

MINUTES
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MONDAY, JANUARY 29, 2007
REGULAR SESSION
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM, TOWN HALL
7:00PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:00 PM in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall. All members were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

II. QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

Dr. Nabil Fahmy asked the Board about compensation for his basement flooding after heavy October rains flooded the basement, and 3 different pumps installed by the Town's contractor, Rotondi, were defective. Hanover Insurance came out and looked at the damage and asked for an itemized list of damages. They have not responded since then to Dr. Fahmy's phone call. Mr. Conti will follow up on this.

III. ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

Police Awards

Acting Police Chief Richard Lane appeared before the Board to present awards to police officers and distinguished citizens.

Media Corporation Annual Report

Jeff Hansell, Executive Director, appeared to present the Belmont Media Center (BMC) annual report. The Media Center non-profit corporation was formed in July 2005 to take over the operations of Comcast Channel 8. Since then the media center has provided over 2700 hours of programming including 7 new local shows, as well as classes and training sessions.

For 2007, the BMC will continue to upgrade its facilities, increase the number of residents participating, offer more classes and programs, increase local programming, and support the business and residential communities. Challenges the BMC faces in achieving these goals are the limited space available at the high school, and proposed legislation which could undermine municipal control of cable franchises and hence the funding stream for public access channels.

Selectman Firenze noted that the funding for the BMC does not come from resident taxes but from payments made by Comcast and Verizon.

The Board expressed its satisfaction with the progress that has been made and its confidence in the continued growth in services over the next year.

Zero Base Budget Discussion

Selectman Firenze explained that zero-based budgeting or activity-based budgeting means that instead of basing a budget on the prior year's expenditures, the process begins by deciding what is hoped to accomplish and building a budget based on what will be needed to meet those goals. Mr. Younger has been looking to try this out with one of the Town departments as a test project.

Selectman Brownsberger said it is healthy to break down the budget and look at what services actually cost. He noted that it takes a lot of work to go through this exercise and feels it probably

makes sense to look at one or two departments in a given year rather than try to tackle all of them in this fashion every year.

Selectman Firenze said this should be done by the department heads in conjunction with the Warrant Committee subcommittees that normally review the budgets. Mr. Younger and Selectman Firenze will work together to pursue this.

There was a general discussion of the timing of this year's budget process.

Process for Setting Priorities for Future Building Projects

Selectman Firenze suggested that a small group should step back and take a fresh look at Belmont's priorities for its building projects. Selectman Brownsberger said that the MEGA group should tackle the issue of the timing of the library project while a smaller group can tackle the larger question of priorities as suggested by Selectman Firenze. Chair Solomon noted that the Senior Center and the Wellington School do not need to be part of this discussion as both of those projects are too far along in the process to be re-visited.

Selectman Brownsberger said the small group should be constituted by the MEGA group at its next meeting after a scope of the review (what projects will be included) is decided.

Jill Westcott of the Library Trustees said that the discussion of the library project should include the fact that private fundraising really needs a target completion date in order to be effective. The Belmont Library Foundation needs support from the Town for a concrete time framework.

The Board discussed the pending request from the Library Trustees to place an article on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant to appoint a building committee for the library project. The Trustees will come before the Board next week to discuss this in detail. The Board talked about whether the decision should be made by the MEGA group or whether the MEGA group ultimately functions as advisory to the Selectmen.

Resident Norma Massarotti expressed her support for master planning of building projects and believed that current buildings should be included in those discussions.

Goals Update

The Board reviewed progress toward goals under 8 major objectives.

Develop new sources of revenue: The Town will be meeting with the Belmont Hill School and later the Belmont Day School and other non-profit entities to discuss PILOT compensation. The Town will be pursuing disposition of town-owned land in April, possibly by auction. The Board would like to disseminate information about tax mitigation options for seniors.

Plan for controlling healthcare costs: The Board is reviewing a self-insurance option and hopes to make a decision by March 1st. The Town also would like to explore joining the state's GIC if legislation allows this.

Develop and maintain regional opportunities: A group studying regionalization opportunities for shared services and purchasing will be meeting with MAPC in February. Preliminary meetings with ten communities have already been held. Belmont is taking a leadership role in this area because of the broad support for this among town institutions.

Redefine Community Development, Economic Development, Engineering and Planning functions: The Board felt that Jay Szklut is doing a very good job in making progress on Economic Development and Planning issues. Efforts are being made to allow permit applicants to meet with multiple departments at once to simplify the process of obtaining approvals. The pavement

management committee and Belmont Center Planning Group are both reporting to the Board in February with recommendations. The Board will review the status of efforts to address the flooding situation in the Winn Brook neighborhood.

Review facilities management: A committee is reviewing consolidation of building maintenance functions between town and school. The Town is obtaining examples of privatization contracts for rinks and pools. Closing is anticipated in February on the sale of Brighton Street property for housing. The Center Fire Station has been sold. The Woodfall road land swap agreement with the Belmont Country Club should be transacted by February 1. The purchase and sale agreement for the Harvard Lawn Fire Station is being drafted. Archive materials are being removed from the old Light Department building while awaiting a proposal for temporary re-use of building for a teen center. A schedule has been proposed for capping the incinerator site. The Security Committee will present its report to the Board in February.

Assist in public/private partnership regarding development and land conservation: The Town is continuing to monitor progress of Pleasant Street construction.

Improving communications: The Selectmen's Office is resuming its monthly meetings with seniors. An upgrade to the Town's web site is in progress.

Personnel management and development: A management training program is being scheduled for new department heads. Mr. Conti recently attended an MMA succession planning seminar and obtained information on how to move forward with metrics for evaluating job skills and employee skills.

The Board will review its goals again in April.

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Younger reported on the status of negotiations with new police Chief Richard McLaughlin. The parties have been speaking daily and negotiations are proceeding with possible conclusion tomorrow - the parties are relatively close to an agreement. Chief McLaughlin's start date would be three weeks from the date of the contract signing.

The Town is in the process of getting a third quote for the repair of the Town Hall doors, as required because the quotes we received were greater than \$10,000. New parking signage will be going up around Town Hall.

Belmont has received a \$1,875 grant from MIIA for gas detectors for manholes.

IV. ACTION BY CONSENT

A. Renewal Application - Common Victualler's License

The Board moved: To approve the license.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

V. OTHER

Next week the Board is convening as the Light Board at 6 PM before the Selectmen's meeting at 7.

The Board considered a date for the next MEGA meeting. They tentatively set aside Monday, March 5 at 7:30 PM to allow the Board to meet briefly beforehand.

The Board moved: to go into executive session to discuss negotiations with non-union personnel and not to return to open session.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0). The Board entered executive session at 10:31 PM.

(During executive session, one substantive motion was made and passed unanimously. The Board adjourned at 10:46 PM.)

Thomas Younger, Town Administrator