:* To appoint former Youth Commission members: Ms. Laurie Carlson and Ms. Ann Bere to the Recreation Commission.  
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

The Board noted that a TM article would be needed to officially abolish the Youth Commission.

### **Notifying TM Members**

The Board discussed notification of community-wide meetings/forums for TM members. The Board discussed how to best obtain the phone numbers of the TM members.

### **Housing Authority**

The Board noted that the Housing Authority would appear before the Board at its meeting on February 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Town Administrator's Report**

Mr. Younger reported on the following items:

- Field Utilization for Well Program – Mr. Jim Fitzgerald from the Belmont Soccer Association (BSA) notified the Board that, regarding the scheduling of Town, PQ, and Grove fields, he and Mr. Younger will coordinate with the Recreation Department. He said that the BSA will invest between \$80-\$100K for wells and want the Board of Selectmen to understand that the BSA requests access to the fields, as they have had in the past. The Board will look at a memorandum of agreement detailing the understanding of wells funding in exchange for the same field space access. Chair Firenze said he hopes that there is some flexibility written into the agreement. He suggested that the Board of Selectmen could act as arbitrators under special circumstances (for instance, should a field scheduling conflict arise, the Board could address that conflict with consideration of the fiscal contribution of the Belmont Soccer Association). Mr. Fitzgerald will work with Mr. Younger to come up with such a written agreement.
- Local Aid Reduction for FY09 – Chapter 70 will be untouched, but additional assistance and lottery funds may be reduced. Chapter 70 may not be touched in FY10, as well. Mr. Younger will meet with his financial team and school department to estimate shortfall possibilities (maybe \$250K) for FY09.
- Pavement Management – May fall under federal stimulus funding.
- Generator – Installed behind Homer Building.
- Rock Meadow – The upgrade program will resume in the Spring.

The Board discussed the issue of regionalization in the areas of water and sewer programs as well as the cooperative purchase of road patching and other capital equipment.

### **OTHER**

#### **GIC Numbers**

Chair Firenze asked that Mr. Younger watch the financial numbers closely for Towns that have joined or are joining the state's Group Insurance Commission for health insurance.

#### **Snow Removal**

Mr. Conti noted the extensive snowfall Belmont has received, which totals 49.5 snow inches this year already. (The average in a full winter season is 45 inches.) The Board will need to authorize the DPW to expend money beyond its FY09 appropriation on snow removal. The Board will reconcile the snow removal account at April's TM.

The Board discussed the issue of sidewalk clearing. Chair Firenze asked Mr. Castanino to spend the additional snow removal money where it is most needed. The Board reminded residents to clear sidewalks and help their elderly neighbors to clear their sidewalks.

*The Board moved:* To authorize the DPW Director to expend money on snow and ice removal in excess of the amount appropriated for this purpose in the FY09 budget.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

## **ACTION BY CONSENT**

[There was none.]

## **ACTION BY WRITING**

### **Elm Street and Cushing Avenue Stop Control**

*The Board moved:* To support placing a stop sign on the corner of Elm Street as it intersects with Payson Road, and to place a stop sign stop sign on Cushing Ave., as it intersects with Payson Road.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

### **Club License Alcohol – Authorization to Place on the Official Town Meeting**

This issue was postponed to a later meeting.

## **OTHER (continued)**

### **Chapter 40B Changes**

Mr. Conti: There is a new bill regarding affordable housing which suggests making changes to Chapter 40 B legislation. The Board will not discuss until it has read the new bill.

### **Dates Leading Up to TM**

Mr. Conti will communicate dates and deadlines to the appropriate boards and committee chairs. Mr. Conti will mail out the warrant to TM members by Monday, April 13. Therefore he will need all information, including final budget numbers, by Friday, April 10. (Mr. Conti noted that sooner would be better.)

## **Executive Session**

*The Board moved:* To enter into executive session at 10:32 to discuss litigation. The Board will not be returning to open session.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

*(During executive session, no substantive motions were made. The Board moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:07 pm.)*

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Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator