

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA.

**BELMONT WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
FINAL**

Oct 21 9 28 AM '13

**OCTOBER 9, 2013, 7:30 P.M.
CHENERY COMMUNITY ROOM**

Present: Chair Libenson; Members Allison, Baghdady, Dash, Epstein, Gammill, Grob, Helgen, Manjikian, McLaughlin, Mennis, Sarno; Selectman Rojas, School Committee Representative Slap

Town Administrator Kale

Capital Budget Committee (CBC) Chair: Ms. Anne Marie Mahoney

Members Absent: Bruschi, BOS Chair Paolillo

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Chair Libenson.

Chair Libenson began by noting that the first agenda item will be postponed until Mr. Mennis arrives.

Reminder: Association of Town Finance Committees Meeting

Chair Libenson reminded the WC of the date of the upcoming meeting: Saturday, Oct. 19, 2013. Please contact Mr. Kale's office for registration details.

Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles – Discussion

Harris Field Resurfacing

CBC Chair Mahoney approached the WC table.

Mr. Kale reviewed the data pertaining to the field, noting that estimates have been received from the design firm. The estimate, he said, is on target with the one prepared last winter. There is a funding source for the field, he explained, and the project will cost the town \$960K, which includes the field replacement, track resurfacing, and various repairs. The track has a life expectancy of about seven years and is approaching its end of life – meaning, it needs resurfacing. The turf would be installed over the summer, at which time the track can be resurfaced. He said that other repairs in the immediate area (e.g., the gate, the surrounding concrete, and the fence) would occur at this time as well, subject to final bids. Interest rates for the bond should be less than 4%. Mr. Kale then spoke about the potential timeline and of the rolling funding mechanism with regard to track and field replacement.

CBC Chair Mahoney said that the CBC was supportive of this project and of borrowing up to \$960K. However, if the actual bid comes in higher than that, some of the add-on

repairs would need to be dropped.

WC members asked some clarifying questions pertaining to this project. Member Helgen stated that, given the expense, perhaps outside funding could be explored. Regarding CPA eligibility, Mr. Kale said he did not think this project meets the criteria.

Member Allison said that, the way the finance plan is designed, the track project will not have to compete for funds the way other capital projects do. She asked why this particular project should have absolute protection when so many others do not. CBC Chair Mahoney agreed that there would effectively be a “silo” for this project if it utilized funding made available from the ending of bond payments on the high school HVAC project. She noted other examples of this type of rolling financing across town, e.g., fire truck, ambulance.

Mr. Kale said that this project would be evaluated when it needs to be replaced again. He said that, given the need for field replacement, it made sense to use the funding that was available. Member Allison said that this type of financing plan is not provided for other pressing needs across town, e.g., sidewalks, educational materials, the DPW facility, etc.

CBC Chair Mahoney agreed and suggested that the criteria/prioritization form that the CBC established could be utilized for capital decisions like this. Mr. Kale offered that the new finance task force will look at the capital projects across town using the criteria/prioritization that the CBC established.

Member Sarno asked what would happen if the field was shut down. SC Rep. Slap said that many sports (field hockey, football, soccer, lacrosse, etc.) would have no field, should that happen.

Member McLaughlin moved: Favorable on this Article.
The motion passed unanimously.

Yard Sale Article, Snow By-law

Chair Libenson asked if the WC agreed that it will not weigh in on these two by-laws. There was agreement.

Demolition Delay By-law

Chair Libenson asked that WC members read the materials and be prepared to discuss this article next week.

Introduction of a New Member

Chair Libenson introduced the newest WC member: Mr. Greg Mennis. Chair Libenson reviewed Member Mennis’ credentials. Member Mennis, he informed the WC, is an expert on pension reform. Member Mennis then highlighted some of his professional

experience. WC members introduced themselves.

Discussion of Potential “Deep Dive” Analysis

Chair Libenson distributed a handout of potential structural reform projects, a list originally created in 2010. He noted that these brainstormed projects were generated by a combination of Warrant Committee recommendations as well as submissions from town residents – and therefore do not represent a list of recommendations, only a set of ideas loosely organized around town departments. He asked WC members to consider if there are any projects that the WC might want to evaluate and/or any additional projects to dive into. (He requested that members please send feedback and suggestions to Member Epstein.)

The WC discussed some of the projects, by area.

Town Government

Member Helgen suggested that “selling naming rights” may be an appropriate area to explore. Member Slap informed the WC that the school department is also looking into this area. Member Gammill suggested that the establishing of revolving accounts is an area that might be added to this list. Member Sarno noted that cost controls and the generation of new revenue is a topic that the new finance task force will look into. Member Dash asked if the Board of Selectmen had selected any of these topics to explore. Selectman Rojas replied yes, and that coordination of the WC and Board will be important when considering projects.

Mr. Kale offered that the Financial Task Force will also consider similar projects such as an analysis of service delivery, cost savings, fees for services, etc.

