

**MINUTES
TOWN OF BELMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM
Monday, November 3, 2008
7:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:05 by Chairman Firenze in the Town Hall Auditorium. All the Selectmen were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were present.

QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

There were none.

ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

OPEB Discussion

The actuarial consultants for the Town – Mr. Stephen Ricci (Ricci Consultants) and Mr. Stuart Rubenstein (HRH) – as well as Town Accountant Barbara Hagg and Treasurer Floyd Carman appeared before the Board to discuss OPEB (Other Post Employment Benefits). Ms. Hagg stated that an actuarial study was done two years ago as a benchmark. A study will now be done once every two years. The actuarial consultants reviewed OPEB funding as it relates to Belmont's employees and retirees. Their work concluded that Belmont has a \$166M unfunded OPEB liability. Selectman Jones noted that Belmont's liability was \$121M in 2006, while it is now \$166M. (The liability has increased by 33% over the past 2 years.) While medical cost assumptions have gone up by 20%, the number of Belmont employees partaking in the town's medical benefit plan is driving the numbers up as well. Chair Firenze asked what the total number of town employees was 2 years ago versus the number of employees today. Mr. Ricci: Belmont had 608 active employees 2 years ago, this year there are 733 active employees (but not all are collecting insurance). Chair Firenze said that the \$166M number seems not to reflect Belmont's recent plan design changes, although the number could have been \$199M, without those changes.

The Board then discussed the possibility of insuring the two groups (retired vs. active members) separately because the actives are currently subsidizing the retirees through blended rates. Ms. Hagg will contact Ms. Crimmins to get some data on blended rates. The Board concluded that the town may have to consider not continuing to give benefits it can't afford to fund.

Hillcrest Area Private Ways

Community Development Director Glenn Clancy appeared before the Board with representatives from the Hillcrest Neighborhood Road Reconstruction committee regarding paving Hillcrest Road, which is a private road. Chair Firenze provided some background information: Hillcrest Road is a “private way,” it is not town owned. When the developer paved the road about 60 years ago, the paving did not meet the town’s standards. Mr. Clancy said there has been a plan to get the residents from Hillcrest together to privately fund the repaving of the road. There is roughly 2.4 miles of road, and 195 homes. The estimated cost to reclaim the road is \$1.4M. This amounts to \$7,200 per home (a \$300.00 payment per year for the next 20 years). The cost is \$52.00 per foot of frontage. These costs do not include engineering fees. The targeted construction date is Spring 2011. Chair Firenze noted that when this was discussed previously the corner lot people were upset, as they would be paying for twice as much frontage. One compromise, Firenze offered, would be for the corner lot residents to pay for the larger side of their frontage, with the rest is lumped in and split among all the residents. Firenze added that the town could bond the cost of the paving projects and the residents could pay back the town. This is a neighborhood issue though, he said, and as such the residents will have to take the initiative to move it forward. The Board discussed that a two-thirds approval from residents seems appropriate (131 homes) and that the sewers in that area would be impacted as it is a “high inflow section.” Selectman Jones said that the sewers should be tightened up if the roads are being worked on.

Road Overlay Discussion - Glenn Clancy

Mr. Clancy appeared before the Board to discuss the road work done in the Clark Hill area. Chair Firenze provided some background information: Water main work was done in the Clark Hill area. The roads were in tough shape and a simple overlay was done with a little millwork, but not the entire surface. Chair Firenze asked Mr. Clancy about the costs associated with doing roads in that way (e.g., a simple overlay). Mr. Clancy said that, while it is a cheaper alternative, it is not good for the long term. Clark Hill gets very little traffic, and many roads in Belmont are too far run down to get by with a simple overlay. Belmont’s roads need full depth reconstruction, he said, because they are so bad.

Five Year Plan for Pavement Management – FY09-FY13

Mr. Clancy looked at available money going forward and has devised a five year plan for road reconstruction based on that funding. Funding will be set aside for Trapelo Road, and all work will be in conjunction with the water mains. Major roads can be completed by FY13; with no amenities such as sidewalks and curbing, just asphalt. Mr. Clancy added that all current funding sources and levels must be maintained (Chapter 90, the 2001 Belmont override, etc). Phase two of this plan focuses on local road repair, which would begin in FY13. Mr. Clancy suggested that since this plan does not include sidewalks, the Board should explore a sidewalk override. \$200-250K would make a significant difference.

The Board acknowledged that this is a very professional plan, one that differs greatly from the goals of the override (reflecting the different level of funding), but addresses the most critical roads.

Chair Firenze and Mr. Younger stepped out of the meeting for 10 minutes to attend a Conservation Committee meeting.

Representative Brownsberger Legislative Update

Representative Brownsberger appeared before the Board and provided the following updates:

- Budget cuts to local aid could occur in January 2009.
- He is working on regionalization within Arlington and Lexington in the area of Public Health. The town needs to continue working on regionalization, especially within the Belmont Fire Department. Representative Brownsberger also discussed Police Department regionalization possibilities.

Open Space Plan - Jay Szklut

Town Planner Jay Szklut appeared before the Board to discuss the open space plan executive summary. Mr. Szklut said that a 2006 update to the plan was begun, but was not finished. (This 2006 update was updating an open space plan completed in 2001). We should move forward with a 2008 update to reexamine the goals and needs discussed in 2001. Those goals include looking at Belmont's recreational needs, the preservation of wildlife, the protection of the town's natural resources, the protection of existing open space, and the maintenance of playgrounds and fields. Upon completion of the 2008 update, it will be filed with the state. The Planning Board and Board of Selectmen need to first review the 2008 Plan and submit comments as well as a letter of endorsement.

The Board moved: To have a letter drafted stating the Board's approval of the Open Space plan.

The motion passed unanimously (2-0).

Chair Firenze and Mr. Younger returned to the Board meeting.

Woodfall Road Discussion

Chair Firenze explained that the successful bidder has rescinded his offer as a result of a lack of financing. He would like to ask if the second bidder's offer (at same price) could be considered but Town Counsel has said no – the second bid was off the table. The Board then discussed options for selling Woodfall Road including another auction or waiting for someone to come forward with a bid of \$2.5M.

Water Advisory Board Appointment

The Board moved: To appoint Bill Shea to the Water Advisory Board..
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Special Town Meeting – Discussion

Chair Firenze: There is \$150K of new growth which could be spent this year if appropriated before the tax rate is set. Town Meeting needs to appropriate the money and then the Board would meet following that meeting to set the tax rate. The other Town Meeting article to be addressed involves a zoning change.

The Board moved: To hold a Special Town Meeting on December 8th assuming this is acceptable to the Board of Assessors; otherwise, to hold it on December 1st.
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Selectman Jones articulated the articles that would need to be addressed at the December meeting:

- fuel shortfall funding
- street lighting funding
- \$150K in new growth revenue
- the Brighton Street re-zoning issue

Meeting Schedule Changes

The Board then discussed Board of Selectmen meeting schedule changes. The November 17th meeting will be moved to November 10th. The January 5th meeting will be held on January 12th instead.

The Board will vote on the Community Preservation Act Committee's report after the Warrant Committee has opined on it. Chair Firenze said that with a debt exclusion and an override facing Belmont this Spring, he was not inclined to support the CPA.

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Younger reported on the following items:

- *Energy Savings.* The Town Hall and Homer Annex buildings are scheduled to be open the day after Christmas (12/26/2008) and the day after New Year's Day (1/2/2009). If we close the buildings on those Fridays, the town could save on energy costs. To make up the missed time, we would stay open 14 additional hours over subsequent evenings. (One hour later for 14 days, for example.) The Board supported this.
- *Senior Center.* It is a month behind schedule. Due to open in March or April.
- *Town Hall.* Generator pad is getting installed.
- *ALS Study Group.* Will be in to the Board on December 15 to present its report.
- *Blanchard Road Rotary.* It would cost \$12K to do a "tiered" rotary. Mr. Clancy is putting out the bid.
- *Emergency Phone Notification System.* Residents can go to the town website and put in their phone numbers to receive emergency town notifications.

- *Absentee Ballots.* 1807 were requested, with an 89% return rate.
- *Board of Library Trustees.* They have voted to close the Benton Branch.

OTHER

Chair Firenze raised the following issues:

- *Town Vehicles/Road Patching.* Mr. Younger is working on the town vehicles' report as well as the road patching program. Mr. Younger will ask Mr. Castanino to address the patching standards.

ACTION BY WRITING

Approval of Road Salt Contracts for FY09

The Board moved: To approve the Road Salt Contracts for FY09.
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

BCBA Holiday Lighting

The Board moved: To accept the Belmont Center Business Association's request to hold the annual holiday tree lighting event on Dec 4th.
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

OTHER (continued)

Chair Firenze continued:

- *Horne Road Group.* Met with Chair Firenze and requested that negotiations with the developer be public and that discussion points be put on the agenda.
- *Recycling.* Letter regarding recycling will be forwarded to the recycling committee.
- *Foreign Oil Dependency.* Robert Kennedy letter regarding foreign oil dependency will put on the agenda for the next Board meeting' (11/10/08).

Executive Session

The Board moved: To enter into Executive Session at 10:40 to discuss litigation.
The Board will not return to Open Session.
The motion passed unanimously (3-0).

*(During executive session, one substantive motion was made and passed unanimously.
The Board adjourned the meeting at 11:26 pm.)*

Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator