

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
Monday, October 20, 2008
7:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:04 by Chairman Firenze. All the Selectmen were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were present.

QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

Bill Ames, a Willow Street resident, requested that the Board observe 125 Trapelo Road: a dumpster is often present and the trash is put out two days early. The Department of Public Works will look into this and report back to the Board. (DPW Director Peter Castanino was in the audience.) Another issue regarding 125 Trapelo Road, Mr. Ames added, is the number of balconies that are attached to apartments. It's an eye sore, he said. The Board replied that there is little they can do about the balconies. Mr. Ames also asked that the Board review the sidewalk from Shaw's to the entrance of the new Senior Housing. It's narrow and dangerously close to passing cars. Chair Firenze replied that that section of sidewalk is currently being redesigned. Mr. Ames then asked if Mr. Starr's design project at Cushing Square is available for the public. Chair Firenze replied that no official design plan exists. Mr. Starr will go through the Planning Board in developing a design plan.

ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

Senior Center Operating Budget Discussion

Town Treasurer Floyd Carman and Senior Center Director Nava Niv-Vogel appeared before the Board to discuss the new Senior Center's prospective operating budget. Ms. Niv-Vogel stated that they compared the FY09 budget of the current Senior Center in developing the FY10 numbers for the new center. New expenses include \$50,000 for electricity used for the new geothermal heat pumps, \$24,800 (up from \$2,500) for repair service contracts for the new HVAC system (among others), and \$18,366 for increased custodial services. The current site is 12,358 square feet, while the new site is 19,747 square feet. The cost per square foot is currently \$10.28 and is expected to be \$6.70 for the new center. At the new site, \$71,000 in rent will be saved. A \$19,242 savings is expected on heating fuel. The total cost difference expected is about an increase of \$10,000. Mr. Carman noted that these figures were calculated based on the building being in use from 8-4 Monday through Friday; these numbers do not account for night and weekend use. He also stressed that it was difficult to put a budget together based on a facility that hasn't opened yet.

Chair Firenze commented that a bigger, new facility will probably have costs associated with it, costs that may not be known at this time. He also noted that, while the \$71,000 in rent will no longer be an expense, the tax payers will have to pay down the debt on the new building – which will amount to \$160,000 per year in interest costs only.

Street Light Discussion

I. Street Light Savings Proposal

Mr. Castanino, Light Department Director Tim Richardson, Police Chief Richard McLaughlin, and Assistant Police Chief Richard Lane appeared before the Board to discuss the street light proposal. Mr. Richardson noted two goals of the proposal: to reduce the FY09 budget and to provide those savings in a safe way. The recommended proposal involves replacing 400 watt bulbs with 250 watt bulbs, replacing 250 watt bulbs with 100 watt and replacing the 100 watt bulbs with 70 watt bulbs. These replacements will result in 50% less lighting throughout town and will provide a total FY09 savings of \$28,751. Mr. Richardson noted that this figure does not meet the \$170,000 goal, but to achieve those savings would have required turning off the majority of lights. In answer to a question from the Board, it was noted that the 70 watt lights, which are used on all side streets, were not being reduced. Chief McLaughlin noted that this proposal was a logical and reasonable way to attain some savings. Selectmen Jones and Leclerc articulated their support for the plan as presented.

Ms. Sapolsky, an Edgemore Road resident, referred to this as the “dimming proposal.” She asked: How is it that lights (which impact everyone’s safety) were chosen to get cut as a means to save money? The school budget could cut its athletic teams and how many people would that impact? One law suit, she added, could wipe out all of the town’s savings.

Selectman Leclerc said that the schools would continue making their share of cuts this year as well.

The Board moved: To accept the street lighting saving proposal recommendation.
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

II. Fire Alarm Boxes

Chair Firenze raised the issue of the fire alarm box cost savings. The Board agreed that this issue ought to be studied further.

The Board moved: To ask Chief Frizzell for a program to remove non-essential fire boxes.
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

III. Track Lights

Chair Firenze raised the issue of the track lights. Mr. Castanino noted that it's not clear that the "walking lights" have ever been on because of an agreement with a nearby resident. Those lights may have been designed to augment the field lights, he added. Mr. Castanino is looking into this issue and will report back to the Board with a recommendation.

IV. Lingering Funding Issue

The Board then discussed the issue of funding the \$150,000 which will still be needed for street lighting. A special Town Meeting may need to be called, as a reserve fund transfer is not likely. Mr. Younger will attempt to transfer some existing budget funds from one account to another to cover lights. The consequence of this will be less free cash available in the future.

Renewal of Movie Theater Licenses, 2007, 2008, 2009: Studio Cinema, Trapelo Road

The Board moved: To approve all of the theater licenses for Studio Cinema. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Parking Lot Fees Discussion

Town Treasurer Carman appeared before the Board to discuss parking lot fee increases. Mr. Younger noted that Belmont maintains three lots: Belmont Center, Cushing Square, and Waverley Square. Currently there is no charge for overnight parking in those lots. Daytime fees have not been raised in almost 6 years. The proposal is to raise fees to .60 cents for an hour (from .40), to \$3.00 for a day (from \$2.00), and to \$60.00 for a monthly fee (from \$40.00).

Chair Firenze said that the town ought to be charging for spaces that are convenient to the shops, and not charging for the inconvenient, far away spaces. The town ought to charge at least \$1.00 an hour to park on Leonard Street. Mr. Carman said that the Parking Committee is looking at Leonard Street; there are pros and cons to raising fees on Leonard. The merchants fear it will drive customers away. Mr. Younger noted that it is now recommended that parking lot fees be assessed every three years. All town departments should also review their fees every three years.

The Board moved: To accept the parking lot fee increases as proposed. The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Committee Appointments & Health Advisory Board

Council on Aging. The Board reviewed the status of the present COA committee members. Mr. John Bruschi has a 1 year appointment, Ms. Ethel Hamann has a 3 year

appointment, and Mr. Henry Kazarian has a 2 year appointment. Three vacancies still remain on the COA.

The Board moved: To recommend Diana Dick, Judy Morrison, and Angela Mullin for full 3-year appointments.
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Retirement Board.

The Board moved: To appoint Mr. Peter Palandjian to the Retirement Board.
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Other. Chair Firenze noted that the Recreation Commission and the Youth Commission are working together to assess areas of potential overlap. They will come back to the Board with their recommendation.

The Human Rights Commission will be addressed at an upcoming Board meeting.

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Younger reported on the following items:

- *VFW Lease.* A lease agreement has been reached with the VFW for 10 years. Selectmen Jones and Leclerc will read the lease agreement and it will be signed at a later time.
- *Financial Situation Update.* Question 1's impact on local aid has the potential to be severe. If state revenue decreases, local aid will be impacted. Mr. Younger proposed that the town consider a "hiring freeze" which would take effect immediately, until further notice (with room for exceptions in certain circumstances). Younger stated that he wants to send a message to the community that the economic situation is being taken seriously.

Selectman Leclerc stated that he would rather wait until Question 1's outcome is known on Election Day. Selectman Jones said that he endorses this and can justify a freeze, as the town is already down more than a \$100,000 due to the lights issue and the Warrant Committee has instructed the town and schools to live within their budgets. Chair Firenze said that he supports a freeze, as it addresses the \$4M budget gap and puts the town ahead of the curve, should an override fail. Selectman Leclerc said he can support this proposal; his difference was mostly a question of timing.

The Board moved: To support the Town Administrator's recommendation to establish a hiring freeze, effective immediately.
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

- *Benton Branch.* Mr. Younger is recommending that Benton Branch Library be closed. The Board discussed the fact that the Library Trustees will ultimately decide what gets cut (e.g., if their budget is \$10,000 less, they could cut another service at the main library). Mr. Conti suggested that Town Meeting could transfer authority of the Library building over to the Board of Selectmen.

ACTION BY CONSENT

Approval of Board of Selectmen Minutes – August 4, 2008

The Board moved: To approve the minutes of the above meeting date: 8/4/08.
The motion passed (2-0).

Chair Firenze abstained as he was absent from the meeting.

ACTION BY WRITING

There was none.

OTHER

Chair Firenze raised the following items:

- *Auditorium Lighting.* The spring show will have the new lighting system in place.
- *CVS Trash Management.* Mr. Younger will look into this.
- *Veteran's Service Officer.* It is required that the town have a full-time Veteran's Service position, if the town has more than 12,000 residents. Currently Belmont combines this position with the position of Animal Control Officer. The issue is being discussed statewide.
- *Church Parking Lots.* A number of churches rent out their parking spaces. The Planning Board is addressing the bylaw that states that this is not permissible. The Board discussed that their main position is to support and enforce the town's bylaws as written, until such time that the bylaws are changed.
- *Health Advisory Board.* Mr. Younger asked Recording Secretary Lisa Gibalerio to give an overview of this committee. Ms. Gibalerio stated that the Health Advisory Board meets about four times a year and is comprised of the High School principal, the middle school headmaster, the school nurse, a youth commission representative, a school committee representative, the DARE police officer, etc. The Health Advisory Board reviews all of the health initiatives that are taking place throughout the schools. Mr. Conti recommended that Ms. Gibalerio act as the Board of Selectmen representative as she already sits on this committee.

The Board moved: To appoint Ms. Lisa Gibalerio as the Board of Selectmen representative to the Health Advisory Board.

The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

- *PILOT Payments.* Chair Firenze said that both Belmont Hill School and Belmont Day School have declined the request(s) to make PILOT payments to the town. He noted that these schools have extensive summer programs and wondered if that revenue is taxable? Mr. Younger will follow up on where potentially the town could collect fees. The Board agreed that they will pursue collecting fees from these schools where they can - to the fullest extent possible.
- *Police Details.* This will be discussed at a November Board meeting with Town Counsel present. While a “flagger” makes nearly the same amount of money as a police officer detailer, Selectman Jones suggested that the number of details be reduced overall. The Board agreed that this issue needs to be addressed as it is a concern all over town.

Executive Session

The Board moved: To enter into executive session at 10:14 pm to discuss possible purchase of real property. 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 10:37 pm.)

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Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator