

- **Belmont Warrant Committee FY08 Meeting Minutes**
- **FINAL**
- **November 5, 2008, 7:30 p.m.**
- **Chenery Middle School Community Room**

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- Present: Chair Curtis; Members Allison, Brusch, Callanan, Heigham, Hofmann, Libenson, Lynch, Paolillo, Smith, Widmer; BOS Chair Firenze; School Committee Chair Bowe

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- Town Accountant Hagg, Town Administrator Younger, Town Treasurer Carman

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- Absent: Members Epstein and McLaughlin

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- The meeting was called to order at 7:34 pm by Chair Curtis.

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- Chair Curtis began the meeting by picking up the FY09 budget discussion that was begun last week.

- ***Continuation of FY09 Budget Discussion***
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- Chair Curtis: There are two areas where the town is facing either an unanticipated expense overrun (\$177K fuel energy costs) or the need for a reallocation of finances due to unachieved street lighting savings (\$150K). Town Accountant Hagg distributed a handout reviewing the deficits, which total about \$327K. The new growth total has come in at \$196K. Town Administrator Younger has put forth town side savings which total \$323K. This \$323K is expected to be applied to the energy shortfall. In answer to a question about the Assessors' relationship to the new growth money – e.g., would they snag it for the overlay account? – Hagg replied “it is ours to appropriate.”

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- Chair Curtis added that this money could be appropriated using the school/town split: 56.2% or \$110K for school side and 43.8% or \$86K for town side. Curtis said he would like to hear from the schools about how they are dealing with the energy shortfall as well. SC Bowe said that among the school's cuts was \$110K for technology funding. With the school's share of the \$196K new growth, he could see restoring technology spending. BOS Chair Firenze said he would like to make an argument for the entire \$196K going to the town side. Chair Curtis said that the WC will discuss this very issue at its next meeting on November 19th.

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- BOS Chair Firenze noted that there will be additional town side revenue realized in the latter part of FY09 due to increased parking fees effective Jan. 1, 2009. There is also \$20K savings potential by eliminating fireboxes. Town Accountant Hagg said that this money could be appropriated or it becomes free cash. Member Brusch noted that new revenue typically gets appropriated.

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- Chair Curtis then turned the discussion to the WC Reserve Fund. I am opposed, he said, to using the WC reserve fund to cover the energy shortfall or street lighting issue. These areas do not meet the criteria for reserve fund use. There is \$400K in the fund and some of that money may be needed for snow removal. It sends the wrong message to the voters if, when faced with unanticipated expenses or in the case of the street lighting scenario, we use this money. We need to send the message that we intend to live within our budget. The WC members offered their agreement to the Chair's sentiments. Chair Firenze asked if the street lights could just be turned off? Yes, Chair Curtis replied, if the town can't figure out where to get the necessary \$178K from, it can turn the street lights off.

- BOS Chair Firenze confirmed that TM will be held on December 1, 2008. Member Widmer asked what other Articles are expected to be addressed? Town Administrator Younger replied that a planning board rezoning issue is the only other article up for discussion at this time. He will send the specifics of the rezoning issue to Chair Curtis. Member Bruschi added that the WC needs to be prepared at its meeting on the 19th to fully address the Articles for the December 1 TM, as there is no possibility of holding another WC meeting before 12/1. Chair Curtis agreed and added that the WC will need to meet on the 1st of December, prior to TM.

Update on ATFC Meeting

- Chair Curtis announced that Member Bruschi is President of the Association of Town Finance Committees (ATFC). He added that he, along with WC Members Bruschi, Callanan, Smith, and Heigham attended the November 1st ATFC meeting where the state's \$750M capital gains tax shortfall was discussed. Municipalities will be impacted by this and should be prepared for something big and bad, exactly what is unknown at this time. Member Widmer: the "big and bad" will be felt in dribs and drabs. The state may need to make FY09 midyear cuts to local aid, probably not in January, though. There will most certainly be cuts in local aid in FY10. Perhaps we should prepare "nuclear winter budget" for 2010, offered Member Allison. Town Administrator Younger said that the fiscal situation is being taken seriously – even now – as evidenced by the hiring freeze.

- The WC discussed core services. BOS Chair Firenze: All services are "core" to some group in this town. Member Heigham agreed, but noted that, while the school budget is required by law, the COA is not. Heigham added that Belmont has been deficit financing for 4 years in a row.

- Member Callanan said that the issue of PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) programs was discussed at the ATFC meeting. It was recommended that towns negotiate with the non-profits when they come before the town with a request. The town can ask for a percentage of money raised or charge fees where appropriate. Chair Firenze said that he and Town Administrator Younger hit a "stone wall" with regard to getting a payment from the non-profits in town. Belmont Hill School is not inclined to pay anything, he said, and in fact they have taken real estate off the town's tax roles.

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- ***Minutes of 10/29/2008***

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- The minutes of 10/29/08 were approved, with one adjustment.

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- ***Other: Executive Session***

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- The WC moved to enter into Executive Session at 8:31 to discuss litigation. The WC will not return to open session. A roll call vote was taken and all present members voted aye.

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- Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
- WC Recording Secretary