Chair Libenson noted that pension and OPEB benefits and compensation were considered high priority topics when the list was generated.

Public Works/Safety

Member Dash noted that some of the topics in Public Works have been implemented since the list was generated. Member Allison offered that it will be important to frame the questions/problems well so that we do not, for example, study whether more firefighter services/hours should be made available through overtime or through increased hiring without examining the larger question of whether firefighters, an expensive resource, should be performing all the functions they are performing. Member Helgen raised the topic of enterprise funds for the Recreation Department programming.

Building Services, COA, Library, Education

Member Sarno noted that the area of online courses has been encouraged by the Ed. Subcommittee in the past. He added that the WC should continue, in this endeavor, to

focus on what it does well, e.g., to offer substantive cost benefit analysis.

Minuteman Update

Member McLaughlin informed the WC that there have been several meetings since the WC last met. The “right to withdraw” from the district agreement is being explored, as this will be important in attracting new communities. The new agreement would like to have 80% agreement (among the member towns) for borrowing money, as opposed to unanimity as it is now. He said the issue of OPEB debt and what would be owed (if a member town withdraws) is also under discussion.

He then explained the “special act” required to change the member-town agreement.

Regarding the new building project, Minuteman is approaching Modular 3 – which is where Belmont feels the process ought to stop. He discussed the financial analysis (regarding the borrowing capacity) that is being gathered relating to the size of the new school.

Chair Libenson clarified that the WC may be called in to provide some fiscal analysis on issues relating to Minuteman. Member McLaughlin said that the issue of funding the new building and the revised member agreement are interconnected. He said the new agreement may be ready for review this spring.

Selectman Rojas noted that both issues seem to be coming together for next spring – and if so, he asked, will they come before the 16 member-towns? Member McLaughlin said Minuteman needs 16 votes to get the funding for the new facility and it has been suggested that they get a sense now, of how those 16 towns feel about the proposed size of the new facility.

Approval of Minutes (6-12-13 and 9-25-13) and Minutes Process Review

Chair Libenson proposed a potential approach to the minutes: after Lisa completes her draft, Member Epstein (as Secretary) will do the initial review of the minutes. His draft will then be distributed to the WC, and feedback will be sent back to Lisa. Adjustments should be oriented around one’s own comments. Lisa will pull together the edits and send out a new draft; this draft will be reviewed and voted on. The Minutes, he said, should strive to be a fair representation of what has occurred at the meeting.

The minutes of 6/12/13 and of 9/25/13 were approved, with five abstentions for June 12 and two abstentions for September 25.

League of Women Voters (LWV) Briefing on Special Town Meeting Articles

The WC will be present for the LWV briefing to be held on Monday, October 28, 2013 at 8:00 pm at the Beech Street Center.

Updates: Board of Selectman, School Committee, Planning Board

Board of Selectmen: Selectman Rojas noted that the Demo Delay By-law has come together and the Board has been focusing on the Special TM Warrant.

Planning Board: Member Baghdady reported that the PB has voted to approve the Demolition Delay By-law as published in the Warrant for the Special Town Meeting. He believes this version also has the support of the Historic District Commission as well as the By-law Review Committee. He explained that the List of properties that would be subject to the demolition delay has been reduced from over 200 to about 150 properties. The List will be posted with the Town Clerk before Town Meeting takes action on the By-law. The List cannot be expanded; however, a resident whose property is on the List will have 60 days to appeal to the Board of Selectmen to have his or her property removed from the List. Municipal buildings are expressly excluded from the By-law. Finally, the By-law contains a sunset provision whereby the By-law will automatically expire on June 30, 2016. It is anticipated that the survey of historical properties being commissioned by the HDC will be completed by that time, and the town will be in a better position to consider a final version of a Demolition Delay By-law.

Chair Libenson said that this article will be discussed in detail next week.

School Committee: SC Rep Slap reviewed the fact that eight small groups had been formed by the Superintendent to explore topics that the School Committee and the leadership agree are important to explore. A report should be ready before the end of the calendar year. Regarding the enrollment, the numbers are up by 151 (across the system), showing that last year's enrollment numbers were not a blip. The SC Finance Subcommittee will meet next week and the first Quarter (Q1) budget numbers will be analyzed.

Public Contributions

There were none.

Upcoming WC Meetings / Room Availability for Subcommittee Meetings

Chair Libenson noted that the WC will meet next week: 10/16/13. He said he does not have a specific fall schedule as of yet, as the "deep dive" analysis decisions will impact the schedule of meetings.

Member Sarno informed the WC that the CMS Community Room is available from 6:00 on (for subcommittee meetings), on most Wednesdays evenings – with the exception of the following Wednesdays: 10/16, 10/30 and 11/20.

Adjournment

Member McLaughlin moved to adjourn at 9:17 pm.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
WC Recording Secretary